

KAYAH STATE
KAYIN STATE
EASTERN
BAGO REGION
SOUTHERN SHAN STATE
SOUTHERN SHAN STATE
EASTERN BAGO REGION
MON STATE
EASTERN SHAN STATE
MON
STATE
TANINTHARYI REGION
KAYAH STATE

SITUATION ANALYSIS OF SOUTHEASTERN MYANMAR

September 2016

Myanmar Information Management Unit
Peace Support Fund

To the reader:

This Situation Analysis is a first step towards identifying key trends and bringing together a growing body of knowledge and data on southeastern Myanmar across the development, humanitarian and peace sectors. Each section of this report provides an overview of key issues and seeks to understand the current situation in a heterogenous area of Myanmar. This report includes a wealth of resources that a host of actors can draw on in their engagement in this part of Myanmar. Documents used in this Situation Analysis are available through the MIMU website: <http://themimu.info/se-situation-analysis>.

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Acronyms

3MDG	Three Millennium Development Goal Fund	IHLCA	Integrated Household Living Conditions Assessment
3W	Who is doing What, Where	ILO	International Labour Organisation
ADB	Asian Development Bank	INGO	International non-governmental organisation
Amyohta Hluttaw	Upper House of Parliament	IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ARCM	Asian Research Centre for Migration	IPSG	International Peace Support Group
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	JMC	Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee
BBO	Border-based organisation	JMC-S	Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee – State Level
BNI	Burma News International	JPF	Joint Peace Fund
BGF	Border Guard Force	KAP	Knowledge, attitudes, and practices survey
CBO	Community-based organisation	KHRG	Karen Human Rights Group
CIDKP	Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People	KIO	Kachin Independence Organisation
CRS	Catholic Relief Services	KNDP/A	Karenni National Development Party/Army
CSC	Citizenship Scrutiny Card (or “Pink Card”)	KNG	Kayan National Guard
CSO	Civil society organisation	KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army
DCA-CM	Dan Church Aid-Chiang Mai	KNLP	Kayan New Land Party
DKBA	Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, or Democratic Karen Buddhist Army	KNLPF	Karenni National People’s Liberation Front
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative	KNPDP	Karenni National Peace and Development Party
ERW	Explosive remnants of war	KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations	KnSWDC	Karenni Social Welfare and Development Committee
Four Cuts	A strategy used by the military to cut the enemy from four key areas: food, funds, intelligence and recruits	KNU	Karen National Union
FPD	Framework for Political Dialogue	KNU-KNLA	PC Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council
GAD	General Administration Department	KNUSO	Karenni National Unity and Solidarity Organisation
GBV	Gender-based violence	KPF	Karen Peace Force
GEN	Gender Equality Network	KPSN	Karen Peace Support Network
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-Region	KRW	Karen Rivers Watch
HLP	Housing, land, and property	KTWG	Karen Teacher Working Group
HURFOM	Human Rights Foundation of Monland	KyWO	Kayan Women’s Organisation
ICBL	International Campaign to Ban Landmines	LDU	Lahu Democratic Union
ICG	International Crisis Group	LIFT	Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund
ICLA	Information, counselling and legal assistance	MAG	Mine Action Group
IDP	Internally displaced person	MDTF	Multi-donor trust fund
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems		

Acronyms *(continued)*

MIMU	Myanmar Information Management Unit	SNLD	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy
MoIP	Ministry of Immigration and Population	SWAN	Shan Women's Network
MNDA	Mon National Defence Army	Tatmadaw	The Myanmar Armed Forces
MPDF	Mon Peace and Defence Front	Taungya	Shifting cultivation (agriculture and farming)
MMA	Mon Mergui Army	TB	Tuberculosis
MMAC	Myanmar Mine Action Centre	TBA	Traditional birth attendant
MPC	Myanmar Peace Centre	TNI	Transnational Institute
MRE	Mine risk education	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
MTUF	Mergui-Tavoy United Front	UNFC	United Nationalities Federal Council
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
NDAA	National Democratic Alliance Army	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
NGO	Non-governmental organisation	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
NLD	National League for Democracy	UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
NLUP	National Land Use Policy	UPWC	Union Peacemaking Working Committee
NMSP	New Mon State Party	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Committee	USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
NRPC	National Reconciliation and Peace Centre	UWSA	United Wa State Army
NSA	Non-state actor, typically referring to an armed group in ethnic minority areas	VFV	Vacant, fallow and virgin land
NSPAW	National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women	WCRP	Women and Child Rights Project
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	WHO	World Health Organisation
PIN	People in Need	WFP	World Food Programme
PNLF	Pa-O National Liberation Front	WON	Women's Organisations Network
PNLO	Pa-O National Liberation Organisation	WNO/A	Wa National Organisation/Army
PNO	Pa-O National Organisation		
PSF	Peace Support Fund		
PSG	Peace Support Group		
Pyithu Hluttaw	Lower House of Parliament		
RCO	United Nations Office of the Resident Coordinator		
RCSS/SSA-S	Restoration Council of Shan State/ Shan State Army-South		
SAZ	Self-Administered Zone		
SEWG	South-East Working Group		
SEZ	Special Economic Zone		
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency		

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The **Myanmar Information Management Unit/MIMU** is a service provided under the Office of the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. The unit was established in 2007 as an impartial resource providing information management services to support evidence-based analysis and decision-making by humanitarian and development actors in the Myanmar context. The MIMU provides information services, maps and other information products, capacity building and support to the coordination, planning, and allocation of resources for humanitarian and development activities.

The **Peace Support Fund/PSF**, established in 2014, is a flexible, responsive and demand-driven multi-donor fund which aims to increase the likelihood of sustainable peace in Myanmar by supporting initiatives which increase trust, confidence, engagement and participation in the peace process, and which reduce inter-communal tensions. In particular, the PSF supports the meaningful engagement of civil society, women and youth in efforts to achieve peace and inter-communal harmony, with a preference for national and small scale, catalytic initiatives. The PSF receives funding from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Government of Sweden.

Executive summary

About this report

The Situation Analysis of southeastern Myanmar has been prepared by the Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) and the Peace Support Fund (PSF) as a resource to support programming, strategy and policy across the peace, humanitarian and development sectors. For this purpose, southeastern Myanmar includes the following: Mon State, Kayin State, Kayah State, eastern and southern Shan State, Tanintharyi Region and eastern Bago Region. Information was gathered through a desk review of recent documentation and from interviews with 36 key interviewees which aimed to capture additional information on trends, gaps and emerging areas. A further 32 participants took part in a validation workshop in March 2016 to review key findings.

Analysis in this report is not exhaustive. It is not meant to act as a needs assessment or gap analysis. It is intended to be a first step towards identifying key trends and bringing together a growing body of knowledge and data on southeastern Myanmar. While this analysis included inputs from key interviewees, it did not involve consultations outside Yangon or with interviewees from Government or non-state actors (NSAs), including ethnic armed organisations.

The context

Southeastern Myanmar comprises the States/Regions adjacent to the country's border with Thailand and Laos, and makes up slightly over 30% of the Myanmar's land area. The southeastern region is home to approximately 20% of Myanmar's population of 51.4 million (2014). The area is diverse geographically, characterised by highlands, hilly upland areas, valleys and some areas of flatter, arable land. It has long rivers that mainly flow from north to south, and a long coastline which includes many small islands.

The area shares some common attributes including ethnic diversity and a history of tensions between local leaders and the Government of Myanmar. In parts of southeastern Myanmar, the authority of the central Government has never been fully accepted. After decades of conflict, NSAs continue to hold some territory and have considerable influence in other areas. Associated common issues relate to migration, trade, economic development, conflict and forced displacement. Myanmar's southeast is, however, neither uniform nor homogenous and the fast-changing area varies widely in its geography, ethnicity, developmental status, culture, and history.

Across Myanmar, a triple transition is occurring: democratic reform and the partial transition from military to civilian governance; economic reform, involving further shifts from a centralised economy to one that is market based; and a national peace process seeking to resolve over 60 years of armed conflict. These macro-level changes affect all parts of the country.

The country's political transition moved forward in November 2015. The National League for Democracy's (NLD) election victory came with majorities in all states and regions of southeastern Myanmar except for Shan State. A significant decline in violent conflict has increased stability in many parts and access to previously restricted parts of the area is improving. Since the negotiation of bilateral ceasefires in 2012 and the launch of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) process, opportunities exist to pursue a more comprehensive and sustainable peace.

Key actors

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international development agencies are found in all 84 townships throughout southeastern Myanmar. Kayin State has the highest concentration of agencies (73), followed by Mon State (62). The lowest concentration is found in eastern Shan State (25). Overall, health is the most common sector of activity, followed by protection and civil documentation initiatives, livelihoods and education. Opportunities for donor funding within Myanmar have increased, including multi-donor funds and peace funds. In general, there is now more information available on all aspects of the area.

Effective coordination is regarded as essential. Coordination meetings related to Myanmar's southeast occur at the national and State/Regional levels. The South-East Working Group (SEWG) is one such mechanism, created to enhance strategic coordination in response to the increase in international actors. However, there is no specific coordination mechanism which exclusively discusses the development or the peace processes for southeastern Myanmar. Interviewees also noted that there was an absence of emphasis on gender. Consultation and engagement with national civil society actors remains a challenge.

At the State/Region level, local governments have been instrumental in facilitating increased coordination between agencies, including thematic and sector meetings. There may be an opportunity for strengthened coordination at this level with more relevance for Government and for practical applications at the local level. Township-level coordination on specific issues may also be valuable, enabling engagement by local government, NGOs, and other NSAs. Local coordination forums may help to avoid overstressing national organisations as new initiatives are launched.

The following subsections of this Executive Summary provide an overview of each section in the report.

1. Economy and livelihoods

Many of southeastern Myanmar's residents are relatively poor farmers although the past two decades has seen cross-border trade routes and natural resource extraction generating significant wealth for some. The area is well-positioned for further economic growth through improved agricultural production, trade, tourism, industrialisation, and natural resource exploitation including mines, hydropower, forestry and fishing. The area's proximity to the Thai border attracts both legal and illicit trade and migration.

Concerns exist over who benefits, and who loses, from economic development. Only limited resources have been invested in the region's infrastructure and services. While tourism has yet to reach its potential, the sector is growing quickly. Incomes vary widely across the region and growth may further exacerbate economic differences, potentially increasing the concerns of minority leaders over discrimination. Groups especially at risk include upland farmers, small-scale fisherfolk and minorities. There is need to further understand the gendered dimensions of economic development, particularly related to the impact on women's livelihoods.

Upland farmers, especially those practising shifting cultivation (taungya), are particularly at risk from new plantations and changes to forestry conditions. Agricultural concessions for palm oil now cover 18% of Tanintharyi Region's total land area. Opium production is a major issue, especially in Shan State. Poppy is cultivated to varying degrees in at least 32 of the 84 townships in southeastern Myanmar. Meanwhile, rural poverty continues: a 2012 rural poverty assessment of southeastern Myanmar found that almost two-thirds of households were unable to meet basic needs.

2. Infrastructure and investment

New investments are increasingly common across southeastern Myanmar, including public investments such as electrification and road construction, along with private investments such as telecommunications, plantations and mines. There are major plans for improved roads (for international as well as national connectivity), upgraded ports, industrial development and tourism.

Considerable investment is needed. Electrification rates in southeastern Myanmar are among the country's lowest, particularly in remote parts of Tanintharyi Region and Kayin State. Infrastructure is especially deficient in the conflict-affected areas and zones near the border with Thailand that are governed by NSAs. There have, however, been some changes: by 2014, 31% of households had access to mobile phones; this figure is expected to have doubled by 2016.

New projects are generating tensions, with civil society organisations raising concerns about these new projects' impact on peace, livelihoods, land tenure, gender and the environment. Local populations who fear losing out have resented many recent large investments, such as the proposed port and industrial development in Dawei. A history of non-transparent, top-down decisions that primarily benefit groups connected to the military clouds the future, while NSAs and local populations are suspicious of external investment to their areas. Meaningful consultations with local communities or local leaders, along with other aspects of environmental or social screening of projects, are usually inadequate.

If peace continues then further public and private investments are likely to be seen in areas that were previously deemed unsafe. New investments are needed, yet can both exacerbate pre-existing drivers of conflict and further inequality. Recent examples of this include the improved road to Myawaddy in Kayin State which is thought to have contributed to conflict between armed groups.

3. Natural resources and the environment

Management and benefit-sharing of the region's natural resources – abundant minerals, forests, land and water – are highly sensitive, affecting the peace process and aspects of support for federalism. There are also concerns over transparency and equitable sharing of benefits.

The Government of Myanmar's budget is heavily dependent on income from natural resource concessions including minerals, hydroelectricity and offshore gas from southeastern Myanmar. The allocation of revenues from these resources has further complicated the many conflicts that have affected the region for decades.

Two-thirds of Tanintharyi Region and almost half of Kayin State are still forested although tree coverage continues to decline. Timber exports generate significant revenues but these export interests often conflict with communities whose livelihoods depend on the forests. The region's forests, especially in Tanintharyi, contain impressive biodiversity. Conservation efforts, including an improving legislative framework, are ongoing.

Flooding presents the greatest natural disaster risk, especially in places affected by changes to their land use. Earthquake risks and other concerns, including fire, present further areas for disaster preparedness.

4. Services – education and health

Most people report gradual improvements in education services and healthcare provision over recent years. Service provision in southeastern Myanmar involves different bodies: Government, NGOs, NSAs, religious bodies and private services. Some people near the border travel to Thailand for health services.

Educational attainment statistics vary across southeastern Myanmar, from close to the national average to well below it for literacy rates in eastern Shan State. Women record lower literacy rates than men across all States and Regions in southeastern Myanmar. Particular concerns exist over the standard of teacher training, the availability and quality of vocational education, and the high number of children who complete only primary education.

Infant mortality is higher than the national average. There is particular concern about the lack of available trained health personnel and access problems in remote and conflict-affected areas. Preventable diseases cause 42% of deaths in remote and displaced communities in southeastern Myanmar. As in other parts of the country, many maternal, reproductive and sexual health needs are not being met.

Overall, conflict-affected areas have poorer access to health and education services, especially in the most remote areas. Service provision, whether by the Government or NSAs, is widely seen as a political act seeking to build local legitimacy and authority. Some aspects, such as staff recruitment, the language used in schools and the version of history being taught can be highly controversial.

Some NSAs assume responsibility for service provision in the areas that they control, either through parallel state mechanisms or through local NGOs. In contested areas, there is some mixed service provision involving Government services or facilities, NSAs and NGOs.

Efforts to ensure better links between different service providers are ongoing and in many areas a pragmatic mixture exists. The notion of convergence may be resisted if it appears to promote central Government authority.

Migrant groups and people near the border may have specific problems accessing health and education services. In addition, people educated in NSA-held areas or refugee camps in Thailand may not have the necessary qualifications or language skills to access better jobs or higher level education within Myanmar as education qualifications from these areas are not always recognised.

5. Governance, justice and land rights

Myanmar remains highly centralised. Central authority is especially resented in ethnic minority states, contested conflict zones and some other areas of southeastern Myanmar.

Efforts to decentralise have taken place but local parliaments remain weak with inadequate budgets and limited administrative support. General Administrative Department (GAD) officials, and in places the military, remain dominant at the local level. Village tract officials are now indirectly elected rather than being appointed.

Federalism is a pressing issue for ethnic leaders and local politicians. It is closely related to the ongoing peace process and is the subject of intense debate.

Areas of southeastern Myanmar not under full central Government control have a range of complex local governance arrangements. The relationships between NSAs and Government agencies have been described as ranging between occupation, contestation and co-existence. In many areas of southeastern Myanmar (for instance in much of Shan State) multiple authorities overlap, with local NSAs holding sway on the ground.

Barriers to accessing justice for men, and especially for women, exist in all areas. Access to justice is limited by widespread mistrust within and across ethnic groups, as well as between NSAs and the Government. Common mistrust of external authority in general means that many local people view any legal system as a repressive tool rather than a safeguard of rights. At the village level, communities in many parts of southeastern Myanmar are used to governing themselves after decades of building up

resilience and coping mechanisms in the face of authoritarian rule and ongoing armed conflict. One survey found that 74% of village tracts used varying types of customary law as the primary mechanism for dealing with serious disputes. Women face a host of barriers related to access to justice, particularly in the areas of land ownership, inheritance, and protection.

Land access and tenure lie at the centre of many important issues across southeastern Myanmar. Trade, natural resources, migration, returnees, landmines, gender equality, land titling and citizenship status are all linked to views of land and disputes over it. Current laws come into conflict not only with each other, but also with customary and communal use and ownership of land, both of which remain common.

Although land use policy is improving and land registration is ongoing, significant challenges remain. A history of land seizure by the military makes the issue especially sensitive. While the military are now considerably less likely to abuse people's land rights, new development and rising land prices present additional threats. Particular groups, including potentially returning migrants, internally displaced people (IDPs) and upland shifting cultivators are especially prone to abuses.

6. Peacebuilding

There are economic as well as fundamentally political elements to the causes of the complex and protracted conflicts that have affected Myanmar since the country's independence in 1948. The remaining conflicts in southeastern parts of the country involve local groups, each of which are associated with an ethnic minority who seek recognition and self-determination.

The ongoing peace process seeks to bring an end to decades of civil conflict. In 2015, five NSAs from southeastern Myanmar signed the NCA, but others chose not to. Non-signatories are, however, still involved in the wider process through bilateral ceasefires signed in or around 2012. The NCA signing launched joint ceasefire monitoring committees (JMC) which, as of early 2016, were being established in Shan State and Tanintharyi Region. JMC has now extended, at the state level, to Mon and Kayin States.

The peace process continues to encounter many obstacles, including a lack of unity among NSAs and a lack of trust between the parties in the process. Leaders of the process have made efforts to include different voices, including local communities and women, but these steps have had only a minor impact. Women's organisations and some peace and security organisations are implementing programmes to increase the inclusion of women in the peace process and to secure gendered peace process outcomes. These organisations also train and empower women peacebuilder.

Aid agencies are concerned about the appropriate ways with which to engage with NSAs, especially those not accepted legally. Integrating civilian ceasefire monitoring mechanisms into formal monitoring structures is a further challenge. Available information on some issues is limited, including the significance of the informal economy at the local level and the prevalence of local, communal conflicts.

The reduction of armed conflict in southeastern Myanmar has been accompanied by improved access, which is encouraging economic development and increasing focus on chronic development needs, particularly in remote and upland areas. However, some humanitarian agencies are still blocked from accessing some areas to address humanitarian needs. Recently contested areas are not stable and are vulnerable to renewed conflict. Effectively and equitably sharing the benefits of peace will be key to ensuring sustainable peace.

Conflict is an important planning consideration for development and humanitarian agencies across southeastern Myanmar. The best planning strategies integrate an understanding of complex

local contexts and recognise the risks of unintentionally doing harm. Interviewees for this report stressed the importance of conflict-sensitive approaches to future programming.

7. Landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW)

Southeastern Myanmar contains the majority of the country's 58 landmine-affected townships. Although local knowledge identifies many known minefields, comprehensive information on victims and on mine locations is limited.

Mines have been planted by the Tatmadaw, by NSAs and on occasion by local communities seeking to protect themselves. Eastern Bago Region and Kayin State are the worst-affected parts of the country. In 2014 251 casualties caused by mines/ERW were recorded in Myanmar, but this figure does not represent the full number of casualties, as some may have gone unrecorded.

Landmine contamination is a significant barrier to refugee return. It also continues to pose barriers to livelihoods, economic development, land ownership, and access to health and education services, all of which have gendered dimensions and implications.

Although demining has not yet started, commitments to improve the problem were made in the 2015 NCA. Many agencies, some with significant donor funding, are working on mine awareness. Current programme coverage is broad but not fully comprehensive. Myanmar has not yet agreed to the 1997 International Mine Ban Treaty and while National Mine Clearance Standards have been created, they have neither been shared nor implemented. This means that agencies are for the moment limited to mine risk education (MRE) activities.

8. Displaced people and migration

For several decades, migration and displacement have been a way of life in many parts of southeastern Myanmar, whether people have been fleeing from conflict or seeking economic opportunities.

People from conflict-affected areas have been displaced within Myanmar (internally displaced persons, IDPs) and have also crossed the border to Thailand (refugees). In some villages people have experienced multiple displacement, having been moved more than two dozen times. Displaced people do not fall into simple, uniform categories: some have now settled permanently in another location while others wish to return to their original area once it is considered sufficiently secure. For IDPs in the southeastern region there has not been a uniform approach to durable solutions to address and end internal displacement.

There are over 100,000 verified refugees in camps in Thailand, and an estimated 400,000 IDPs across southeastern Myanmar. Among the millions of migrants from Myanmar who work in Thailand rather than living in the camps, some were also displaced by conflict.

Plans exist to facilitate a refugee return process to Myanmar although concrete steps have been delayed by slow progress towards a peace agreement. UNHCR is encouraging standards that prohibit involuntary return, and insist on sufficient security. Refugees have diverse needs and strategies. Many will not wish to return to their places of origin while some may have trouble reintegrating into Myanmar. Some have returned spontaneously.

Several million migrants from Myanmar live in Thailand, most coming from southeastern Myanmar. A clear majority have migrated mainly for economic reasons. An estimated USD2.9bn was remitted from Thailand to Myanmar in 2013, of which 80% went to southeastern Myanmar, primarily through unofficial channels. Many migrants return from abroad seasonally, or for visits.

Concerns include labour conditions in Thailand, human trafficking and infectious disease transmission. Migration is changing the population dynamic, with up to one third of the households in southeastern Myanmar headed by women – significantly higher than the 24% national average. The labour shortages created through out-migration from southeastern Myanmar tend to be filled by incoming migrants from other parts of the country who have agricultural-dependent livelihoods.

9. Gender

Women remain severely underrepresented in local and national parliaments despite some improvement as a result of the 2015 election. Significant barriers limiting the participation of women in politics and governance include norms that perpetuate gender inequality, gendered leadership cultures and roles that relegate women to private, household responsibilities. As a result of these barriers, the peace process to date has largely excluded gender concerns and women's participation in both process and substance.

Some interviewees noted that there had been some indications of a shift in gender roles as a result of an increase in the number of female-headed households. Positive steps include efforts by political parties, networks and NGOs to boost the role of women in public life and to monitor the gender impact of new projects.

More comprehensive gender power analysis is required across the humanitarian, development and peace sectors in order to better understand the issues, impacts, needs and aspirations of women and men. As in many parts of the country, women are largely excluded from public decision-making roles at all levels of governance due to prevailing socio-cultural norms and structures that inhibit gender equality.

10. Vulnerable groups (undocumented residents and children)

A lack of formal identification and recognition of full citizenship status increases vulnerability for many in southeastern Myanmar.¹ Documentation is an important protection tool to counter forced marriage, secure rights to nationality, prevent trafficking and enforce labour laws. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable when they do not have civil documentation.

Child welfare varies across southeastern Myanmar. For example, children in predominantly rural southern and eastern Shan State show stunting rates of 42% and 39% which is above the national average of 35%. Kayin and Mon States measured 29% and 30%, significantly below the national average.

Child labour, including some allegations of continued child recruitment into armed groups, remains a concern. Migration also generates vulnerabilities, and protection services are still more limited in conflict-affected areas than elsewhere.

¹This section does not exhaustively cover all types of vulnerable groups – it focuses only on two particularly vulnerable groups, undocumented residents and children.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM INTERVIEWEES²

Approaches

- External actors often arrive with a predetermined plan. They do not spend enough time listening and appreciating local context. Interviewees see international agencies and donors as having their own agendas, which often mirror those of the State/Region Governments.
- Trust is lacking between actors. Building trust takes time yet is an important process.
- Relationships need to be built between a multiplicity of local actors. A sustained field presence helps to establish these relationships.
- Community consultations, which include the voices of women and youth, should be encouraged. Actors should also engage better with local organisations and share best practices.
- Conversations about thematic issues must occur in concert with discussions of broader processes. For example, interviewees highlighted the fact that discussion of exploitation of natural resources must be had in relation to the peace process.
- Actors should ensure that civil society strengthening does not focus only on service delivery.
- Donors and international organisations need more realistic timeframes for achieving programme impact. Tight timeframes restrict the scope for effective and sustainable interventions.

Diverse context

- Southeastern Myanmar is vast and nuanced, and it is difficult to make generalisations about the area. A more detailed, multifaceted understanding is required.
- Lines of territorial control and authority are complicated. Interviewees highlighted the need to understand the meaning of “mixed-control” and to acknowledge the difficulty of capturing rapidly changing ceasefire dynamics.

Conflict sensitivity

- International organisations need to improve their understanding of power dynamics. If they do not, they risk feeding and exacerbating pre-existing drivers of conflict.

²These lessons were noted by participants during the interviews. They are not recommendations, nor intended to be prescriptive.

- One group of vulnerable people should not be privileged over another. For instance, broadly applicable vulnerability criteria should be considered.
- The experiences of multiple service delivery providers, inside and outside southeastern Myanmar, should be recognised.
- Working relationships with Government and non-state service providers need to be established. Integrating conflict-sensitive and Do No Harm approaches within programme design, implementation and monitoring is essential.
- Work should not be limited only to easily accessible areas. Avoiding high-risk areas is counterproductive. Dynamic risk management needs to be integrated into programme design.

Representation

- Government and NSAs are not homogeneous. Neither side is a monolith and detailed assessment of project areas is key. Some NSAs are more centralised than others.
- Dominant narratives need to be questioned. For example, interviewees noted that some groups conflate the Union Government with the Bamar majority.

Coordination

- There is an increasing need for coordination as more development actors engage. In an uncertain and dynamic context, coordination is especially critical at the local level.
- There is no substitute for direct interaction in the field. Interviewees stressed the value of having decision-makers based across southeastern Myanmar, not only in Yangon.

Sharing information

- Lessons should be learnt from other transitional contexts. It is useful to analyse experiences from other conflict environments, in Myanmar and internationally.
- Information-sharing cultures need to be fostered. Improve data collection and make information accessible.

About this analysis

In the context of Myanmar's democratisation, economic reform and ongoing peace process, international engagement has deepened and expanded across the country. For a host of stakeholders – Government, civil society, non-state actors (NSAs³), UN agencies, donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – the dynamic, evolving context creates both opportunities and the need to build a common understanding across the sectors.

This Situation Analysis has been conducted by the MIMU and the PSF to inform programming, strategy and policy across the peace, humanitarian and development sectors in southeastern Myanmar. It seeks to provide a comprehensive and updated review of these sectors, recognising that increasing access and opportunities for engagement have enabled a deepening of stakeholder involvement across southeastern Myanmar. New data has enabled a more in-depth analysis of the issues and gaps in this distinct area of the country.

Specifically, the Situation Analysis seeks to understand and analyse:

- the current situation
- emerging trends, issues and debates on sectors related to peace, development and humanitarian assistance in southeastern Myanmar
- lessons learned from engagement in southeastern Myanmar.

This report draws on information available in literature along with perspectives shared by key interviewees to provide an overview of the current situation and to identify key trends, issues, emerging areas and lessons learned from engagement in humanitarian, development and peace sectors in southeastern Myanmar⁴. It is not intended to be a substitute for a needs assessment or gap analysis of southeastern Myanmar, nor does it identify sectoral priorities or prescribe recommendations.

Coverage and terminology

For the purpose of this exercise, southeastern Myanmar has been defined as comprising those States and Regions in the vicinity of the Myanmar-Thailand border, namely Mon, Kayin, Kayah, southern and eastern Shan States, and Tanintharyi and eastern Bago Regions.

Grouping Myanmar's southeastern States and Regions as one geographic unit does not imply that the area is in any way uniform or homogeneous. Indeed, referring to the area as "the Southeast" risks suggesting homogeneity where it does not exist. Even if only for administrative convenience, adding "the" or capitalisation to the term may create assumptions.

Methodology

This Situation Analysis was prepared by a team from MIMU and the PSF between October 2015 and June 2016, and focused on recent developments between 2013 and 2016. To guide the strategic direction and oversee the preparation of this document, a time-bound consultative group was drawn

³This Situation Analysis prefers the term "non-state actor" (NSA) over "non-state armed group", "ethnic armed group" or "ethnic armed organisation" as it believes that NSA is potentially the most inclusive.

⁴The most recent multi-sector analysis focusing on southeastern Myanmar was conducted in 2013 by the Myanmar Peace Centre and the Peace Donor Support Group. PDSG. (2013). [Desktop Review of Needs and Gaps in Conflict-Affected Parts of Myanmar](#).

from the interagency South-East Working Group (SEWG) comprising UN agencies, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and donors.

The Situation Analysis was conducted in three main stages:

1. The first stage was a desk review to gather relevant documentation from various sources that included agencies, key interviewees and the internet. It focused on more recent developments, sourcing documents published mainly between 2013 and 2016. The report took data and information from MIMU, UN agencies, donors, NGOs, INGOs and civil society. Data was also pulled from Government sources, from Myanmar's Aid Information Management System database (AIMS/Mohinga) and from MIMU's 3W (Who is doing What, Where) which maps actor engagement across the country.⁵ In all, over 250 documents were consulted. Those documents in the public domain are listed in the Reference and sources Section and will be made available on the MIMU website (www.themimu.info).
2. The second stage was a series of interviews with relevant stakeholders in order to inform analysis and identify key emerging trends that had not been available in the literature. In all there were 36 interviews (15 of them, or 42%, with women). These included six UN agencies, 17 NGOs, five donors and a number of individuals noted for their work on a particular theme. The interviewees brought significant expertise and experience from differing sectors.
3. The third stage was a validation workshop to verify report findings and to gather additional information and opinion. A total of 32 people participated in the workshop, including members of the SEWG, four donor representatives, two embassy staff, 12 INGO staff, one national non-governmental organisation (NGO), 12 participants from UN agencies, and one independent expert. Of these, 22 were international and 10 were from Myanmar.

Methodological limitations

Analysis in this report is not exhaustive and is intended to be a first step towards identifying key trends and areas where further analysis is needed. The desk review component was limited to documents that were publicly available or shared with MIMU and the PSF for this purpose. The majority of documents received and reviewed were provided in the English language, meaning that documents in Myanmar and ethnic languages were not widely referenced.

Key interviewees were identified because of their regional, sector or state-level expertise. They were interviewed either in person, by phone or via email in order to capture a wide geographic diversity of interviewees.

The Situation Analysis was conducted primarily as a desk review and did not include field-based travel or consultations with Government or NSAs due to the difficulty of ensuring representative consultations in all field areas. Similar difficulties limited engagement with civil society more broadly. Recognising the limitations inherent in the methodology, representatives of field-based agencies were invited to the validation workshop to review the relevance of the Situation Analysis.

Given the complexity and dynamism of the peace, development and humanitarian sectors across southeastern Myanmar, it is inevitable that some documentation and many possible interviewees will have been missed in this first review. As such, the Situation Analysis should be seen as a base from which to better understand the interconnectedness of issues and to reconsider areas requiring further analysis as the situation evolves.

⁵For more information on AIMS/Mohinga, see: <http://mohinga.info/en/>; for the latest MIMU 3W, see: <http://www.themimu.info/3w-maps-and-reports>

Information gaps

Annex 1 provides an overview of key information gaps that were shared by interviewees in the interview phase of this Situation Analysis. Information gaps are also noted throughout the main body of this Analysis. This Annex is not comprehensive and some of these gaps may be covered by existing information which was not identified or accessible during the research process. It is difficult to know the full extent of available information across all sectors given the lack of routine sharing of information and data.

Background and context

A history of conflict

Southeastern Myanmar's history, like its people and geography, is diverse and complex. The area's common historical trends relate to the wider history of Myanmar, especially to the troubled relationship between the country's ethnic minority regions and the "Bamar" majority central areas of the country.⁶

The official version of Myanmar's history stresses the roles of warrior leaders who forged a nation through military victory and benign governance. The view from the country's periphery looks somewhat different. Instead of a single nation-building narrative, emphasis is placed on a more complex past that has seen many different kingdoms come and go. Many parts of the country which now form modern Myanmar have their own legacy of empires, conflict, peaceful coexistence, domestic trade and international linkages.⁷

Much of southeastern Myanmar has never accepted incorporation into the nation of Myanmar (or Burma). During the British colonial period the ethnic borderlands were allowed a large degree of autonomy, and were administered separately from central Burma as "Frontier Areas". In present-day Kayah and Shan States, the pre-colonial rulers, the "Sao Pha", maintained some of their authority and retained their titles until as late as 1959.

While subsistence farming has persisted especially in upland areas, there is also a long history of other economic activities. Large parts of southeastern Myanmar (most of Bago, parts of Mon, Tanintharyi and Kayin) are lowland, rice-growing areas, while parts of Shan and Kayah State form fertile plateaux. Trade, including overland routes to China, Siam and elsewhere, as well as sea routes along the coasts, brought wealth and supported the development of many towns. Mining and plantations date back to the 19th century. Even the production of opium has a long history, having been the mainstay of farmers in parts of Shan State for many generations.

⁶A detailed overview of southeastern Myanmar's complex history is beyond the scope of this Situation Analysis. Much of what follows in this section is drawn from the Peace Donor Support Group. (2013). [Desktop Review of Needs and Gaps in Conflict-Affected Parts of Myanmar](#), from the State Profiles available on [UNHCR's Thailand-Myanmar Cross Border Portal](#), and from Jolliffe, K. (2015). [Ethnic Armed Conflict and Territorial Administration in Myanmar](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

⁷This paragraph and subsequent paragraphs draw from Smith, M. (1999). *Burma and the Politics of Ethnicity*; and various chapters of Steinberg, D (ed.) (1985). *In Search of Southeast Asia*.

Figure 1: Timeline

1510-1762	Taungoo Empire dominates smaller states across Burma and much of Siam with periods of peace and conflict. Former Mon Kingdom is threatened. Shan State maintains relative independence and, at times, significant regional influence.
1826	Ending decades of Burmese consolidation, the British take control of western Burma and Tenasserim (now Tanintharyi).
1885	The British take over the rest of present-day Myanmar.
1947	The Panglong Agreement, which stresses rights to self-determination, is signed by representatives of some border states.
1948	Following a long-term struggle, Burma gains independence from colonial rule. The new national government is never fully recognised by many minority leaders. Violent conflict involving ethnic groups, communists and others rapidly ensues.
1960	Lawpita Dam is started in Kayah State, which soon provides electricity to much of central Myanmar. This follows a colonial pattern of central extraction from minority states.
1962	General Ne Win seizes control. Decades of military dictatorship follow. Economic isolation generates major opportunities to raise revenue in border areas by smuggling goods.
1964	Shan State Army unites Shan armed factions and launches rebellion, joining Karen, Karenni, Mon and other groups in opposing Burmese military rule.
1960s-1970s	The military "Four Cuts" strategy to combat ongoing insurrection affects many areas of southeastern Myanmar by separating armed groups from the local population. The military gradually gains some territory but fails to defeat armed groups. Many people are displaced.
1974	Mon State is recognised, although most authority remains centralised.
1980s	Violence continues. Refugee camps are established along the Thai border for people fleeing conflict and displacement. There are continued allegations of systematic human rights abuses. Myanmar's economy continues to suffer.
1988	Popular uprisings are violently put down in Yangon and elsewhere. Some protesters head east to join the Karen National Union (KNU) and other armed groups.
1990	National League for Democracy (NLD) wins a national election. The result is not honoured and military authority persists. Subsequent economic reforms bring some improvements along with inward investment, although Western nations impose sanctions.
1991	The Pa-O National Organisation (PNO) signs a ceasefire, joining other groups from Shan State including the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA) who signed in 1989.

Figure 1: Timeline (continued)

1995	The New Mon State Party (NMSP) in Mon State joins other armed groups in agreeing a ceasefire. Some armed groups and splinter factions become Government-affiliated Border Guard Forces (BGF) or militia.
1998	The gas pipeline from Andaman Sea to Thailand is completed, crossing contested areas. Long-term plans for industrial development near Dawei emerge soon after.
2004	Prominent military leader Khin Nyunt, who promoted ceasefires with armed groups, is accused of corruption and placed under house arrest.
2008	A new constitution is signed. Most non-state actors (NSAs) refuse to convert to Government-led BGF which raises tensions.
2011	Thein Sein's government is formed; national and local parliaments are established.
2011	United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) is formed to link up NSAs.
2012	Bilateral ceasefires are agreed. Reforms bring new plans for dams and other major investments across southeastern Myanmar.
2013	The Government and NSAs agree to a dialogue process.
2014	New data shows that opium production has returned to high levels despite earlier eradication campaigns.
July 2015	Clashes between rival armed groups temporarily close a new road to Myawaddy, Kayin State. There is continued unrest in southern Shan State
October 2015.	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement is signed, although some prominent armed groups do not participate
November 2015	NLD wins the national election, gaining control of State and Region parliaments in southeastern Myanmar except Shan State. NLD Government formed in April 2016. Challenges remain over the peace process and constitutional change.

Armed conflict between NSAs and the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) has been ongoing since Myanmar gained independence in 1948.⁸ Many minority leaders have never recognised the full incorporation of their areas into the nation state and, from the establishment of the Union of Burma in 1948, pressed for full federal autonomy over their areas, an equal share of revenues and separate military units. Ethnic representatives often invoke the spirit of the Panglong Agreement, a political statement that recognised some ethnic claims shortly before the formation of an independent Burma. These claims have persisted to the present day.⁹

Southeastern Myanmar has been particularly affected by conflict since independence. Under the newly independent Burmese government, much of the area was controlled and administered by ethnic and political organisations in armed opposition. Some of these groups are still in operation: the Karen National Union (KNU), New Mon State Party (NMSPP), and the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP). Other NSAs have changed over time, splitting and reforming according to political alliances and military conditions. Communist groups and the remnants of anti-communist forces from China added to the military complexity through to the 1980s and beyond.

The mountainous terrain made it easier for armed groups to control land and some have maintained long-term bases in remote locations. From the 1950s the KNU operated as a de facto government in large parts of the region extending from Karen State into Mon State, Bago Region and Tanintharyi Region. Karen leaders also controlled many parts of the Ayeyarwady Delta which has a predominantly Karen population. They did not typically control the major towns, but oversaw trade routes across the border region which for several decades supplied the majority of the consumer products used in Myanmar. Wealth was also derived from local taxation, businesses, drug trafficking and some external fundraising.

Ongoing insurgency and fear of a communist takeover provided much of the justification for the 1962 military coup led by General Ne Win. He remained as military leader of the country for another 26 years, and the military exercised political control until 2011. Under Ne Win, Myanmar followed an isolationist and partly socialist path characterised by strong military power and repression, economic mismanagement and increasing xenophobia. The 1982 Citizenship Law was especially harsh on descendants of migrants and others who could not prove full indigenous identity.

The Tatmadaw pursued the goal of “national reconsolidation”, controlling the civil service and other organs of a one-party state. Efforts to pacify the restive periphery, including much of southeastern Myanmar, continued. This involved some recognition of ethnic difference and local identity. For example, in 1974, Government authorities began to recognise parts of a separate Mon State, carved out of Bago and Tanintharyi Regions. But little authority was handed over to local or civilian bodies.

From the 1960s, the military pursued a new counter-insurgency effort known as the “Four Cuts”. This involved cutting the four main links (food, funds, intelligence and recruits) between NSAs and the local population. The approach was applied across much of southeastern Myanmar and similar methods continue today in active conflict areas.¹⁰ For many, the military strategy is associated with violent attacks, forced displacement, forced labour and repeated human rights abuses.

In 1988, national mass protests following worsening economic hardship led to a bloody military crackdown. Many students and other protestors fled from central parts of Myanmar and sheltered with the KNU and other armed groups. Over time, efforts to bring some NSAs into the Government fold through separate ceasefires and promises of unhindered control over territory and lucrative businesses

⁸Jolliffe, K. (2014). [Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar's Contested Regions](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

⁹More recently the NLD Government has also invoked the Panglong Spirit in their calls for a unified Myanmar.

¹⁰At the time of writing, areas with active conflict areas were predominantly in northern Shan State.

led to the splintering of some NSAs and further proliferation of armed groups at the local level. Clashes have frequently occurred between armed groups as well as with the military.¹¹

Ceasefire agreements were largely verbal in nature and the level of stability that they created varied. For example, the bilateral ceasefire brokered in 1995 between the Government and the NMSP led to relative stability in Mon State.¹² Other major armed groups, such as the KNU, did not agree to ceasefires at that time and continued to engage in violent clashes. In most cases the bilateral ceasefire agreements did not address core political grievances. Some NSAs splintered as elements broke away and returned to violent resistance.

The 1990s began with annulled elections, economic reforms, and steps towards a further round of bilateral ceasefires. Well-connected individuals, including many leaders from southeastern Myanmar, were able to take advantage of lucrative opportunities such as timber export to Thailand and China, opium production and trafficking, mining and other economic developments. One prominent example is the leadership of the Pa-O National Organisation (PNO), who benefitted from ties with the military following earlier ceasefires to gain controlling interests in mining, cement and other businesses.

Cross-border relations with Thailand have been complex. Many NSA leaders live in Thailand and have a recognised, if uneasy, relationship with Thai military officials. Cross-border trade has typically involved deals with state actors and NSAs in Myanmar, as well as with Thai officials and criminals. Conflict often arises between NSAs or with the military over access to lucrative border crossings given the common practices of imposing informal tariffs and diverting funds from formal tariffs.

The 2008 Constitution provided for significant changes across Myanmar including several reforms sought by ethnic political movements. It led to the establishment of state governments and minority representation in the Upper House (Amyotha Hluttaw). Special Administrative Zones (SAZ) for minorities within States/Regions were introduced, and many politicians affiliated with the ruling party, the military-linked Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), gradually gained permission to participate in mainstream politics. Yet the country has remained centralised, leaving almost all of the Government budget and most of the decision-making outside of the new local government framework.

In 2009 the military Government issued a new instruction requiring ceasefire groups to transform into BGFs under the command of the Tatmadaw. Only a handful of smaller groups agreed, including the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) and the Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF).¹³ Larger NSAs operating in southeastern Myanmar rejected the proposal. In September 2010 the Government declared standing ceasefire agreements "null and void" when the definitive deadline for armed groups to transform themselves into BGFs had passed.

The 2010 election of a semi-civilian government represented a break with the past. Political power began to shift from a small number of senior generals to the beginnings of a functioning parliamentary system. In the following year, President U Thein Sein invited NSAs to negotiate a political settlement to end armed conflict in Myanmar.¹⁴ The proposed peace process was to follow a three-part path: 1) bilateral ceasefires, 2) the NCA negotiation, and 3) political dialogue.

¹¹ Data available on [Myanmar Peace Monitor](#).

¹² UNHCR. (2014). [Mon State Profile](#).

¹³ The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, established in 1994, was often known by its initials. The acronym DKBA is today used by more than one group, including the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army.

¹⁴ For comprehensive overviews of the peace process, see: Burma News International. (2015). [Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process 2015](#); International Crisis Group. (2015). [Myanmar's Peace Process: A Nationwide Ceasefire Remains Elusive](#); UNICEF. (2014). [Summary of Peace and Development Conflict-Sensitivity Analysis](#); Min Zaw Oo. (2014). [Understanding Myanmar's Peace Process: Ceasefire Agreements. Swiss Peace](#). For analysis specific to southeastern Myanmar, see: Keenan, P. (2012). [The Situation Regarding the Peace Process in Karenni \(Kayah\) State](#); Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. (2014). [Listening to Communities - Karen \(Kayin\) State](#); Search for Common Ground. (2015). For Reconciliation in Myanmar: Bridging the Divides with Cultural Expression - A Conflict Analysis; South, A. (2011). [Burma's Longest War: Anatomy of the Karen Conflict](#); Karenni Civil Society Network. (2014). [Where is Genuine Peace? A Critique of the Peace Process in Karenni State](#).

The peace process, in its first phase, aimed to reconfirm and renegotiate pre-existing bilateral ceasefires, or to create new agreements where none previously existed. Nine armed groups in southeastern Myanmar signed bilateral agreements with the Government. Notably, the bilateral agreement signed with the KNU in 2012 marked a break in one of the world's most enduring armed conflicts.¹⁵

The second phase of the peace process, commencing in 2013, involved negotiating a national agreement between the Government and NSAs. Following several rounds of negotiation, the NCA was signed in October 2015, shortly before national elections. Eight NSAs signed, including five in southeastern Myanmar. Some other prominent NSAs, including the NMSP in Mon State and the KNPP in Kayah State, did not sign. (For more information, see the Peacebuilding section.)

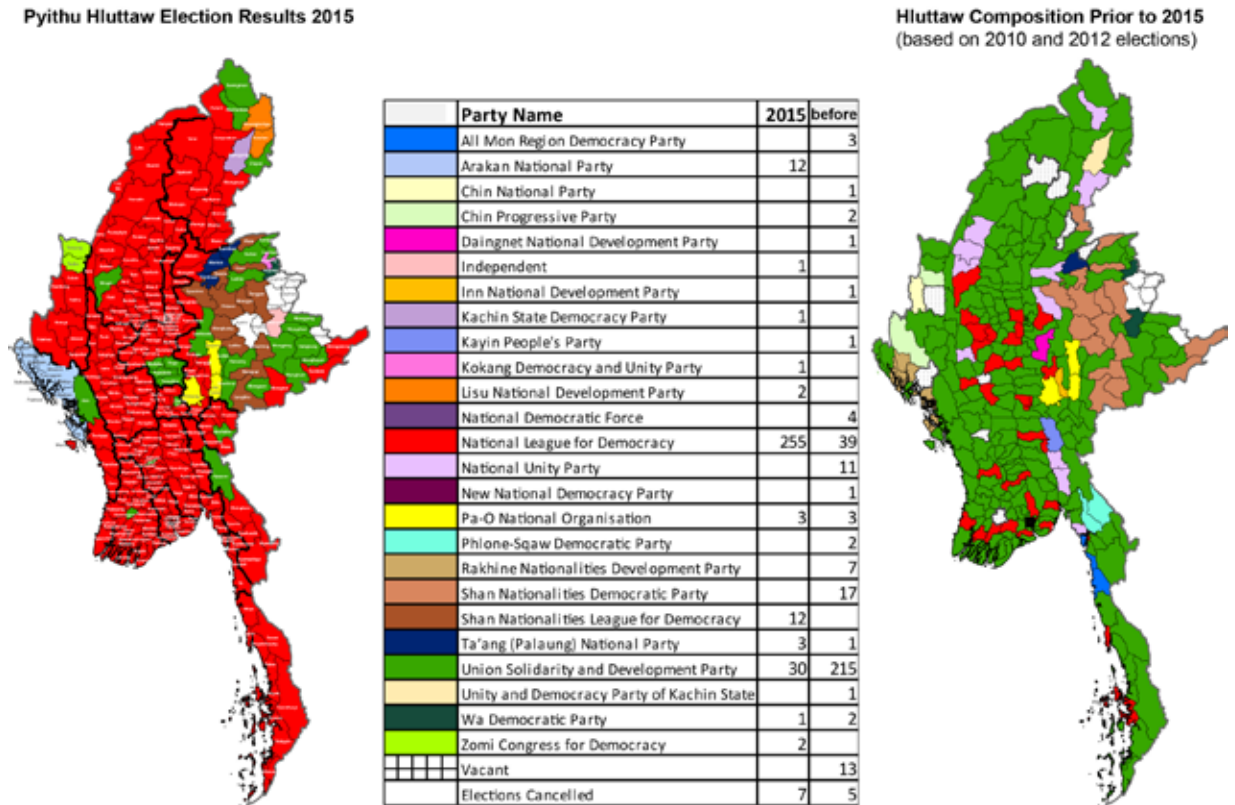
NLD's election victory in November 2015 changed the political context across Myanmar. The NLD-led Government took office early in 2016 under President Htin Kyaw, with Aung San Suu Kyi assuming several key cabinet positions and a specially created role as State Counsellor. Tensions between the elected Government and the military remained, which impacted the scope for significant reforms which affect issues of relevance for southeastern Myanmar; these include subsequent steps in the peace process, the scope for pursuing a federal solution, legislation and practices surrounding new investment in projects such as dams and roads, and policies for addressing ethnic representation.

At the local level, the NLD gained control of all States and Regions in southeastern Myanmar except for Shan State, where the USDP and Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) performed well. Local parties won only three seats in the Mon state assembly, one in Kayin State and none in Kayah State.¹⁶ The 2015 elections resulted in a higher number of women parliamentarians than in the previous election, although overall the inclusion of women in politics remains low. (For more information, see the Gender section.)

¹⁵International Crisis Group. (2015). [Myanmar's Peace Process: A Nationwide Ceasefire Remains Elusive](#).

¹⁶International Crisis Group. (2015). [The Myanmar Elections: Results and Implications](#).

Figure 2: 2015 Pyithu Hluttaw election results, by township



Source: MIMU and IFES. (2015). Myanmar Election Maps 2010-2015.

Figure 3: Southeastern Myanmar States/Regions and townships

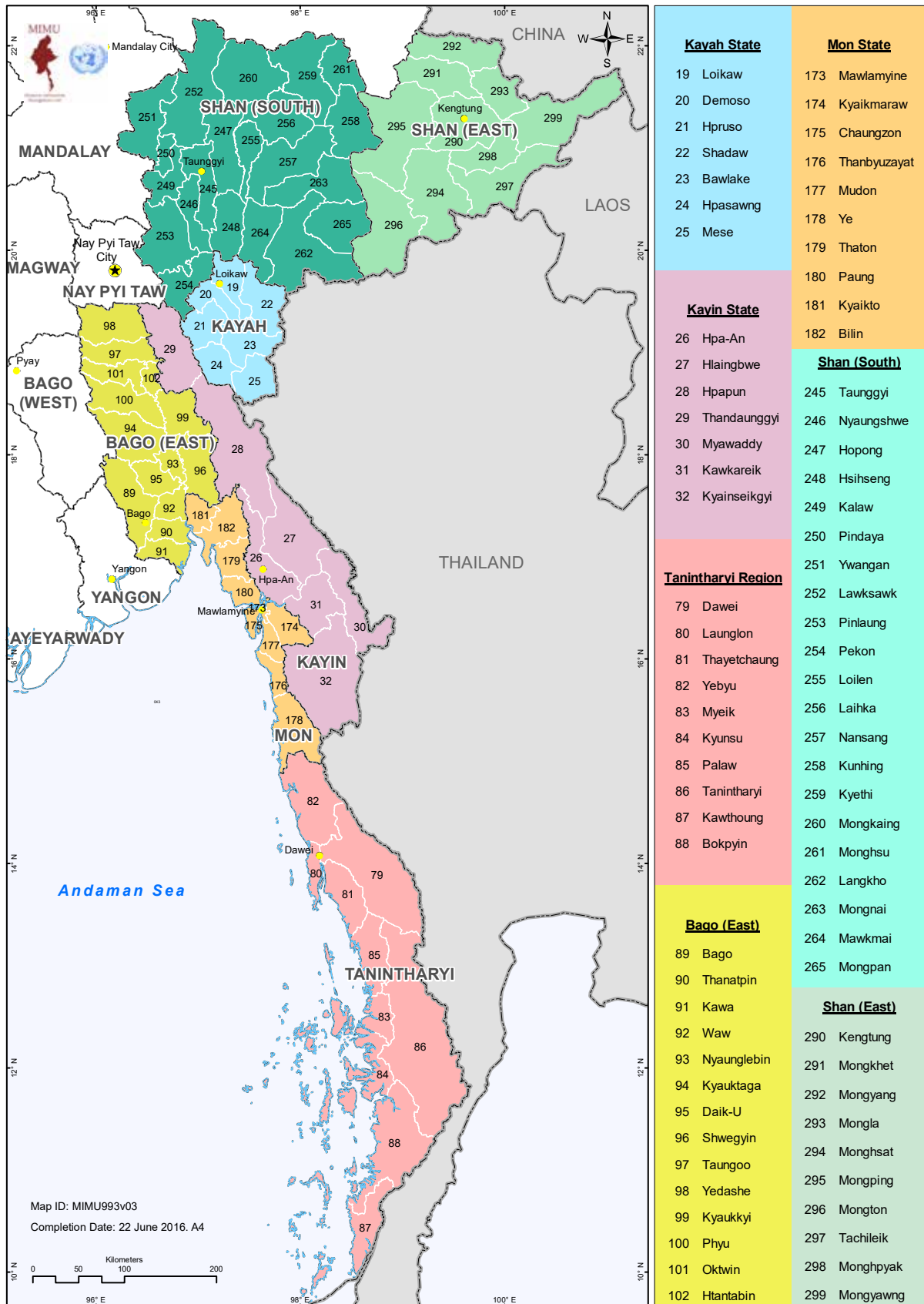
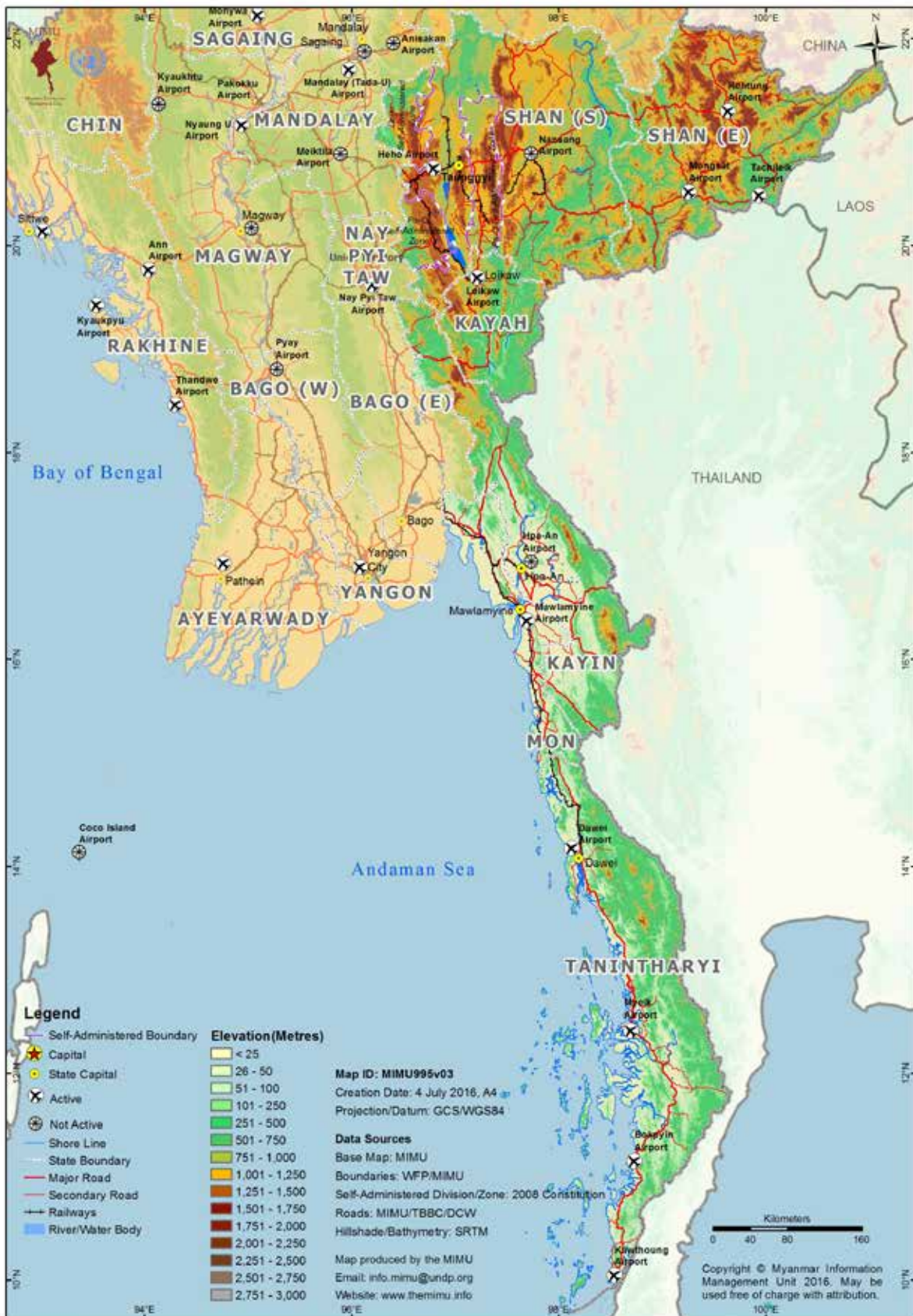


Figure 4: Topography, significant roads and airports of southeastern Myanmar



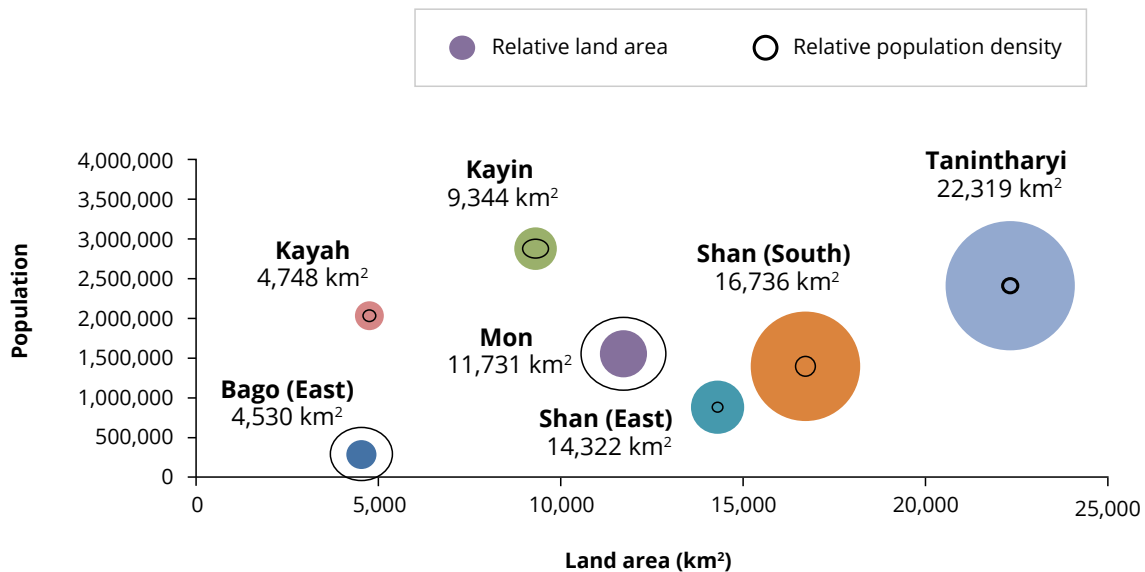
Geography

Myanmar's territory is the largest in mainland South East Asia, covering 676,578km². It borders Thailand to the south east, China and Laos to the north, and India and Bangladesh to the northwest. Southeastern Myanmar is home to three of the country's major river basins – the Sittaung, Than Lwin, and Tanintharyi – that carve the area into long valleys, defining its accessibility, agricultural potential and administrative systems.

Despite losing much of their former territory during military campaigns from the 1960s to the 1990s, non-state actors (NSAs) remain the dominant authority in significant zones near the border with Thailand. Mixed forms of governance are found in some village tracts, with NSAs and Government bodies working in parallel. Other areas are nominally Government-controlled but in reality remain under the sway of semi-independent local proxies (such as militia and BGFs).

Myanmar's southeastern States and Regions comprise 32% of the country's territory. Southeastern Myanmar is defined here as Tanintharyi Region, eastern parts of Bago Region, Kayah State, Kayin State, Mon State, and southern and eastern parts of Shan State.¹⁷ Overall, it covers a total of 216,856km². Each of these areas borders Thailand, with the exception of eastern Bago.

Figure 5: Size of States/Regions in southeastern Myanmar



Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Southeastern Myanmar comprises four whole States and Regions, and parts of two others. These are divided into 19 Districts, 84 Townships, 2,471 village tracts and 16,507 villages.¹⁸ In addition, southeastern Myanmar is also home to the Danu and Pa-O Self-Administered Zone (SAZs), both of which are in southwestern Shan State.¹⁹ The Danu SAZ consists of two townships with around 50,000 inhabitants, and the larger Pa-O SAZ consists of three non-contiguous townships with some 400,000 inhabitants.²⁰

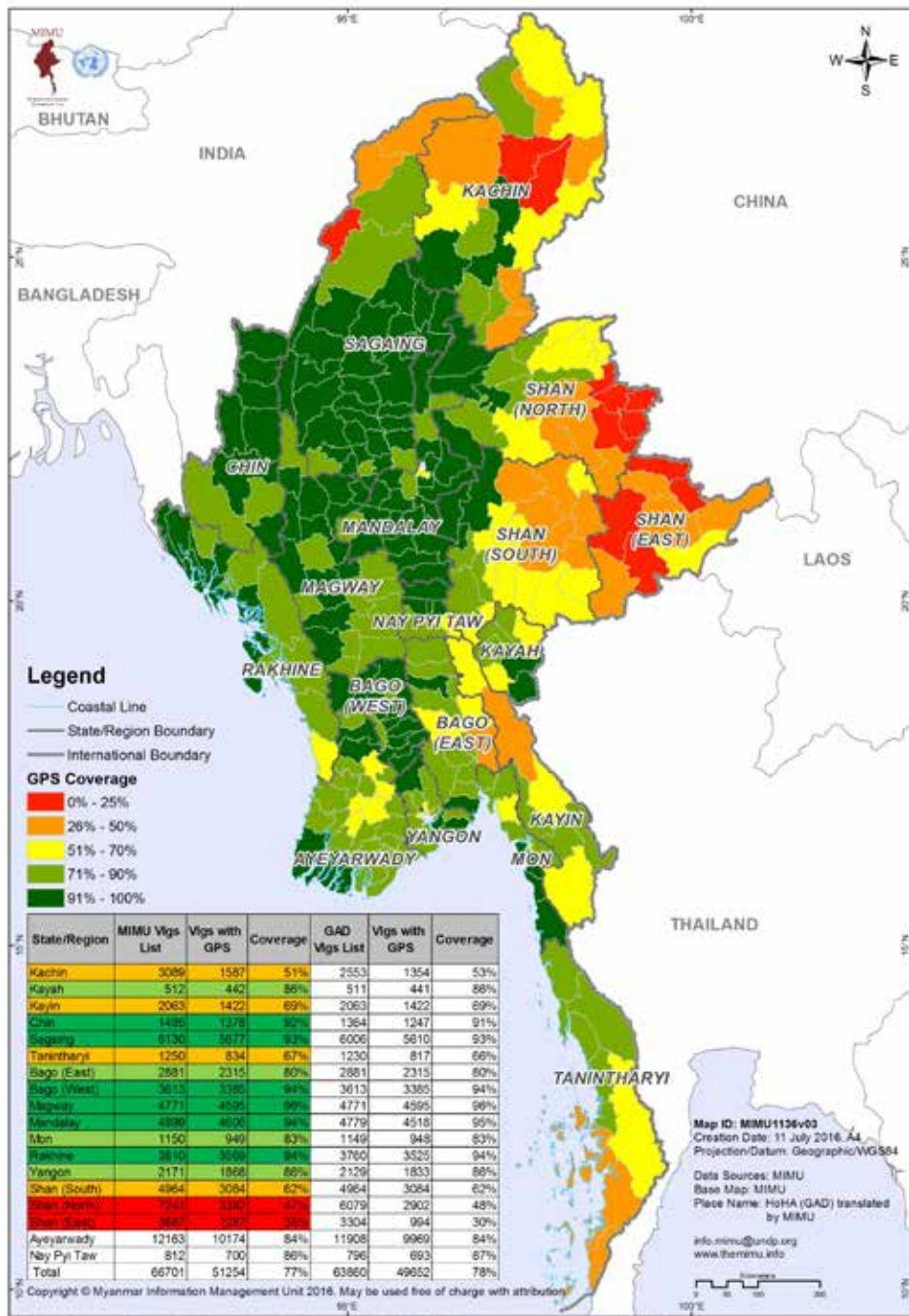
¹⁷Southern Shan, Eastern Shan and Eastern Bago are defunct administrative categories that are now fully incorporated into Shan State and Bago Region respectively.

¹⁸As per the data collected by the MIMU, GPS coordinates have been obtained for 63% of these villages (10,333 in total). Mon State's Mudon and Chaungzon Townships have the best rates of village mapping (over 90% availability of GPS coordinates), while Bago Region's Shwegyin and Kayah State's Shadaw Townships have less than 30% availability.

¹⁹Three other SAZs exist outside southeastern Myanmar: the Kokang, Naga and Pa Laung. One more area, for the Wa, is termed a Self-Administered District. These self-administered areas were established with the aim of offering an amount of self-rule for NSAs in an identifiable territory, usually one that has seen violent conflict.

²⁰Mercy Corps. (2015). [What Holds Vegetable Farmers Back](#).

Figure 6: Village mapping status, by township



Source: MIMU. (2016). Status of Villages with GPS Coordinates.

Southeastern Myanmar is geographically diverse. Much of its terrain consists of highlands and mountainous areas with the Shan Plateau connecting to the Dawna and Tenasserim Yoma ranges; these extend down from Kayah and Kayin States into Tanintharyi Region and form a natural boundary with Thailand. Large areas of flat, arable land are also found in southeastern Myanmar, notably in Mon and Kayin States. The Than Lwin River is the longest free-flowing river in South East Asia and runs from Shan State through Kayah, Kayin and Mon States, eventually reaching the Andaman Sea. Access to the Andaman Sea, via Mon State’s port in Mawlamyine and Tanintharyi Region’s port in Dawei, opens

important trade links to South East Asia and South Asia. Southeastern Myanmar's long coastline includes over 800 islands.

The geopolitical significance of much of southeastern Myanmar is linked to its border with Thailand. Proximity to Thailand has created a unique history that is interwoven with trends related to migration, trade, economic development, infrastructure, conflict and forced displacement. Historically, the uplands of the area provided a partial buffer between Bamar and Siamese kingdoms. Today, Thailand hosts many Myanmar migrants (some estimates state up to four million), of whom a clear majority are from southeastern parts of Myanmar. In addition, 104,149 registered Myanmar refugees are living in nine "temporary shelters" (long-term refugee camps) in Thailand.²¹ Thailand is also the second largest recipient of Myanmar's exports, including natural gas piped from beneath the Andaman Sea and across Tanintharyi Region.²² In addition to cross-border flows, an estimated 400,000²³ internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain in southeastern Myanmar. (For more information, see the Displaced People and Migration section.)

Some parts of southeastern Myanmar have identifiable and different economic orientations. The Andaman Sea coastline is more closely associated with fishing, trade and agriculture. Parts of eastern Bago benefit from the proximity of Yangon and are developing rapidly. The proposed new Hanthawaddy international airport, designed to serve Yangon's future needs, is located in Bago. Other economic priorities include mining in locations across southeastern Myanmar, and tourism in parts of southern Shan State (and potentially elsewhere including coastal Tanintharyi).

People, demography, ethnicity, language and religion

The population of southeastern Myanmar represents 22% of the country's total. The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census indicates that Myanmar is home to approximately 51.5 million people, of whom approximately 11.5 million, or just over 22%, live in southeastern Myanmar. Kayah State is the country's smallest by population (286,627) whereas eastern and southern Shan State comprise nearly 57% of Shan State and a larger population than any other single State/Region in southeastern Myanmar. The 2014 Census provides the most comprehensive population overview, although parts of Hpa Pun Township in Kayin State near the headquarters of Karen National Union's (KNU) Brigade Five were not enumerated.²⁴ Instead, the KNU counted 69,753 persons without using the census questionnaires. These figures were analysed by the Census Office and are considered reliable.

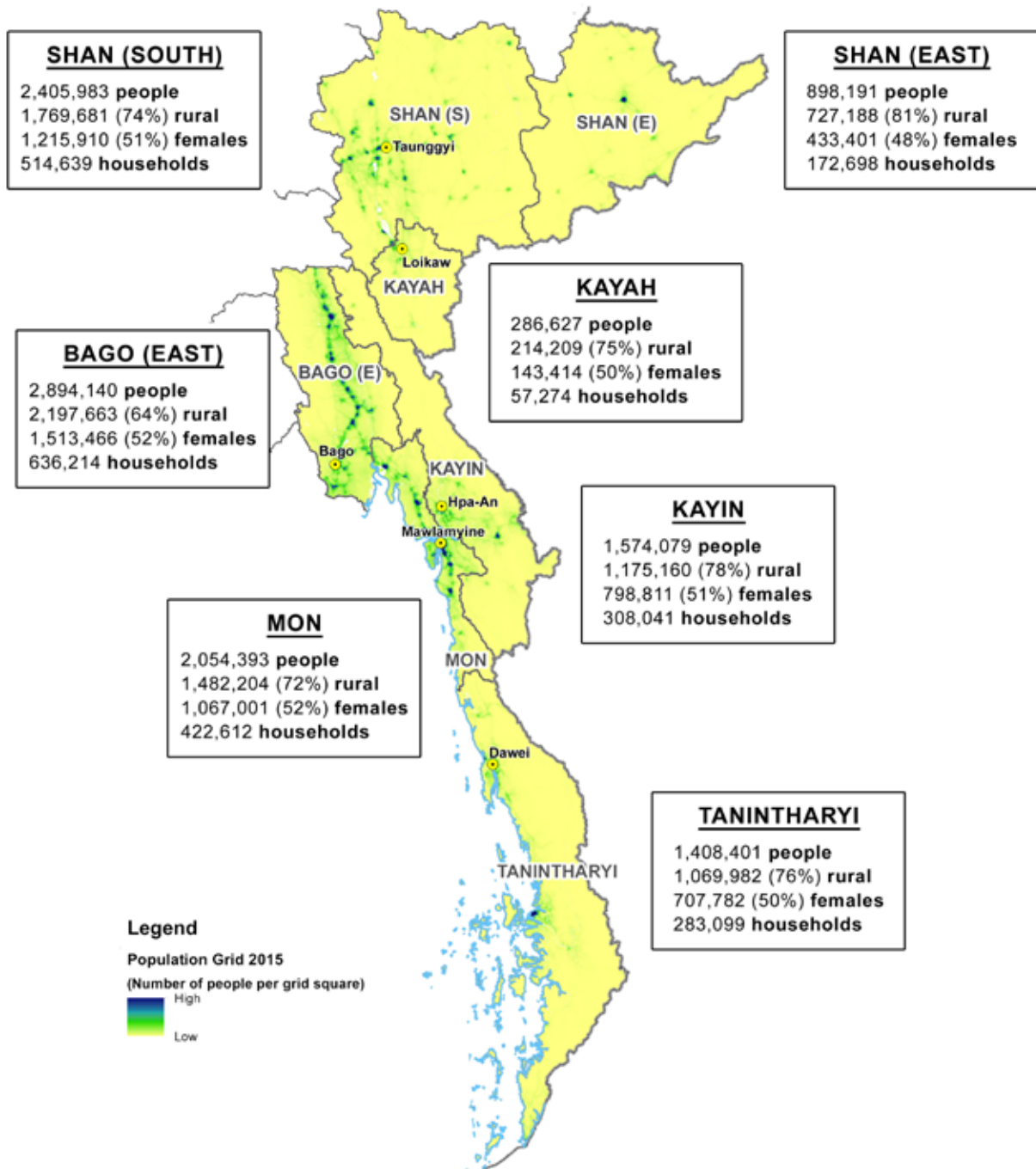
²¹This figure of 104,149 verified refugees is valid as of 31 July 2016. See: <http://data.unhcr.org/thailand/regional.php> for updated information related to Myanmar refugees.

²²In 2014-2015, Thailand received exports from Myanmar worth USD4.03bn. For more information, see: Government of Myanmar - Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development. (2015). Myanmar Statistical Yearbook 2015, Table 14.09, Direction of Export by Country; Figure 14.2 Direction of Export by major country.

²³OCHA. (2016). [Humanitarian Response Plan](#).

²⁴Government of Myanmar. (2015). The [2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census Kayin State](#). Outside of southeastern Myanmar, enumeration also did not cover some population groups in the northern parts of Rakhine State and a few areas of Kachin State.

Figure 7: Population and density, by State/Region

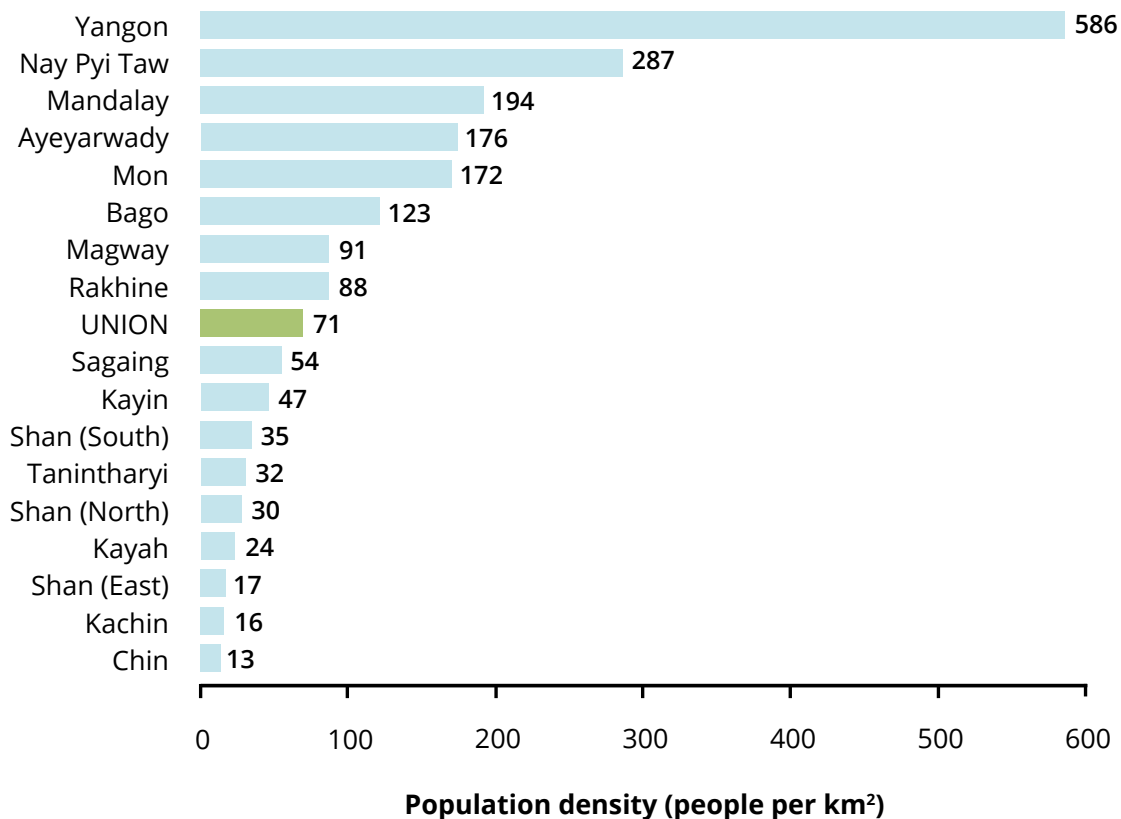


Source: World Pop/MIMU. Population of Myanmar using the World Population Grid (2015) and Ministry of Immigration and Population (2014). The 2014 Population and Housing Census. [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Population density varies across southeastern Myanmar. Tanintharyi Region, Kayah, Kayin and Shan States have a lower average population density than the countrywide average of 76 people per square kilometre. These areas have extensive mountainous terrain. Average population density is higher in Bago Region and Mon State. Population density varies greatly within States and Regions. Areas near the border with Thailand tended to be more remote, hilly and fairly lightly populated even before forced displacement and disruptions to livelihoods from long-term conflict caused populations in these

areas to fall. By contrast, townships outside the conflict-affected zones, typically state capitals and often those which have more low-lying farmland, have grown in size as their economies have expanded and migrants have relocated there. For instance, the 2014 Census shows that while the western part of Kayah State (Loikaw District) has a population of 243,700, the eastern part (Bawlakhe District) nearer the Thai border records just 42,900 residents.

Figure 8 Population density (people by square kilometre), by State/Region



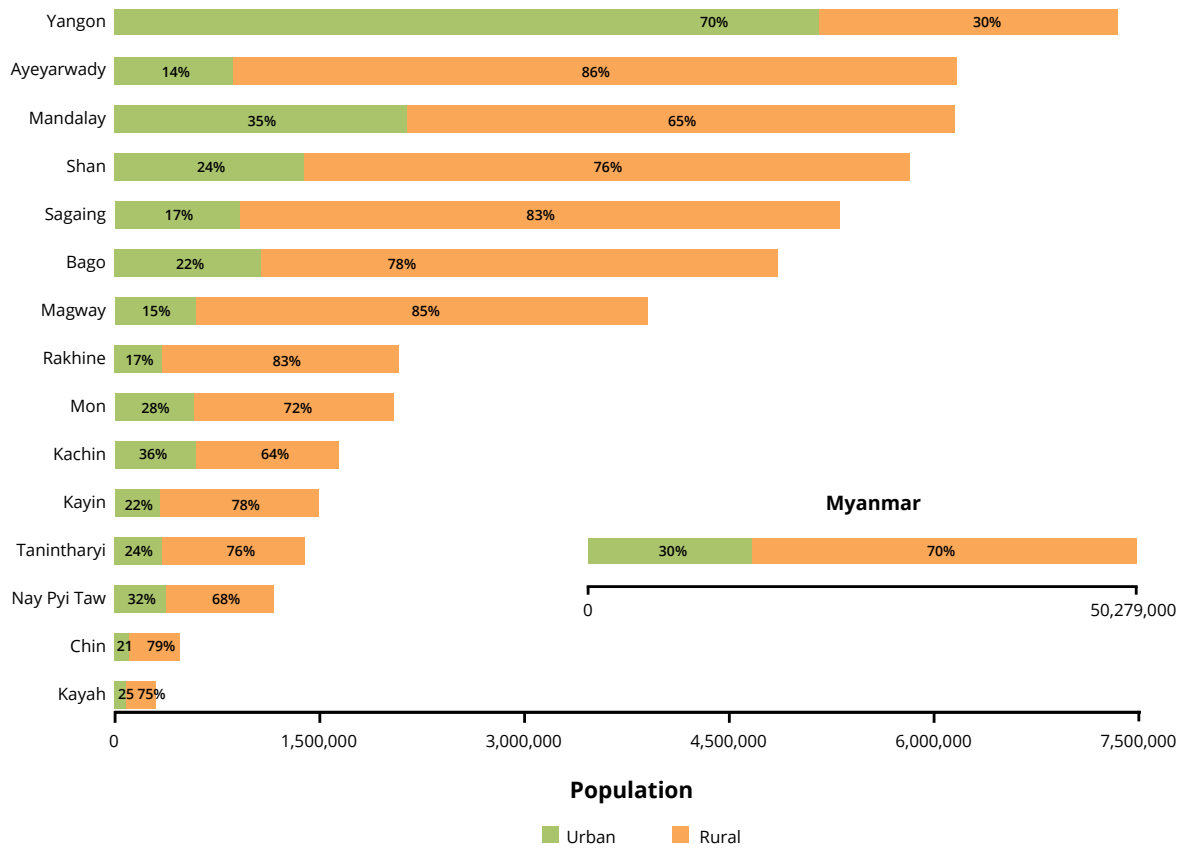
Source: Ministry of Immigration and Populations (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Southeastern Myanmar's rural population is higher than the national average.²⁵ Approximately 75% of the population lives in rural areas across southeastern Myanmar,²⁶ as compared to 70% countrywide. Upland and remote areas have predominantly rural populations. This might change in the future: increased regional integration and infrastructure development will improve connectivity between urban centres. However rural areas along the border are likely to remain connected with the Thai economy rather than depending on urban and semi-urban areas in the southeastern region. A lack of infrastructure development in rural areas remains a pressing issue that needs to be addressed in a conflict-sensitive manner.

²⁵Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

²⁶Definitions of "urban" and "rural" are based on the GAD classification: "urban" is defined as those living in cities, State/Region capitals and wards. "Rural" refers to those living at the village tract level.

Figure 9: Urban/rural populations, by State/Region



Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Southeastern Myanmar is home to a wide variety of ethnicities. The main ethnic groups in the area are Bamar, Karen, Karenni (Kayah and other related groups), Mon and Shan. The 2014 Census collected data on ethnicity and religion: data on religion was released in July 2016 but data on ethnicity has not yet been released.²⁷ Gathering accurate data on the ethnicity of populations has historically been difficult and extremely sensitive.²⁸

Sensitivities have several causes. Firstly, local political power in Myanmar's States is affected by the size of ethnic groups within specific areas, according to constitutional provisions as well as common practice. Minorities of a certain size (over 10%) within a State or Region are entitled to special political representation. Still more importantly, if an ethnic group comprises the majority of the population in an area then it has stronger claims to authority, either at the State level or more locally through Self-Administered Zone (SAZs) or informal local leadership structures. Ethnic identity is also strongly associated with non-state political movements.

Secondly, the rigid categories of ethnic identity applied by the Government clash with a more fluid and unclear reality, making all precise enumerations challenging. Divisions and sub-divisions, such as Karen sub-groups and even Bamar sub-groups such as "Tavoy/Dawei" in Tanintharyi, are contested and controversial. Ethnic identity can change over time whether through marriage, migration, redefinition of categories or changing self-definitions. In some areas, especially among more remote communities, official ethnic designations differ from people's own self-definitions.

²⁷ Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2016). 2014 Population and Housing Census – [the Union Report: Religion](#).

²⁸ Transnational Institute-BCN. (2014). [Ethnicity without Meaning, Data without Context: The 2014 Census, Identity and Citizenship in Burma](#).

Thirdly, the legacy of discrimination, often by Government actors including the military, is strongly felt by many minorities in southeastern Myanmar, from larger groups, such as the Karen, to smaller groups such as Moken communities in coastal Tanintharyi. Rigid distinctions between indigenous and migrant groups, including descendants of migrants who settled generations back, add to the tension.

Ethnic identity and language traverse State/Region boundaries. Over 34 languages are spoken in the area. Language is a core indicator of ethnic affiliation and many different languages are used across southeastern Myanmar. Members of one ethnic group often speak different dialects, often corresponding with sub-groups or geographical location and are at times mutually unintelligible.²⁹ All States in southeastern Myanmar have mixed indigenous and migrant populations. For example, Shan, Bamar, Mon and Pa-O people can be found in Kayin State, as well as the majority Karen. Topographical features and elevation are sometimes better predictors of where different groups are located than State/Region frontiers. In addition, individuals sometimes identify with more than one ethnic group.

The majority of people in southeastern Myanmar do not speak Burmese as a first language. Burmese language competency is typically high in urban areas and among more educated people but is often very limited among rural populations in particular.

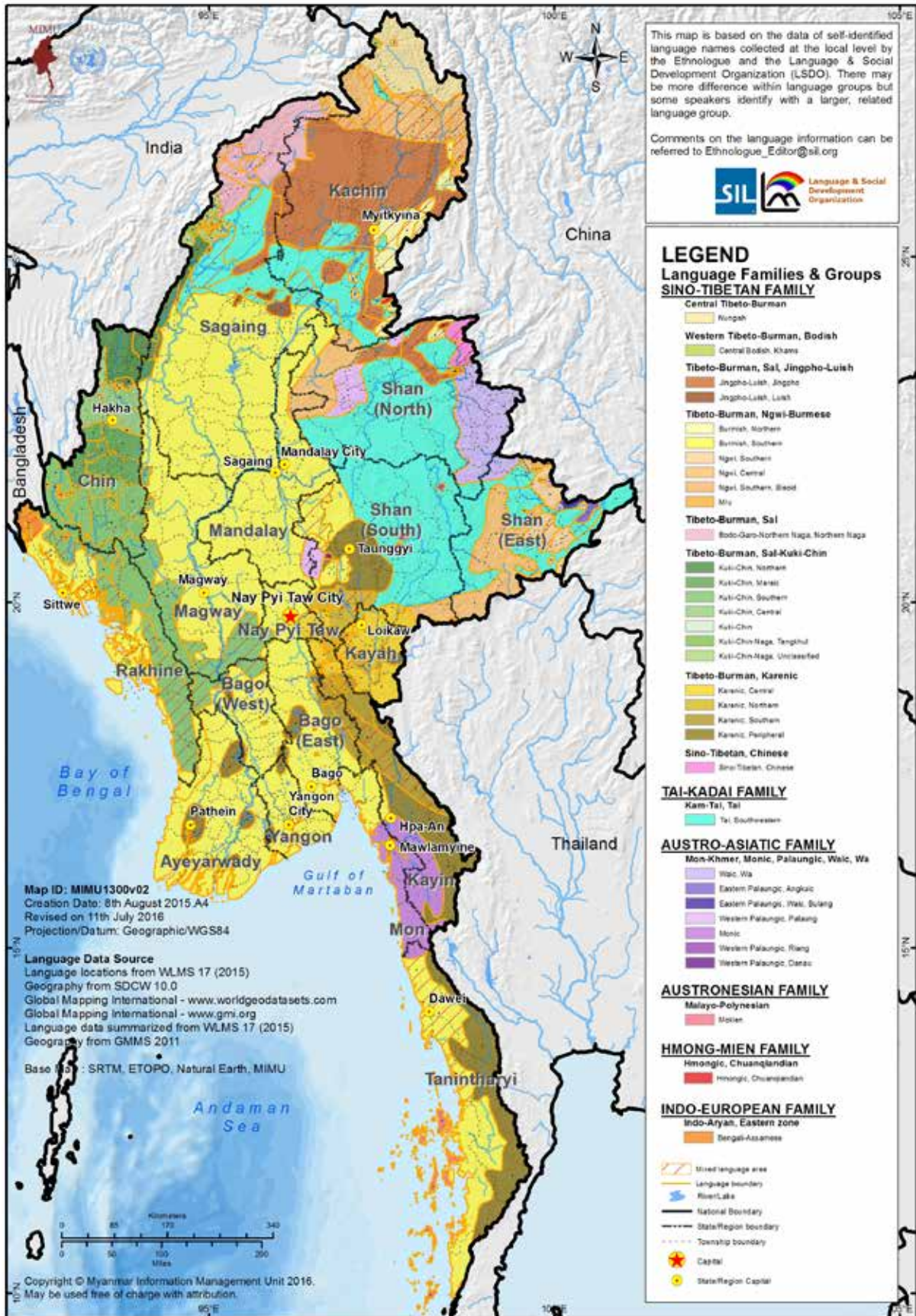
Figure 10: Major ethnic groups in southeastern Myanmar

Bamar	Many longstanding residents and more recent migrants live across southeastern Myanmar. Tanintharyi, much of Bago and some other (generally low-lying) areas are seen as areas of long-term Bamar presence. Migration has led to presence elsewhere: in towns and some rural areas. People in some parts of Tanintharyi identify both as Bamar and as a local sub-group.
Danu	Found primarily north of Inya Lake in southern Shan State.
Intha	Found primarily in southern Shan State.
Karen	A significant group across and beyond southeastern Myanmar, not only in Kayin State but also in Bago, Mon, Thanintharyi and even Shan State. Distinct sub-groups exist: Sgaw Karen, Pwo Karen, Bwe Karen and Paku Karen, each of which has a distinct language.
Moken	Moken and other minorities inhabit coastal areas of Thanintharyi.
Mon	A major group in Mon State and some other areas.
Pa-O	Living mainly in southern Shan State, and also in parts of Kayin State.
Shan	Found mainly in Shan State, with smaller long-term and migrant populations elsewhere. Shan identity can also be divided into sub-groups who speak very different dialects. Southern and eastern Shan State also have Palaung, Wa, Lahu, Akha and Lao communities, among others.
Others	Significant Muslim populations live in various parts of southeastern Myanmar, especially but not only in urban areas. Hindu (formerly South Asian) groups are also present. Chinese populations tend to be urban, and are especially numerous in parts of Shan State.

Source: For more information, see: <http://reliefweb.int/map/myanmar/major-ethnic-groups-burmamyanmar-dec-2013>

²⁹For more information on the language diversity in southeastern Myanmar, see: <http://www.ethnologue.com/country/MM/languages>

Figure 11: Main Spoken Languages of Myanmar



Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and animism are all found throughout southeastern Myanmar.³⁰ Ethnic identity is interwoven with religious identity across the area. Shan, Mon and Bamar ethnic groups tend to be Buddhist. A majority of the Kayah and Karen population are Buddhist but Christians comprise a significant minority. Within the Christian faith, Catholicism is dominant in Kayah State; Protestant denominations, including Anglicans, Baptists and Seventh Day Adventists, are particularly significant in Kayin State and Tanintharyi Region. Animism remains significant, especially among more remote communities, whether as a primary faith or syncretised with other beliefs.

Muslim populations in southeastern Myanmar have suffered from varying degrees of discrimination. In the 1980s, attacks against Muslims were reported in Taunggyi, southern Shan State, and Mawlamyine, Mon State. Campaigns against Muslims since 2012 have caused conflict among populations in towns. Major outbreaks of violence, such as those seen in Rakhine State and parts of central Myanmar, have not been widely reported.³¹

Religious affiliations have affected organisational structures and rivalries within and between NSAs and political movements. Religious leaders often wield a high degree of influence locally and at times at a higher level. Interviewees noted that the success or failure of community plans often depends on the support of abbots, pastors and others in similar positions. Meetings often take place in churches or monasteries.

Summaries of each Region/State and sub-region in southeastern Myanmar

Figure 12: Development statistics, by State/Region

State/Region	Poverty headcount ratio ^a	Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds ^b	Infant mortality rate ^c	Maternal mortality ratio ^c
Bago (East)	20.2	97.5	16.6 ^d	1.5 ^d
Kayah	11.4	98.8	9.8	1.2
Kayin	17.4	98	10.2	1.9
Mon	16.3	98.4	13	1.2
Shan (East)	46.4	70.4	12.8	0.4
Shan (South)	25.2	95.6	11.9	1.9
Tanintharyi	32.6	95.8	8.1	0.8

Sources: See footnote.³²

³⁰Search for Common Ground. (2015). For Reconciliation in Myanmar: Bridging the Divides with Cultural Expression A Conflict Analysis.

³¹See for example International Crisis Group Asia Report 251. (2013). [The Dark Side of Transition: Violence Against Muslims in Myanmar](#).

³²a. MMR_MNPED/SIDA/UNDP/UNICEF, Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar, Poverty Profile, 2009-2010_2011; b. MMR_MNPED/SIDA/UNDP/UNICEF, Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar, MDG Relevant Information, 2009-2010_2011; c. MMR_MOH/DHP, Township Health Profile, 2011_2011; d. Data only available for 2009

Tanintharyi Region

Population: 1,406,434 persons with population density of 32 people per square kilometre.³³ While the majority of the region is sparsely populated, the coastal townships of Launglon and Myeik are the most populous areas. A majority of people are ethnic Bamar and Buddhist, although some speak a heavy dialect and assert a strong local identity. Notable minorities include Karen, Mon and coastal Moken communities.

Geography: Tanintharyi contains three districts, 10 townships, 16 towns, 83 wards and 264 village tracts with a land area of 43,345km². The Region has many hilly areas, especially inland towards the long border with Thailand. Most of the predominantly rural population live either near the coast or along rivers and tributaries. Coastal villagers rely on dwindling fishing resources, while many isolated upland communities have weak land rights and limited opportunity to improve their farming. Some shifting cultivation is practised in upland zones. Many inland areas are still heavily forested and contain high biodiversity, although plantations and other measures have reduced forest cover.

Conflict: Tanintharyi is less conflict-affected than many other areas in southeastern Myanmar. Northern, inland areas of the region have however suffered from decades of conflict between the Myanmar Government and the Karen National Union (KNU) in particular.

Development: Investments in plantations, tourism and in industrial development around Dawei are all likely to accelerate if Myanmar's overall political-economic trajectory is maintained. This is likely to bring opportunities but also costs. Imposed projects undertaken by the military Government and its associates, including gas pipelines, plantations and ports have generated resistance and protest. Poverty figures remain high. Reasons include a predominantly rural population, poor transport links and accessibility, and in some areas a history of regular forced displacement. Labour migration to Thailand is very common, with wage earners leaving the elderly or the very young behind.

³³Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Mon State

Population: 2,050,282 persons with a population density of 167 people per square kilometre. Central Mon, particularly the areas surrounding Mawlyamine (state capital) and Kyaikto, is the most populous part of the State. Key ethnicities are Mon and Bamar. Other groups include Karen and some Muslim communities.

Geography: Mon contains two districts, 10 townships, 16 towns, 99 wards and 378 village tracts with a land area of 12,297km². Mon State is relatively well-connected with Yangon and central Myanmar. Predominantly agricultural, the main economic activities are rice paddy, rubber, fishing, mining and forestry.

Conflict: In the past Mon State was heavily conflict-affected, especially in upland areas. Problems still exist, with clashes between the military and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) reported as recently as September 2014. Much unrest has gone unreported. Other actors include the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the KNU. The NMSP did not sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in October 2015, but the KNU did. Many communities rely on services, including education and health that are provided by ethnic NSAs often affiliated with armed groups.

Development: Poverty rates of 16.3% are better than the national average of around 26%.³⁴ Major differences exist between poorer upland areas and better-connected, lower areas near the coast that have much higher population densities and higher levels of development including services and transport links. Trade with Thailand offers considerable opportunities for growth. Poor environmental and common resource management, along with increasing landlessness, generate problems for some rural communities.

³⁴Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development. (2011). [Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar \(2009-2010\)](#).

Kayin State

Population: 1,572,657 persons with a population density of 52 people per square kilometre. While the majority of the region is sparsely populated, the central townships of Hpa-An (state capital) and Kawkareik are the most populous areas. One township, Hpapun, was not enumerated in the 2014 Census. Ethnic groups include Karen and Bamar. Karen identity and language covers several sub-groups. While the majority are Buddhist, there is a significant Christian minority.

Geography: Kayin contains four districts, seven townships, 18 towns, 84 wards and 376 village tracts with a land area of 30,383km². Lowland areas, mostly in the west or in valleys, practice paddy rice farming. Further east, many areas are hilly, forested, and upland farming is common. Population distribution has been affected by conflict given forced displacement and access problems. Karen make up the largest group in refugee camps across the border in Thailand.

Conflict: Large areas of Kayin State have suffered from protracted violent conflict, in cases for over 60 years. The main actors, aside from the Myanmar Armed Forces (the Tatmadaw), are the Karen National Union (KNU) and other Karen groups including the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA). Gradually rebel-held territory has been reduced to a relatively small area. Other areas experience mixed or contested authority. All of Kayin's townships are affected to some extent by landmines. Like many other armed groups, the KNU run parallel state institutions that include public services. Problems in some rural areas include landmines, lack of services and very limited access. The KNU and the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) signed the NCA in October 2015, but not all communities support this move and splintering is anticipated.

Development: Resources include tin, tungsten and timber. The main agricultural outputs are forest products, rubber, betel, tree fruits, cardamom and coffee. It is likely that peace would lead to considerable mineral speculation. Scope exists to invest in several sectors and to benefit from cross-border trade with Thailand. However, further development as well as the pursuit of human rights and justice primarily depends on the ongoing national peace process. Communities may have little confidence in any group, not only the military but also other Government and non-state actors (NSAs).

Kayah State

Population: 286,738 persons with a population density of 24 people per square kilometre. While the majority of the region is sparsely populated, the northern townships of Loikaw (state capital) and Demoso is the most populous area. The population is mixed, including Kayah, Kayin, Kayan, Kayaw, Bamar, Shan, Pa-O and others.

Geography: Kayin contains two districts, seven townships, eight towns, 31 wards and 74 village tracts with a land area of 11,732km². Kayah State is small. A majority of its population lives in the relatively flat, upland plateau that includes Loikaw. Other areas have low populations: some townships have only several thousand inhabitants. Upland farmers plant various traditional crops and increasingly hybrid maize.

Conflict: Conflict actors, in addition to the Tatmadaw, include the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and a large number of smaller non-state groups. Some are BGFs or local militia, often associated with an income source (mining, trade, timber and increasingly opium). Eastern parts of the State have significant KNPP influence; although the KNPP and other armed groups are also well-established in the hills of western Kayah. The area is considerably more peaceful since 2012, although the KNPP did not sign the NCA in October 2015.

Development: Kayah State is known for mineral wealth including tin and tungsten. Hydropower from Lawpita Dam has long provided much of Myanmar's electricity. These resources are contested and plans for new development (dams, mines, timber etc.), often with Chinese investors, regularly lead to controversy. Peace and stability, along with better transport links and services, offer a basis for improved rural livelihoods, although resource wealth, trade and remittances are the main drivers of growth. Residents report improved service provision in recent years.

Eastern Bago Region

Population: 2,894,140 persons with a population density of 119.6 people per square kilometre. The southern township of Bago (state capital) and the northern townships of Phyu and Taungoo are the most populous areas. The population is predominantly Bamar, with various other minorities. The region has a significant Karen population, being part of the wide area originally claimed as part of a Karen homeland in the mid-20th century.

Geography: Eastern Bago contains two districts, 14 townships, 25 towns, 179 wards and 738 village tracts with a land area of 24,200km². In large areas, lowland farming, including rice paddy, is dominant. Upland areas are very different, with considerable forest cover and less productive agriculture.

Conflict: While the eastern part of Bago Region has faced instability due to armed conflict between NSAs and the army, the remaining part has been more stable and has not experienced any major conflict or instability after the turbulent decades of the 1950s and 1960s. The Eastern part remains unstable, following similar dynamics to parts of Kayin State. Landmines present a particular hazard in these areas. Given Myanmar's history of limited land rights, other concerns include potential tensions surrounding land. Timber extraction has resulted in forest depletion and environmental degradation. Negative impacts of mining – particularly gold mining – on communities are noticeable and are identified as a potential source of conflict. As in other parts of the country, Muslim populations are particularly at risk from discriminatory practices and communal tensions.

Development: Lowland areas, including those close to Yangon, have experienced significant growth in rural and urban economies. Upland and more remote areas have suffered from conflict and are considerably poorer. On most social indicators, the Region fares similarly to the national average of Myanmar, while on the overall poverty incidence it is doing better (18%) than the national average (26%).

Southern Shan State

Population: 2,405,983 persons with a population density of 41.6 people per square kilometre. The upland area containing Taunggyi (southern state capital), Kalaw and Nyaungshwe are the most populous areas of Southern Shan; the remainder of the area is sparsely populated. Ethnic groups include Shan, Bamar, Pa-O, Intha, Danu and Karen.

Geography: Southern Shan contains three districts, 21 townships, 34 towns, 234 wards and 420 village tracts with a land area of 57,806km². This is a varied area, predominantly of rolling upland plains and hills. Areas of upland farming exist alongside other lower zones. Cash crops include maize, rice, tea and fruit. Vegetables are grown in the fertile areas around and north of Inle Lake. Opium is grown in many areas, some of this is only several kilometres away from improved roads. Politically, the area contains the Danu and Pa-O Special Economic Zones (SEZs) as well as areas where Government control is weak.

Conflict: The area has long been contested by Shan and other armed groups including Wa and Pa-O organisations. Communist and Kuomintang groups are also present. The Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army South (RCSS/SSA-S) dominates many areas. Other zones are controlled at ground level by various NSAs and militia. The Pa-O National Liberation Organisation (PNLO) also has a presence and signed the 2015 NCA along with the RCSS/SSA-S. Despite that, outbreaks of conflict were still taking place in 2015 and 2016. Most of the concerns typically associated with conflict have had an impact in the area; these include human rights abuses, forced displacement, loss of livelihoods, criminality associated with drug-trafficking, landmines, forced recruitment and the recruitment of child soldiers.

Development: As in other areas, major disparities exist. Some politically stable areas near Taunggyi, around Inle Lake and near main roads have seen significant development. Other areas remain remote and poor, especially upland zones. Natural resource wealth provides many opportunities for development, as does tourism, urban growth, industrial development, cross-border trade routes, and opportunities to improve agricultural production. Challenges include poor governance, ongoing violent conflict, impunity, forced land acquisition, drug production, trafficking and abuse, and the domination of business opportunities by influential individuals and companies.

Eastern Shan State

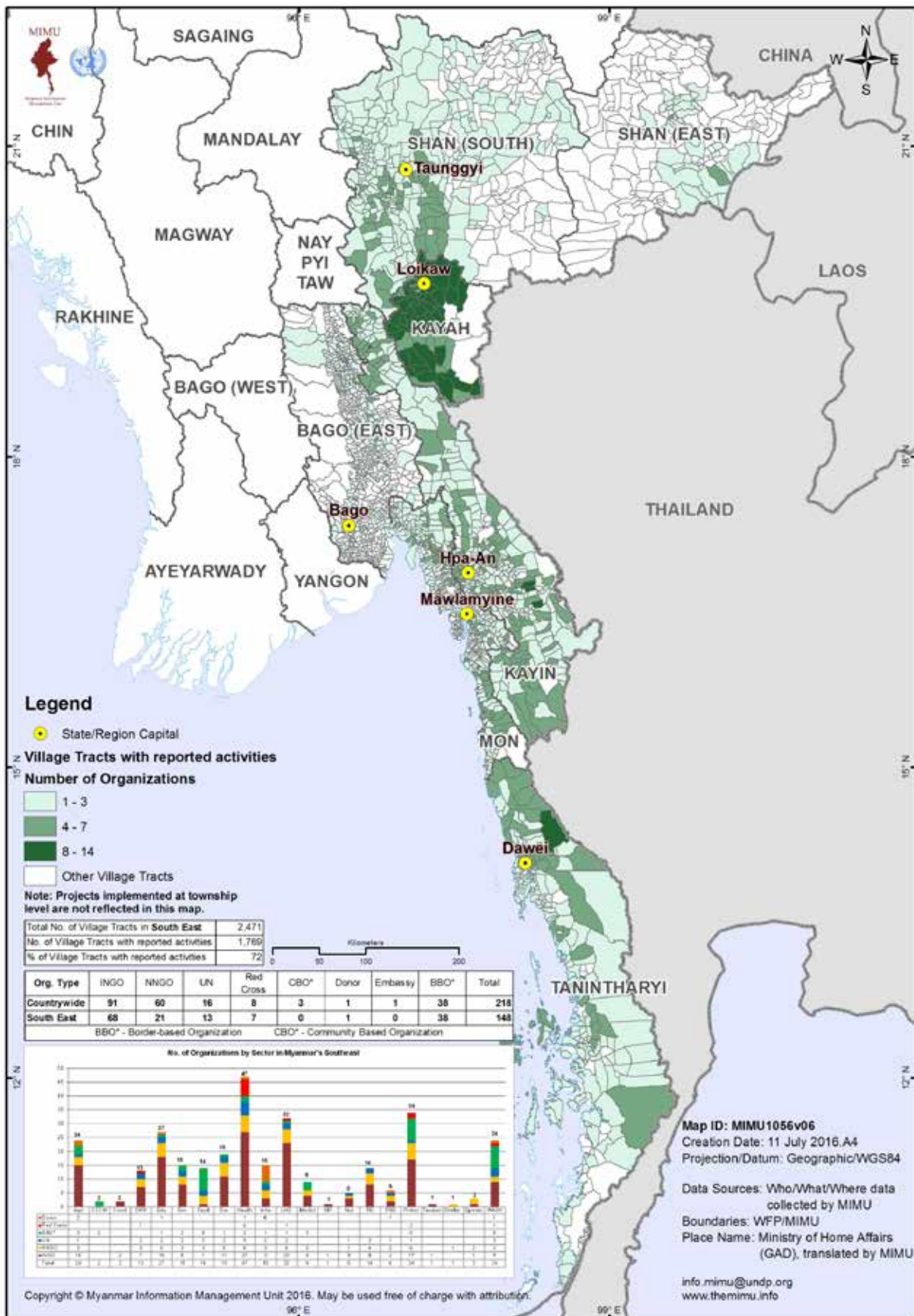
Population: 898,191 persons with a population density of 24.1 people per square kilometre. Ethnic groups include Shan, Palaung, Wa, Lahu, Akha and Lao. The majority of the region is sparsely populated; the upland township of Kengtung and border township of Tachileik are the most populous areas.

Geography: Eastern Shan contains two districts, 15 townships, 23 towns, 77 wards and 224 village tracts with a land area of 37,093km². The State borders Laos, Thailand and China, but poor access means that it is difficult to properly research and understand the area.

Conflict: The area has been home to various armed groups, including the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA) in Mongla, formerly Special Region 4. Other groups have controlled rural and even some urban areas. The area's international borders and remoteness invites smuggling of drugs, wildlife and other goods.

Development: A lack of services is a main challenge for many inhabitants, along with poor transportation and security concerns. From a development perspective, the area presents perhaps the greatest challenge in all of southeastern Myanmar. Improvements to governance (which depend on political progress towards peace), better service provision, some resource extraction, and cross-border trade all offer opportunities to positively impact local incomes and the rural economy.

Figure 13: Reported projects at village tract level in southeastern Myanmar (March 2016)



Disclaimer: The names shown and the boundaries used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

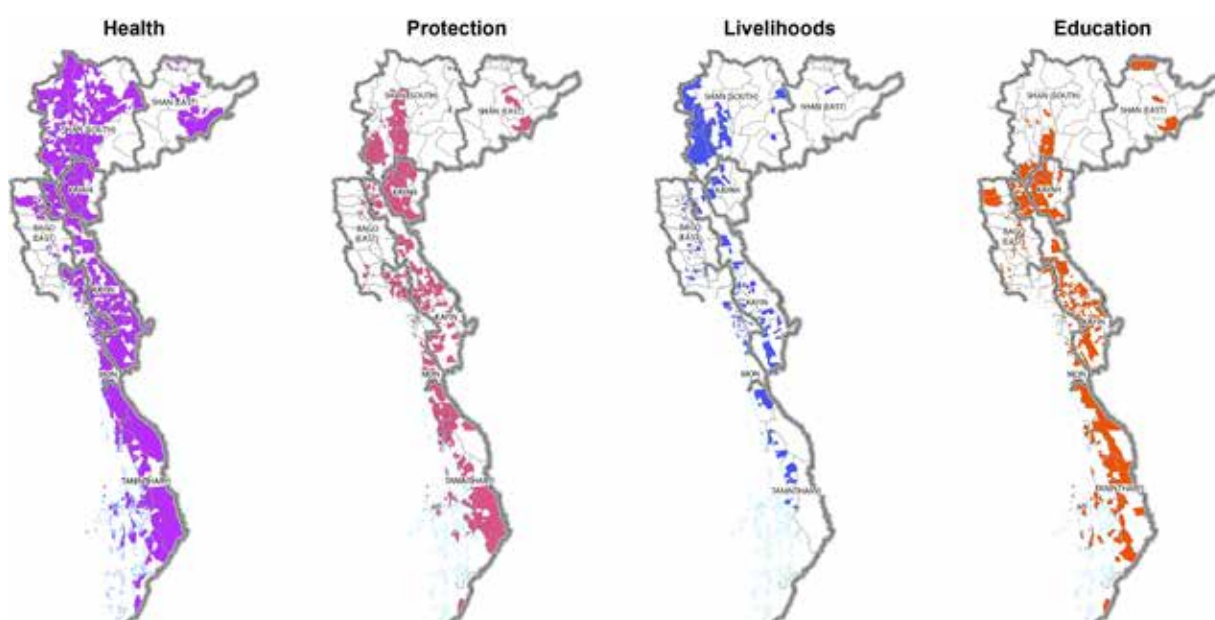
Source: MIMU 3W/Who is doing What, Where, March 2016.

Key actors

Overview³⁵

In the March 2016 overview of 3W, agencies were found to be active in all 84 townships of southeastern Myanmar. There was activity in 72% of village tracts and 37% of the villages.³⁶ A total of 148 organisations reported projects under implementation. The majority – 127 – are NGOs, 38 of which are border-based. Kayin State had the highest concentration of agencies (73), followed by Mon (62), southern Shan (58), Kayah (54), eastern Bago (49) and eastern Shan State (25).³⁷ Across southeastern Myanmar, 393 projects were reported in 21 sectors, making up 49% of the total projects reported to the 3W nationally.

Figure 14: Activities in southeastern Myanmar, by sector and village tract



Note: Projects implemented at township level are not reflected in this map.

Source: MIMU. (2016). [All Organisations' Projects Under Implementation Reported to the MIMU](#).

Health is the most widespread intervention sector among agencies in southeastern Myanmar, with 47 agencies (35 of them NGOs and six Red Cross agencies) reporting some form of health activity through 107 projects in all 84 townships.³⁸ The majority are malaria programme activities (2,279 villages), followed by maternal and child health care (1,016 villages), tuberculosis (TB) programmes (435 villages), basic health care (330) and reproductive health care (237). Health activities are found in all States/

³⁵As explained in the Methodological Limitations section, Government actors and NSAs are not included in this summary due to the difficulty of ensuring representative consultations in all field areas.

³⁶This covers the 6,154 villages that have place codes.

³⁷The data may under-report the activities of local field-based NGOs and CBOs. In all, 218 agencies participated and provided information across 22 sectors and 158 sub-sectors defined by technical/sector working groups. The overview covers activities as of 18 February 2016 in Kayah, Kayin, Mon, southern and eastern Shan States and Tanintharyi and eastern Bago Regions. Information on planned and recently completed projects is included in the 3W dataset, which is available on the MIMU website, as well as in the MIMU 3W Dashboard, which shows agencies' activities to township level. For more information, see: www.themimu.info.

³⁸Covers 3,203 villages, 1,200 village tracts.

Regions but are most concentrated in Kayin and Mon States. The health sector has a higher number of UN and Red Cross agencies than other sectors.

Protection is the second most commonly reported sector with 47 projects under implementation by 34 agencies.³⁹ These mainly consist of activities around civil documentation (1,553 villages) and child protection (633 villages). Protection agencies were found to be widespread but most concentrated in Mon State. Most of the activities are implemented by 31 NGOs/community-based organisations (CBOs).

Livelihoods is the third most reported sector.⁴⁰ These are mainly microfinance interventions (1,229 villages), followed by income generation support activities (288 villages), support to civil society organisations (136 villages) and vocational education and training (114 villages). Livelihood activities are most numerous in Kayin State, Mon State and eastern Bago Region, while only one agency reported activities in eastern Shan State.

Education is the fourth main sector with 51 projects under implementation by 27 organisations (24 of them NGOs),⁴¹ most frequently early childhood development (717 villages), followed by support to quality basic education (288 villages) and non-normal education support (58 villages). Food/cash for education activities were reported in 33 village tracts.⁴² Agency activities were found to be more concentrated in Kayin State, followed by Kayah, Mon and southern Shan States.

Multi-stakeholder dialogue and coordination

Southeastern Myanmar coordination meetings occur at the national and State/Regional level.

Yangon hosts several meetings focusing on southeastern Myanmar, although the level of coordination on development and humanitarian issues is limited. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) co-chair quarterly South-East Consultations meetings open to a wide audience including donors, UN agencies and NGOs. These meetings focus primarily on information sharing and providing an update on key developments. UNHCR convenes ad hoc operational meetings in Yangon to discuss specific issues relevant to the voluntary repatriation of refugees and return of IDPs, with a focus on agencies working in these sectors.⁴³ No specific coordination mechanism exists exclusively to discuss southeastern Myanmar in the context of development processes or the peace process. Interviewees noted that missing focus, as well as limited emphasis on gender, in forums such as the Peace Support Group (PSG) and the International Peace Support Group (IPSG). PSG is a Yangon-based coordination forum for donors that occurs at both the principal level (heads of diplomatic missions) and working level (conflict advisers), while IPSG is a monthly Yangon-based forum comprised of international non-governmental organisation (INGO) representatives working in peace and security.

State/Region-level interagency coordination meetings are increasing in southeastern Myanmar.

As of 2016, State/Region-level interagency coordination meetings are held in Mon State, Kayah State, Tanintharyi Region and eastern Bago Region, typically with a rotating chair and/or host. These meetings' frequency ranges from monthly to quarterly. Interviewees highlighted that barriers restricting meetings are declining, and that State/Region governments play an important role in creating (or limiting) space. For example, general interagency meetings in Kayin State did not occur in 2015, although a few new coordination platforms were launched late in the year to test the waters in sectors such as protection and education. In the context of Myanmar's transition, interviewees noted that there may be an opportunity for strengthened coordination at state level under a new government.

³⁹2,188 villages in 684 village tracts across 60 townships.

⁴⁰32 agencies implementing 42 projects reaching 1,604 villages in 62 townships (440 village tracts).

⁴¹993 villages in 528 village tracts.

⁴²Village-level data was not reported.

⁴³For example, past thematic areas have included housing, land and property; education and issues of convergence.

The South-East Working Group (SEWG) was created to enhance strategic coordination in response to the increase in international actors. The Working Group convenes UN agencies, donors and INGOs (INGO representatives are elected by the INGO Forum) on an ad hoc basis. It takes a broader focus extending to development issues, organised around six core components: peacebuilding, durable solutions, multi-stakeholder dialogue and coordination platforms, rule of law and local governance, social services and protection, and community development and livelihoods.⁴⁴ Working towards gender equality is a guiding principle of engagement but it is not listed as a strategic objective. The 2016 countrywide Humanitarian Response Plan considers the needs of southeastern Myanmar to be development-focused rather than humanitarian, and thus largely excludes the region.⁴⁵ Interviewees noted that this omission creates challenges for coordination and identification of humanitarian needs.

⁴⁴Framework currently available in draft form.

⁴⁵OCHA. (2016). [Humanitarian Response Plan](#).

Figure 15: Overview of coordination bodies in southeastern Myanmar, by State/Region

Bago (East)	Kayah	Kayin	Mon	Tanintharyi	Yangon
General Coordination					
1. Interagency Coordination Group (Hsar Mu Taw (CSO))	1. General Coordination Group (State government) 2. Interagency Coordination Group (Rotation)	1. General Coordination Group (State government) 2. CSO Network (Karen State Civil Society Network)	1. General Coordination Group (State government) 2. Interagency Coordination Group (UNHCR/UNDP) 3. CSO Network (Local Resource Center)	1. General Coordination Group (KNU) 2. Interagency Coordination Group (Myeik) (Rotation) 3. Interagency Coordination Group (Dawei) (Rotation)	1. South-East Consultations (UNDP/UNHCR) 2. Operations Meetings (UNHCR) 3. South-East Data Network (MIMU) 4. South-East Working Group (UNDP/UNHCR/RCO)
Disaster Risk/Reduction					
			1. Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group (Relief and Resettlement Department and Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development)	1. Disaster Risk Reduction (State Government/ Department of Relief and Resettlement/ Department of Social Welfare/ World Vision)	
Education					
	1. Education Group (Rotation)	1. Education Group (Department of Education and UNICEF)	1. Education Group (Department of Education and UNICEF)		
Environment					
				1. Environmental Conservation (KNU)	
Gender					
	1. Gender-Based Violence Coordination Network (Karenni Women Organization)				

Bago (East)	Kayah	Kayin	Mon	Tanintharyi	Yangon
Health					
	1. Government Health Coordination (Kayah State) (Department of Health) 2. Government Health Coordination (Loikaw Township) (DOH) 3. Health (State-Level) (Rotation)	1. Health Group (State Public Health Department) 2. Malaria Group (Malaria Team, Disease Control Unit, State Public Health Department)	1. State-Level Health Coordination (Department of Health)	1. Health Coordination (State government/ Department of Health/World Vision)	
Livelihoods					
	1. Livelihoods/ Food Security (Rotation)				
Mine Action					
	1. Mine Risk Education Working Group (DSW/UNICEF-DCA)				
Peace Building/Conflict Prevention					
		1. Do No Harm Network (Practical Learning for International Action)			
Protection					
			1. Case Management Working Group (Marie Stopes International) 2. Social Case Management Committee (Department of Social Welfare) 3. Protection Network (UNHCR)		

Source: MIMU. (2016). Data sourced from MIMU and UNHCR.

Note: This chart is an indicative overview of coordination meetings, therefore the information contained within is subject to change. The frequency and formality of meetings varies. All coordination teams are interagency unless otherwise noted.

State/Region-level thematic and sectoral coordination meetings are also increasing in southeastern Myanmar. Field-based thematic working groups are emerging to coordinate specific themes such as health, education, mine risk education and gender-based violence (GBV). As seen in the figure above, working group meetings are led by a several different actors, including State/Region governments, UN Agencies, INGOs and NSAs. Some interviewees noted that coordination currently does not extend to the private sector.

Township-level coordination meetings may emerge, while overall coordination still needs improvement. While State/Region-level coordination is occurring to varying degrees, some interviewees report that more Government departments may begin taking an active role in coordination at the township level. In Loikaw Township, for example, the Department of Health convenes a monthly meeting of health agencies. Such meetings could usefully be mapped more comprehensively as an opportunity to enable localised operational discussions. Interviewees also noted that while there is no overall lack of coordination meetings, the increasing number of actors means that it is now rarely possible to have everyone at the same table, leading to fragmentation and reduced potential for a unified voice. Interviewees also noted the importance of coordination to ensure that the capacity of national organisations is not stretched too thinly as new initiatives are launched.

Consultation and engagement with national civil society actors remains a challenge. The importance of meaningful, participatory consultation with local stakeholders arose throughout this analysis, pointing to a need for thoughtful reflection on how to improve engagement with national actors.⁴⁶ Some interviewees highlighted that barriers to consultation with national civil society actors include the limited capacity of agencies to access remote communities, the capacity of external actors to understand national priorities and needs, and issues of representation where multiple authorities exist (whose legitimacy to speak on behalf of communities may be questioned). Importantly, information on civil society engagement is increasingly available as initiatives are taking root to map local structures and better understand their roles and priorities.⁴⁷

Funding opportunities for southeastern Myanmar are increasing as new streams are allocated and some pre-existing funding shifts from the Thai border to inside Myanmar. Historically, organisations operating from the Thai-Myanmar border have been the largest providers of services and recipients of donor funds. Now, as access to southeastern Myanmar improves and restrictions on providing aid to Myanmar are lifted, an increasing number of international organisations have an operational presence in Myanmar. Donors are now committing funds inside Myanmar, and increasingly towards development rather than humanitarian activities. Myanmar's foreign aid has increased substantially over recent years. Some initiatives, such as the multi-donor Joint Peace Fund (JPF) and the PSF, support the peace process and peacebuilding. Other multi-donor trust funds (MDTF) include the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust fund (LIFT), and the Three Millennium Development Goal (3MDG) Fund which focuses on strengthening health systems.

Information sharing between Myanmar-based and border-based organisations (BBO) is increasing. MIMU reports that the number of border-based organisations submitting information for their biannual 3W updates has increased from 14 in 2013 to 38 in 2016.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Shift Project. (2013). [Conducting Meaningful Stakeholder Consultations in Myanmar](#).

⁴⁷For example, a CSO mapping project in Mon State, organised by Local Resource Centre and supported by CUSO International, is currently underway. This mapping exercise seeks to understand the current state of civil society in Mon State, as well as assessing the needs of CSOs, and opportunities to build relationships between CSOs and the Government. In 2014, People in Need conducted a civil society mapping exercise, which included data on Mon, Kayin and Shan States. This document is available upon request. For a mapping of women's organisation across several sectors, see: Women's Organisations Network and Gender Equality Network. (2015). [WON-GEN Member Mapping Report](#).

⁴⁸MIMU. (2016). [Overview of the March 2016 3W for South East Myanmar](#).

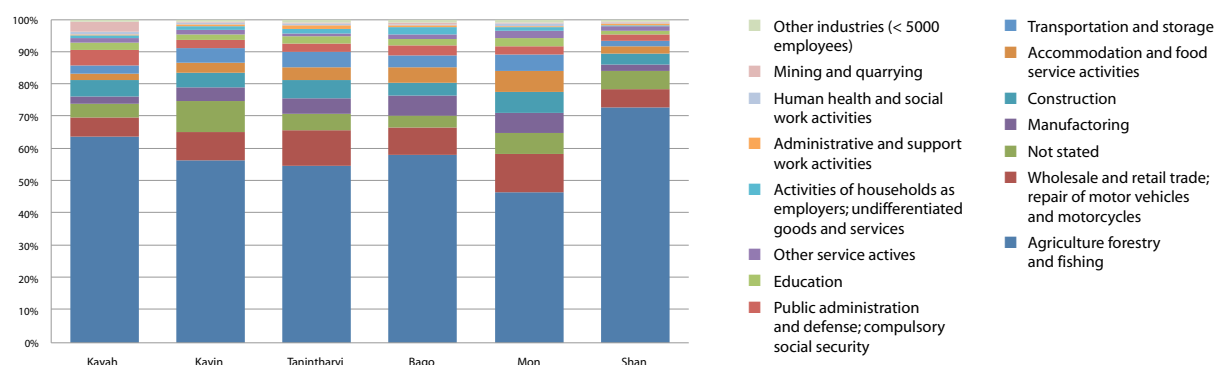
1. Economy and livelihoods

KEY POINTS

- Southeastern Myanmar is well-positioned for faster economic growth: there has been improvement in agricultural production, trade, tourism, industrialisation and use of natural resource wealth. Proximity to Thailand attracts both legal and illicit cross-border economic activities, including trade in consumer goods and wood products. Migration also has an impact: remittances bring in considerable income.
- Concerns exist over who benefits, and who loses, from economic development. Incomes vary widely across the region and growth may further exaggerate differences and entrench inequalities, potentially increasing the concerns of minority communities over discrimination and exclusion. Groups especially at risk include upland farmers, small-scale fisherfolk and minorities. Upland farmers, especially those practicing shifting cultivation, are particularly at risk from new plantations, forestry and other imposed changes in land use. Agricultural concessions for palm oil now cover 18% of Tanintharyi Region's total land area.
- Opium production is a major issue, especially in Shan State. Poppy is cultivated to some extent in at least 32 of the 84 townships in southeastern Myanmar. Meanwhile rural poverty continues: a 2012 rural poverty assessment found almost two-thirds of households unable to meet basic needs.

The growth of new economic sectors will depend largely on improved infrastructure and skills. Interviewees highlighted a critical need to diversify livelihood options beyond traditional dependence on agriculture and fishing. Southeastern Myanmar's potential for tourism remains largely undeveloped.⁴⁹ Industrial development presents significant further opportunities.

⁴⁹Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. (2013). [Myanmar Tourism Master Plan 2013-2020](#).

Figure 16: Employed population (aged 10 and over), by industry and State/Region

Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Many areas remain remote and it can take several days to reach some villages that are inaccessible by car or even motorbike. In conflict-affected areas, the possibility of resumed violence means that investment and growth will depend on local perceptions of security. For the majority of people in these remote areas, agriculture will continue to be the main local employment sector and economic gains will depend on transportation infrastructure, improved agricultural practices, improved access to market value chains and remittances.

Remittances contribute significantly to livelihoods. Many households in southeastern Myanmar supplement household income with funds received from outside Myanmar and particularly from family members working in Thailand. Nearly 80% of migrants from Myanmar to Thailand were born in southeastern Myanmar. Those sending funds back to Myanmar were thought to remit an annual average of USD962. The amounts received vary depending on the State/Region.⁵⁰ An estimated total of USD1.4bn enters southeastern Myanmar in this way every year. The extent of household reliance on remittances is unknown. (For more information, see the Displaced People and Migration section.)

These revenues and associated labour deficits in areas where remittances are sent influence wage rates across all of Myanmar.⁵¹ Employment opportunities, both seasonal and long-term, attract in-migration to southeastern Myanmar from other parts of the country.⁵²

Labour force participation rates are lower for women than men across southeastern Myanmar. Adult labour force participation rates are highest in Shan and Kayah States. The rate among women is lowest in Kayah with a female participation rate of 60% (15-64 years of age) compared with 88% for men.⁵³ As elsewhere, reasons for the gender disparity include socio-cultural norms that relegate women to household roles and responsibilities in the private sphere.⁵⁴ These norms are not consistent across southeastern Myanmar, varying between ethnic and socio-economic groups.

⁵⁰ UNDP. (2013). [A Regional Perspective on Poverty in Myanmar](#).

⁵¹ IOM and the Asian Research Centre for Migration. (2013). [Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand](#). To date, no remittance data disaggregated by township exists for southeastern Myanmar.

⁵² UNHCR. (2014). [Tanintharyi Region Profile](#). For a detailed study of in-migration and livelihoods in Mon's Ye Township, see: IOM. (2014). Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment and Qualitative Study of Selected Communities in Ye Township, Mon State. For a study on Kayah State, see: Lanjouw, S. (2015). [Livelihood Opportunities, Gaps and Training Needs Kayah State, Myanmar & Mae Hong Son Province, Thailand](#). Danish Refugee Council.

⁵³ 2014 Census UNFPA presentation: key highlights of census results: Kayah, Kayin and Mon States.

⁵⁴ Labour force participation rates do not take into account the unpaid labour that women primarily undertake. For a discussion on the barriers women face in entering the public sphere, see: [Gender Equality Network \(2015\). Raising the Curtain: Cultural Norms, Social Practices, and Gender Equality in Myanmar](#). The GEN study collected primary data from Mon, Kayah and Kayin States and Tanintharyi Region to inform analysis. Minoletti, P. (2016). [Gender \(in\)Equality in the Governance of Myanmar](#). The Asia Foundation; Minoletti, P. (2014). [Women's Participation in the Subnational Governance of Myanmar](#). The Asia Foundation.

Figure 17: Labour force participation rate and unemployment (aged 15-64, by gender and State/Region)

State/Region	Labour Force Participation Rate			Unemployment Rate		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Shan	77.5	88.6	66.4	2	2.1	1.9
Kayah	74.2	88.1	60.4	2.7	2.7	2.6
Sagaing	72.3	87.5	59.1	3.6	3.4	3.9
Magway	71.3	86.8	58.5	3.3	3.1	3.6
Nay Pyi Taw	69.8	87.1	53.7	2.9	2.9	2.9
Mandalay	67.9	85.4	52.4	3.1	3.1	3.2
Kachin	67.2	85.7	45.9	3.7	3.5	4.3
UNION	67.0	85.2	50.5	4	3.9	4.1
Chin	64.8	77.6	53.8	5.4	5.9	4.7
Tanintharyi	64.2	86.3	42.3	4.6	4.3	5.2
Ayeyarwady	63.8	85.6	43.5	3.4	3.2	3.8
Yangon	63.1	81.8	46.4	4.1	4.3	3.9
Bago	62.4	85.4	42.0	5.1	4.7	5.8
Mon	61.0	81.2	43.0	6.2	6.1	6.4
Kayin	60.7	81.4	41.2	7.5	7.8	7.1
Rakhine	58.8	83.2	38.1	10.4	9.1	12.8

Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Regional economic integration offers opportunities to diversify livelihood options, but ongoing insecurity and militarisation remain significant barriers to improving local market chains.⁵⁵

Increased freedom of movement, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) integration and improved road networks are cited as potentially improving market chains for local products in southeastern Myanmar.⁵⁶ Militarisation has been reported as a barrier to accessing markets and fields.⁵⁷ Interviewees highlighted that conflict-sensitive livelihoods programming is critical given the occurrence of sporadic armed conflict, high numbers of forcibly displaced people and the presence of contested administrative systems in southeastern Myanmar.

Poverty and inequality

Poverty in southeastern Myanmar is greatest in remote rural areas. A 2010 assessment found eastern Shan State and Tanintharyi Region to have absolute poverty rates higher than the national average, at 46.4% and 32.6% respectively.⁵⁸ A World Bank estimate using the same data and a different methodology suggested that the numbers are higher still. State-level data is misleading, however, given major differences even at the local level. Elevation (ie upland or lowland farming), remoteness (especially distance from an improved road) and stability (ie current or past history of conflict) are major factors in determining poverty levels. Poverty tends to be especially prevalent in areas with high landlessness,

⁵⁵Kempel, S. and Aung Thu Nyien. (2014). [Local Governance Dynamics in South-East Myanmar: An Assessment for Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation](#). Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

⁵⁶Becker, A. et al. (2015). [LIFT Uplands Programme: Scoping Assessment Report](#). Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund.

⁵⁷The Border Consortium. (2012). [Changing Realities: Poverty and Displacement in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#).

⁵⁸Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development. (2011). [Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar \(2009-2010\)](#).

subsistence agriculture, roving military patrols or landmines.⁵⁹ More data and information is required on the gendered dimensions of poverty- particularly given the high rate of female-headed households in Myanmar (See Figure 53).

A 2012 poverty assessment across 21 southeastern Myanmar townships found almost two-thirds of households in rural areas were unable to meet basic needs. The estimate was derived from five key indicators: access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation, adequate shelter, food security and indebtedness. In particular, Bago Region's Kyaukkyi and Shwegyin Townships and Kayin State's Thandaung Township, all areas affected by long-term conflict, had high composite poverty indicators.⁶⁰

Food insecurity varies across southeastern Myanmar but is most prevalent in remote upland communities and in rural areas. People in the hilly parts of eastern Shan State experience food shortages more commonly than those in other parts of the area due to a lack of market access, insufficient road networks and ongoing instability.⁶¹ A 2014 survey in Kayah State found that food security was relatively stable due to the general absence of armed conflict – 66% of respondent households reported sufficient food stocks; 27% of interviewees experienced occasional food shortages and 7% of households reported having frequent shortages of food.⁶²

Dependence on rain-fed, subsistence agriculture leaves some people vulnerable to economic shocks.⁶³ Changing weather patterns and limited access to credit lessen food security.⁶⁴ Rural populations are more likely to face shocks to their livelihoods than those in urban areas.⁶⁵ In Mon State for example, 34% of rural households surveyed faced problems related to food security compared with 22% of urban households.⁶⁶

Incomes vary widely across southeastern Myanmar. A township wealth ranking based on 2014 Census data shows major disparities among the area's 84 townships, with 12 falling in the top quintile nationwide and 11 in the bottom quintile. In Figure 18 wealthier townships are indicated by higher rankings.⁶⁷ Significant differences may exist between households within one area. One critical factor is land ownership: landless rural households tend to be poorer.

⁵⁹Kempel, S. and Aung Thu Nyien. (2014). [Local Governance Dynamics in South-East Myanmar: An Assessment for Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation](#). Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

⁶⁰The Border Consortium. (2012). [Changing Realities: Poverty and Displacement in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#).

⁶¹Becker, A. et al. (2015). [LIFT Uplands Programme: Scoping Assessment Report](#). Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund.

⁶²UNDP. (2014). [The State of Local Governance: Trends in Kayah](#).

⁶³UNHCR's State/Region profiles ([Kayah](#), [Kayin](#), [Mon](#), [Tanintharyi](#)) include an overview of economic and livelihoods of some States/Regions in southeastern Myanmar.

⁶⁴Becker, A. et al. (2015). [LIFT Uplands Programme: Scoping Assessment Report](#). Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund.

⁶⁵UNDP conducted local governance surveys conducted that contains useful data on livelihoods and food security, see [Mon](#), [Shan](#), [Bago](#), [Kayin](#), [Kayah](#), [Tanintharyi](#).

⁶⁶UNDP. (2014). [The State of Local Governance: Trends in Mon](#).

⁶⁷The World Bank calculated a township wealth ranking using data from the 2014 Census.

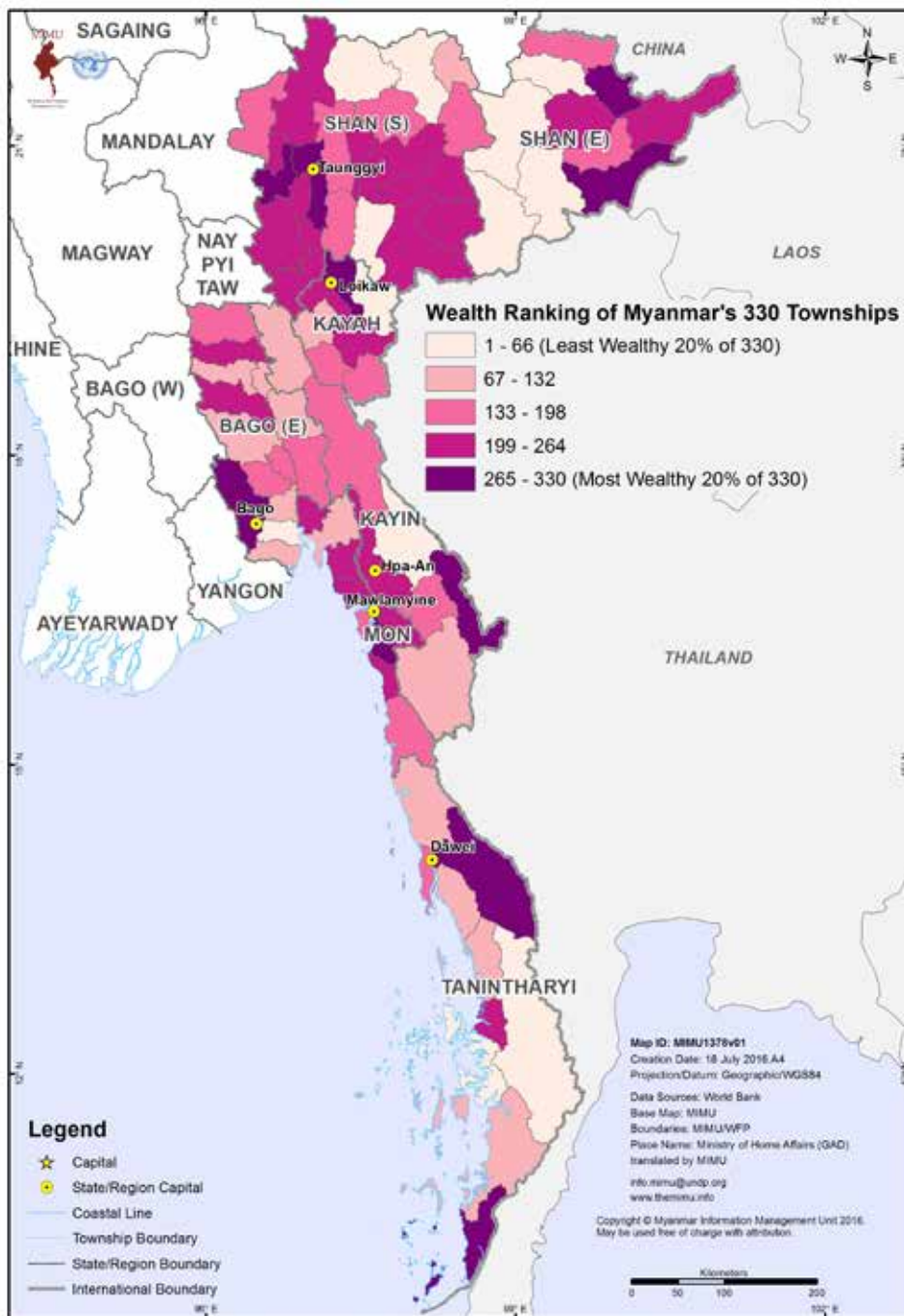
Figure 18: Myanmar township wealth ranking, southeastern Myanmar townships included in top and bottom quintiles nationwide

Top Quintile		
Township	State	Rank
Mawlamyine	Mon	299
Tachileik	Shan (East)	292
Taunggyi	Shan (South)	290
Loikaw	Kayah	287
Mongla	Shan (East)	280
Kawthoung	Tanintharyi	279
Myawaddy	Kayin	277
Bago	Bago (East)	272
Mudon	Mon	270
Dawei	Tanintharyi	268
Kalaw	Shan (South)	267
Kengtung	Shan (East)	263

Bottom Quintile		
Township	State	Rank
Monghsat	Shan (East)	62
Tanintharyi	Tanintharyi	54
Hlaingbwe	Kayin	51
Mawkmai	Shan (South)	50
Kyethi	Shan (South)	35
Mongton	Shan (East)	33
Kyunsu	Tanintharyi	32
Mongkaing	Shan (South)	30
Mongping	Shan (East)	22
Mongkhet	Shan (East)	21
Shadaw	Kayah	15

Source: World Bank. Based on Census 2014 data.

Figure 19: Wealth ranking by township (2014)



Source: World Bank. Based on Census 2014 data

Agriculture and fishing

Agriculture and opportunities abroad dominate employment in southeastern Myanmar. Relative to other parts of Myanmar, subsistence farming is common, especially in high and remote areas.⁶⁸ In the lowland areas of Kayah and Kayin States, the main crop is rice paddy, often grown under a directive stating that farmers accessing a Government irrigation system must grow paddy rice at least once per year. As shown in Figure 20, southeastern Myanmar contributes a relatively small share of the rice grown in the country as a whole. By contrast, 80% of the country's rubber production comes from

⁶⁸Becker, A. et al. (2015). [LIFT Uplands Programme: Scoping Assessment Report](#). Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund.

southeastern Myanmar. Ecological and topographical conditions also allow growth of fruit, coffee, tea and other higher-value crops that are both suitable for export and for a growing domestic market.⁶⁹

Upland areas produce a wide variety of crops including corn, pigeon peas, sunflowers, potatoes, beans, chilli, fruit and opium. “Taungya”, or shifting cultivation, is widely practised; this involves cutting, burning and cultivating large areas of forest land on a rotational basis. In Kayah State, 20.5% of the total acreage is under taungya.⁷⁰

Figure 20: Farming systems in Myanmar



Source: Michigan State University and Myanmar Development Resource Institute's Center for Economic and Social Development. (2013). [A Strategic Agricultural Sector and Food Security Diagnostic for Myanmar](#). USAID (draft).

⁶⁹Vriens & Partners. (2013). An Assessment of Business Opportunities in the Kayah State. *Peace Nexus Foundation*.

⁷⁰Becker, A. et al. (2015). [LIFT Uplands Programme: Scoping Assessment Report](#). *Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund*.

Figure 21: Selected agricultural contributions of southeastern Myanmar in relation to countrywide production, 2014-2015

State/Region	Paddy acres/ sown (% of Myanmar total)	Rubber acres planted (% of Myanmar total)	Fish and prawns in thousand viss (% of Myanmar total)
Shan*	1,358,023 (8%)	183,320 (12%)	7,013 (0%)
Mon	720,276 (4%)	489,053 (31%)	174,370 (5%)
Kayin	646,395 (4%)	260,838 (16%)	12,645 (0%)
Tanintharyi	263,492 (1%)	334,051 (21%)	983,900 (30%)
Kayah	99,110 (1%)	36 (0%)	858 (0%)
southeastern total	3,087,296 (17%)	1,267,298 (80%)	1,178,786 (36%)
Myanmar total	17,722,355 (100%)	1,584,115 (100%)	3,256,077 (100%)

*includes northern Shan

Source: Government of Myanmar Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development (2015). Myanmar Statistical Yearbook 2015. Note that discrepancies exist in Government data. In the case of rubber, it is sometimes unclear whether the total acreage reported refers to planted area or the concession area awarded. The area planted with rubber is probably less than recorded in Government-controlled areas. NSA rubber areas are not included in national statistics.

Plantation agriculture is increasingly replacing small-scale farming. Farm mechanisation is expected to increase the number of off-farm services and lead to land consolidation in southeastern Myanmar.⁷¹ Soil and climate conditions in many parts of Mon State and Tanintharyi Region are ideal for rubber and palm oil. Large and small landholders moved into the sector in the 1990s and early 2000s, responding to a push by the Government.⁷² Large concessions of virgin and forest land were established for plantations in the Tanintharyi Hills; this area now has over 99% of Myanmar's palm oil and 19% of its rubber.⁷³ Agricultural concessions for palm oil now cover 18% of Tanintharyi Region's total land area.⁷⁴ In eastern Shan State, large-scale rubber plantations have supplanted areas used traditionally for shifting cultivation. Many local farmers sold their land and now work as labourers on the plantations.⁷⁵ Loss of food security, combined with falling rubber prices since 2010, have heightened socio-economic and political tensions in the area.

Fishing contributes significantly to the economy in coastal areas, and to a lesser extent through inland fishing in rivers and ponds. Thirty percent of the country's total fish and prawn catch comes from Tanintharyi. Local prawn and fish farms, as well as processing plants, are found in addition to coastal

⁷¹World Bank. (2014). [Myanmar: Ending Poverty and Boosting Shared Prosperity in a Time of Transition](#). In Myanmar, 'viss' is a unit of measurement for weight used across the country: one 'viss' is approximately 1.633 kilograms (or 3.6 pounds).

⁷²Srinivas, S. and U Saw Hlaing. (2015). [Myanmar: Land Tenure Issues and the Impact on Rural Development](#). FAO.

⁷³Becker, A. et al. (2015). [LIFT Uplands Programme: Scoping Assessment Report](#). Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund.

⁷⁴Woods, K. (2015). [Commercial Agriculture Expansion in Myanmar: Links to Deforestation, Conversion Timber and Land Conflicts](#). Forest Trends.

⁷⁵Becker, A. et al. (2015). [LIFT Uplands Programme: Scoping Assessment Report](#). Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund.

fishing itself. Processing and marketing is supported by cold storage facilities, indicating significant development of the industry. Fish products are exported to China, Thailand and elsewhere.

Marine resource management has been inadequate for decades although significant efforts are being made to address the issue.⁷⁶ Conflicts of interest between different sub-sectors of the fishing industry are commonplace. Long-term Government concessions issued to larger businesses, and often sub-divided for smaller interests, generated significant resentment. Independent fisherfolk, especially but not only minority groups along the coast, have seen their livelihoods affected by large-scale fishing. In some areas, stocks have collapsed dramatically. Further threats to local livelihoods are likely given plans for coastal industrial and tourist developments.

⁷⁶See for instance <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/business/2729-fisheries-body-approves-common-use-fishing-grounds-plan.html>

Narcotics – use, production and trade

Opium cultivation is widespread in many upland parts of Shan State and has been grown in parts of this area for well over a century. The extent of cultivation has risen and fallen depending on Government and non-stat actor (NSA) policies, the extent of Government control and demand. Eradication efforts led to a reduction in crops during the 2000s but the extent of cultivation has since rebounded. Poppy is thought to be grown in every township but one in southern and eastern Shan State, as well as in three townships of Kayah State. In other words, poppy is cultivated to some extent in at least 32 of the 84 townships in southeastern Myanmar.

Figure 22, compiled using satellite images and survey data, indicates that these 32 townships represent 75% of Myanmar's total area of opium cultivation. Attempts are underway to promote coffee and other crops as substitute livelihood options to opium cultivation; however, an estimated 135,000 Myanmar households were still growing poppy in 2014.⁷⁷ The opium economy is clearly related to poverty, generating reasonable returns for some farmers as well as significant sums for others higher up the value chain. While substitution programmes have many positive components, they also can have implications for land ownership and have been reported to, in some cases, exacerbate poverty.⁷⁸ More generally, the illegal flow of wealth from narcotics has destabilised local governance, kept local militia solvent and generated enabling conditions for conflict.

Figure 22: Estimated acreage under poppy cultivation in southeastern Myanmar, 2014

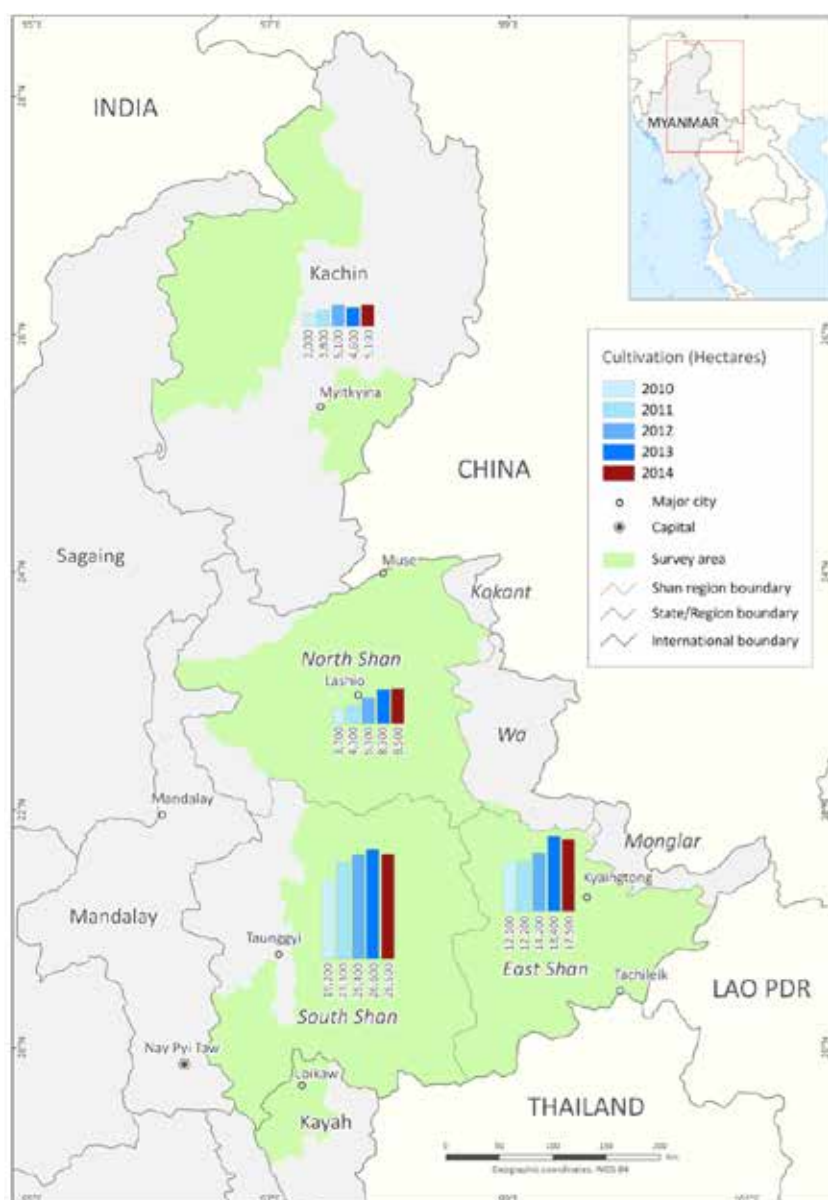
State/Region	2014	Percentage of Myanmar's total area of opium poppy cultivation
Shan (South)	31,000 to 103,000	44%
Shan (East)	25,500 to 65,500	30%
Kayah	1,200	1%

Source: UNODC. (2014). [Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2014: Lao PDR, Myanmar](#). (Note: figures have been converted to acres to standardise measurements throughout the report.):

⁷⁷UNODC. (2014). [Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2014: Lao PDR, Myanmar](#). For more detail on opium in Shan State see: Meehan, P. (2015). [Fortifying or Fragmenting the State? The Political Economy of the Opium/Heroin Trade in Shan State, Myanmar, 1988–2013](#). *Critical Asian Studies* 47(2).

⁷⁸For more information on substitution, see Becker, A. et al. (2015). [LIFT Uplands Programme: Scoping Assessment Report](#). *Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund*; Opium Farmers Forum. (2015). [Third Myanmar Opium Farmers' Forum](#).

Figure 23: Areas in Myanmar with poppy cultivation



Source: UNODC. (2014). [Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2014: Lao PDR, Myanmar](#).

Rates of drug use are increasing. A survey of amphetamine-type stimulant use in poppy-growing areas showed it had tripled between 2012 and 2014.⁷⁹ Of particular note is the use of methamphetamines among youth and hourly-wage earners wanting to work harder, and for longer hours. These stimulants are generally produced in Myanmar and in addition to local use they are exported to neighbouring countries. Reports by local human rights groups describe widespread availability and use in Kayin and Mon States,⁸⁰ estimating that the proportion of young people using such drugs in surveyed areas averages 40%.⁸¹ Interviewees suggested that drug use is on the rise and is underreported in several parts of southeastern Myanmar, not only in the poppy-growing areas. Further research is needed into addiction among youth and the gendered implications of drug addiction.

⁷⁹UNODC. (2015). [The Challenge of Synthetic Drugs in East and South-East Asia and Oceania](#).

⁸⁰Karen Human Rights Group. (2014). [Truce or Transition? Trends in Human Rights Abuse and Local Response in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 Ceasefire](#).

⁸¹Human Rights Foundation of Monland. (2013). [Bitter Pills: Breaking the Silence Surrounding Drug Problems in the Mon Community](#).

2. Infrastructure and investment

KEY POINTS

- New investments are commonplace across southeastern Myanmar, including public investments in electricity and roads, along with private investments such as telecommunications, plantations and mines. Major plans include improved roads for international as well as national connectivity, upgraded ports, industrial development and tourism.
- Considerable investment is still needed. Electrification rates in southeastern Myanmar are among the country's lowest, especially in remote parts of Tanintharyi and Kayin States. Infrastructure is especially poor in conflict-affected areas and zones near the border with Thailand which are governed by NSAs.
- There has been resistance to many recent large investments, such as the proposed port and industrial development in Dawei, with local communities fearing further economic and social exclusion. A history of non-transparent and top-down decisions that primarily benefitted groups alleged to be connected with the military promotes distrust, while NSAs and local populations are typically suspicious of external investment in their areas. Meaningful consultation with local communities or local leaders as part of investment decision-making, along with other aspects of environmental or social impact assessments, are generally inadequate or absent.
- Areas that were previously deemed unsafe are likely to attract further public and private investments if peace continues and deepens. However new investments can both exacerbate pre-existing drivers of conflict and promote inequality, resulting in conflict between armed groups.

Recent reforms have led to greater public expenditure on development programmes. They have also led to the relaxation of international sanctions and encouraged foreign as well as domestic private investment.⁸² Government and private sector investment is expected to grow, especially in areas that were formerly inaccessible due to armed conflict.

A 2014 survey of just under 10% of southeastern Myanmar's village tracts found that 55% of them had received new infrastructure investments over the previous three years. The 155 new investments across the area were primarily road construction projects, but also proposed or approved during this period were concessions for mining (10% of total proposals and approvals), logging (9%), commercial agriculture (5%) and industrial estates (5%).⁸³

⁸²Buchanan, J. et al. (2013). [Developing Disparity: Regional Investment in Burma's Borderlands](#). *Transnational Institute and Burma Centre Netherlands*.

⁸³The Border Consortium. (2014). [Protection and Security Concerns in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#).

The prominent economic and political roles of the military in Myanmar mean that large military holdings companies hold important positions in the economy.⁸⁴ In addition, development projects in ethnic minority areas have often been used as a tool of pacification, either aiming to improve access for military and civil government agencies or hoping to win over local “hearts and minds”.

Decision-making processes around investments are complicated by being centralised and often associated with groups with vested interests that may be at odds with the perspectives and needs of the local communities. Many investments are resented by the local populations, sentiments that sometimes lead to local protests and group demonstrations. Prominent and highly debated examples of these types of projects include the planned deep-sea port and industrial estate in Dawei, and controversial hydro-electrical dams in Kayin, Kayah and southern Shan States.

As with other development initiatives in Myanmar, the challenge of increased growth remains the equitable distribution of political and economic benefits to all stakeholders. Interviewees noted that the root causes of violent conflict have not been eradicated, and that limited consultation and ownership potential in economic projects can increase existing tensions and conflict.

New investment can generate many jobs and livelihood opportunities. Yet there are downsides. Stability created by ceasefires and national reforms is allowing increased investment and infrastructure development. But many sources caution that new investments can both exacerbate pre-existing drivers of conflict and further inequality.⁸⁵ For instance, in 2015, clashes erupted on the Asian Highway in Kayin State between the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) and the military over control of a newly improved section of the road. Violence was also reported between Restoration Council of Shan State/ Shan State Army South (RCSS/SSA-S) and the Tatmadaw in Kunhing Township in Southern Shan State in 2015, allegedly in connection to a hydroelectric dam on the Than Lwin River.⁸⁶

Concern also exists about the impact of new investments on livelihoods. Civil society organisations (CSOs) point to the example of Dawei’s deep-sea port, which has resulted in land confiscation and loss of agricultural land, directly impacting livelihoods and incomes. Over a third of women from Htein Gyi village tract, home to the port, reported losing all their income-earning opportunities.⁸⁷ Advocates of such developments may argue that the jobs and revenue generated will more than outweigh negative impact on the local community.

Conflict-sensitive approaches are particularly important if the economy develops faster than the peace process. Many national advocates in southeastern Myanmar argue that investments are needed but should be delayed until further progress towards peace is achieved.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Moores Stephens LLP. (2015). [EITI Report for the Period April 2013-March 2014 for the Oil, Gas and Mining Sectors](#). Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in Myanmar.

⁸⁵ Karen Peace Support Network. (2015). [Asian Highway project undermines peace in Karen State](#).

⁸⁶ Shan Human Rights Foundation. (2015). [Skirmishes and Abuses in Kunhing Township, September 2015](#).

⁸⁷ Tavoyan Women’s Union. (2015). [Our Lives are Not for Sale: Tavoyan Women Speak Out Against the Dawei Special Economic Zone Project](#).

⁸⁸ Karen Peace Support Network. (2014). [Critique of Japan International Cooperation Agency’s Blueprint for Development in Southeastern Burma/Myanmar](#).

Roads and ports

Road improvements in southeastern Myanmar are underway.⁸⁹ Myanmar has the lowest road density in the ASEAN region at two kilometres per 1,000 people, compared with the regional average of 11km.⁹⁰ Roads in southeastern Myanmar are improving significantly, enhancing regional trade and dramatically reducing travel time. For example, the five-hour journey across Kayin State from Hpa-An to Myawaddy now takes three hours.

In addition to increased expenditure on local roads, international initiatives are supporting strategic infrastructure development. The internationally backed Asian Highway Project seeks to improve continental highway connectivity, including links between Myanmar, India and Thailand. Asian Development Bank (ADB) support for the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) East-West Corridor aims to improve the Asian Highway route that runs through Kayin State, with completion scheduled for September 2019.⁹¹ In addition, four overland border crossings were opened in August 2013, all of which were in southeastern Myanmar: Tachileik, Myawaddy, Htee Hkee and Kawthoung. Crossings at these gateways are set to increase, with local trade and tourism improving as a result.

⁸⁹For assessments of Myanmar's road networks, including road conditions and distance in southeastern Myanmar, see a [Logistics Capacity Assessment](#) conducted by WFP in 2014. For an overview of infrastructure conditions in Kayin and Mon States, see: Japan International Cooperation Agency. (2013). [Preparatory Survey for the Integrated Regional Development for Ethnic Minorities in South-East Myanmar](#).

⁹⁰Road density estimates for Myanmar are not disaggregated by State/Region. For more information, see: Asian Development Bank. (2014). [Myanmar: The Key Link between South Asia and Southeast Asia](#).

⁹¹For more information, see: <http://www.adb.org/news/adb-loan-help-upgrade-road-kayin-state-gms-corridor-route>

Figure 24: Major international road links to southeastern Myanmar



Source: Asian Development Bank. (2012). [Myanmar in Transition: Opportunities and Challenges](#)

Port developments in Tanintharyi Region and Mon State are also expected to improve trade links and provide jobs. The Myanmar Port Authority earmarked sites in Dawei, Bokpyin and Kaleguak to deal with growing maritime trade and increased seaborne traffic. These ports are in the early stages of planning and it remains to be seen whether they will be further developed. The Dawei deep-sea port in Tanintharyi, beset by delays but planned to be operational by 2020, is part of the broader Special Economic Zone (SEZ). (Dawei is one of three such zones in Myanmar, along with Thilawa in Yangon Region and Kyauk Pyu in Rakhine State.) The Dawei port involves Thai and Japanese investment.⁹² It is not yet clear how many opportunities this project will offer local people, or if it will include training to enable them to compete for new jobs.

Tourism is expected to increase.⁹³ Significant growth in tourism nationwide during the past four years has added nearly a million visitors each year from the baseline of 1.05 million in 2012. The increase in the region's hotel beds shown in Figure 25 – 111% compared with the reported national average of

⁹²Asian Development Bank. (2014). [Myanmar: The Key Link between South Asia and Southeast Asia](#).

⁹³Asian Development Bank. (2014). [Myanmar: The Key Link between South Asia and Southeast Asia](#).

86% – reflects recent increased demand. Specific areas of attention include the spectacular scenery of parts of Kayin State and the coast of Tanintharyi. Coastal areas may see significant investment in tourism in future years. As with other economic investments, concern exists that tourism revenues may not directly benefit local populations and will have an adverse environmental impact.⁹⁴

Figure 25: Total beds in hotels, motels, and inns/guesthouses by State/Region, 2010-11, 2014-15

State/Region	Number of beds 2010-11	Number of beds 2014-15	Percentage increase
Tanintharyi	1268	2,385	88%
Mon	784	2,784	255%
Kayin	414	692	67%
Kayah	88	350	298%
Shan	6,968	13,914	100%
southeastern Myanmar total:	9,592	20,125	111%
Union total (% beds in southeastern Myanmar):	49,534 (19%)	92,113 (22%)	86%

Source: Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development (2015). Myanmar Statistical Yearbook 2015.

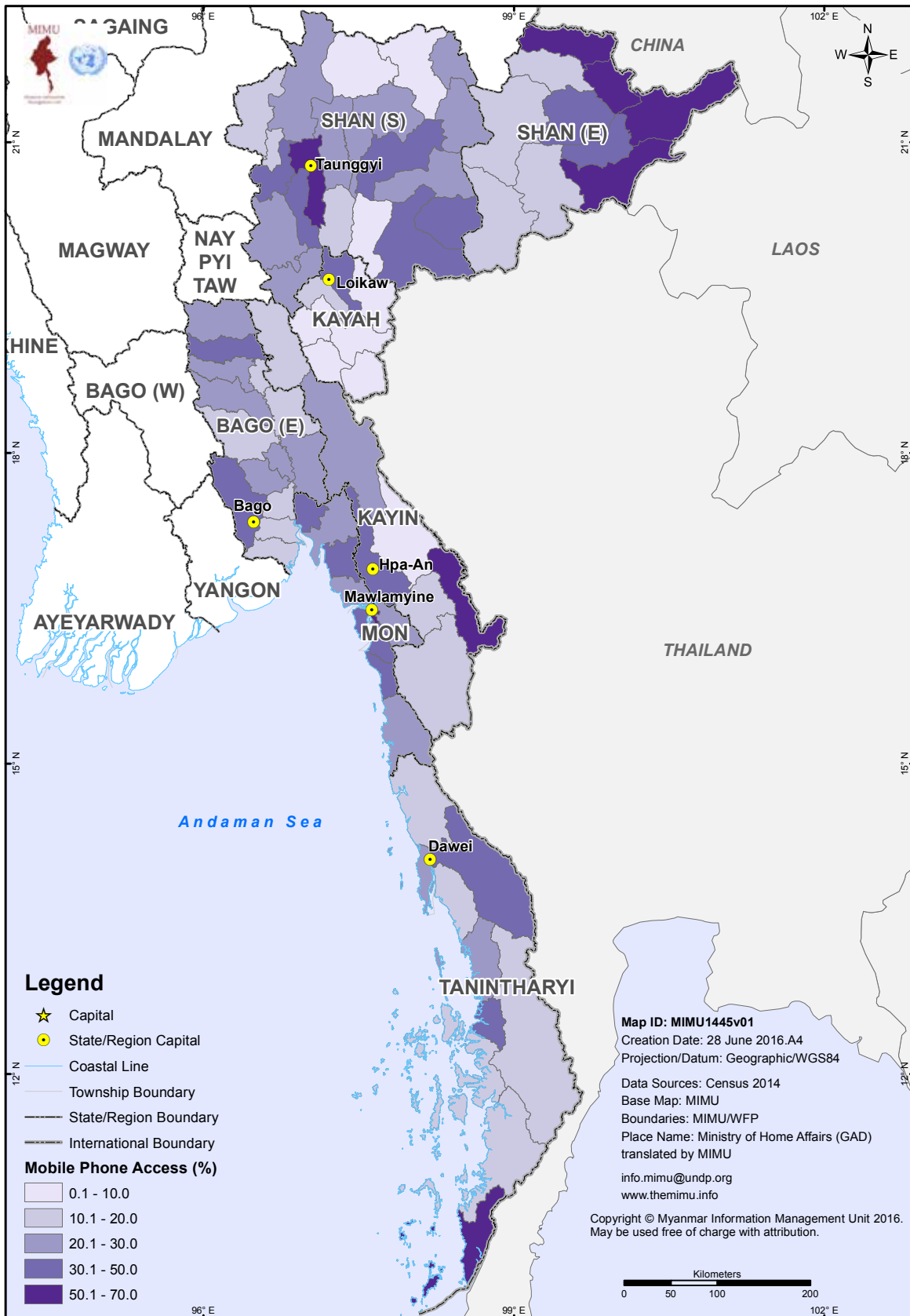
Telecommunications and electricity

Telecommunications infrastructure is improving. Mobile usage varies across States/Regions, as shown by 2014 Census data. From 2012 to 2014, mobile penetration increased from 7% to 33% nationwide. Several reports suggest that penetration in the country as a whole had doubled since the 2014 Census, and that improved internet access has driven use of social media. Company engagement and two-way communication with a wide range of stakeholders is noted as weak.⁹⁵

⁹⁴Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business. (2015). [Myanmar Tourism Sector-Wide Impact Assessment: Executive Summary and Recommendations](#).

⁹⁵Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business. (2015). [Sector-Wide Impact Assessment of Myanmar's ICT Sector: Executive Summary and Recommendations](#).

Figure 26: Mobile phone access, by township



Disclaimer: The names shown and the boundaries used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#). Township-level data on household access to mobile phones is also available.

Figure 27: Households reporting access to mobile phones in southeastern Myanmar, by State/Region¹¹¹

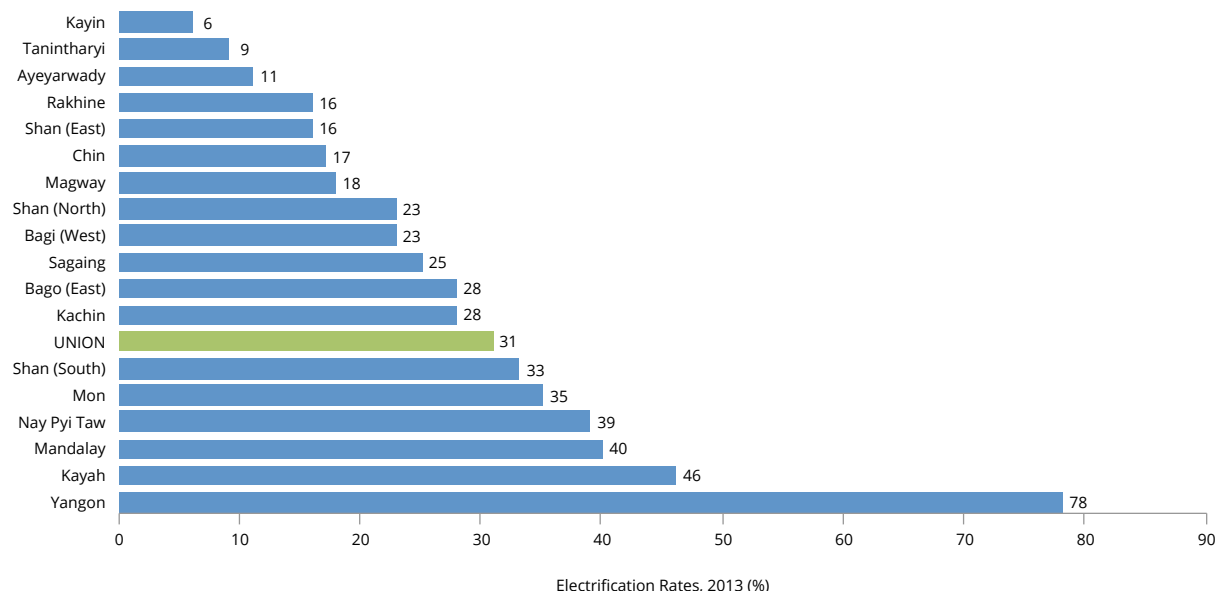
State/Region	Conventional households with mobile phones (% of total households)
Shan (East)	75,707 (43.8%)
Mon	144,514 (34.2%)
Shan (South)	154,825 (30.1%)
Tanintharyi	84,452 (29.8%)
Kayah	16,045 (28%)
Bago (East)	177,518 (27.9%)
Kayin	78,087 (25.3%)
southeastern total	731,148 (30.5%)
Myanmar total	3,581,5751 (32.9%)

Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Network access varies locally. A 2014 survey of 222 village tracts in southeastern Myanmar showed that just 44% have mobile network access.⁹⁶ While the penetration of Myanmar-based mobile networks is making more remote and isolated areas accessible, many border areas still tend to rely on Thailand-based telecommunication networks.

Electrification rates in southeastern Myanmar are some of the country's lowest. As data from 2013 shows, some States/Regions experience lower than average rates, such as Kayin (6%) and Tanintharyi (9%).⁹⁷ The national average is 31%.

Figure 28: Electrification rates, by State/Region



Source: Asian Development Bank. (2014). [Myanmar: Unlocking the Potential](#).

⁹⁶The Border Consortium. (2014). [Protection and Security Concerns in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#). This study identified 23 townships in southeastern Myanmar that had sufficient capacity to conduct a survey. Within these 23 townships, 665 village tracts were identified and a stratified method of sampling was used to select the 222 village tracts surveyed. This survey defined southeastern Myanmar as: Shan, Kayin, Kayah, Mon Tanintharyi and Bago East.

⁹⁷Kayah State, which has a much smaller population and where hydroelectric stations generate much of the nation's power, has a high rate (46%) compared with the Union average of 31%.

Consultation and public engagement

Meaningful pre-investment consultation with local communities is largely absent. Free, prior, and informed consent is rarely asked of affected communities. Meetings are sometimes held but participation is typically limited and input not solicited, leading to increased resistance from those affected by infrastructure projects.⁹⁸ Consultations tend to be dominated by more powerful local voices, often excluding the views of women and youth.

Outside investors are not trusted. In addressing tensions, civil society and environmental groups are not only concerned with improving stakeholder consultation but also with encouraging local ownership. This can take many forms, from local business leaders to wider community involvement.⁹⁹ Consultation has been seen to require more than well-facilitated community discussions, extending to other key stakeholders such as non-state actors (NSAs), local business leaders and local politicians.

Some recent examples of civil society engagement reflect greater opening of political and public space as organisations have mobilised to contest Government, NSA and private-sector developments. In 2014, the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN), a network of 30 organisations, called for a temporary moratorium on large-scale development projects until a comprehensive peace agreement is reached.¹⁰⁰ Another group, Karen Rivers Watch (KRW), a consortium of six Karen civil society organisations, seeks to highlight concerns regarding lack of consultation and ownership, land confiscation, beneficiaries of electrification and Government control in NSA or mixed-control areas.¹⁰¹ In contesting the Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ), civil society groups have raised concerns over the confiscation of farmland to build infrastructure including an improved road to Thailand, the displacement of communities, environmental degradation, and gendered impacts of such projects.¹⁰²

⁹⁸Dawei Development Association. (2014). [Voices from the Ground: Concerns over the Dawei Special Economic Zone and Related Projects](#). Information also from interviews conducted with informed specialists.

⁹⁹Becker, A. et al. (2015). [LIFT Uplands Programme: Scoping Assessment Report](#). *Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund*.

¹⁰⁰Karen Peace Support Network. (2014). [Critique of Japan International Cooperation Agency's Blueprint for Development in Southeastern Burma/Myanmar](#).

¹⁰¹For more information, see: Karen Rivers Watch. (2014). [Afraid to Go Home: Recent Violent Conflict and Human Rights Abuses in Karen State](#).

¹⁰²For more information on civil society response to the Dawei SEZ (inclusive of deep-sea port), see: Tarkapaw Youth Group et al. (2015). [We Used to Fear Bullets Now We Fear Bulldozers](#); Dawei Development Association. (2014). [Voices from the Ground: Concerns over the Dawei Special Economic Zone and Related Projects](#); World Wildlife Foundation. (2015). [A Better Road to Dawei](#). Paung Ku and Transnational Institute. (2012). [Land Grabbing in Dawei: A \(Inter\) National Human Rights Concern](#); Tavoyan Women's Union. (2015). [Our Lives are Not for Sale: Tavoyan Women Speak Out Against the Dawei Special Economic Zone Project](#).

3. Natural resources and the environment

KEY POINTS

- Management and benefit-sharing of the region's natural resources – abundant minerals, forests, land and water are highly sensitive. This has ramifications for the peace process and aspects of support for federalism, while also generating concerns over transparency and equitable sharing of benefits.
- The Government of Myanmar's budget is heavily dependent on income from natural resource concessions including minerals, hydroelectricity and offshore gas in southeastern Myanmar. Resource revenues have also complicated the many conflicts that have affected the region for decades.
- Two-thirds of Tanintharyi Region and almost half of Kayin State are still forested although coverage continues to decline at a rapid rate. Timber exports generate significant revenues, bringing large interests into conflict with communities whose livelihoods depend on forests. The area's forests, especially in Tanintharyi, contain impressive biodiversity. Conservation efforts, including an improving legislative framework, are ongoing.
- Flooding presents the greatest natural disaster risk, exacerbated in some areas by land use changes. Earthquake risks and other concerns including fire are also important areas for disaster preparedness.

Southeastern Myanmar is rich in natural resources. The area's wood, metal, minerals, gas, water and animals provide the basis for basic needs, energy and income generation, but also throw up governance challenges. In 2012-13 natural resources made up about 70% of national exports, or about 10% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) nationwide.¹⁰³ In the contexts of economic restructuring, constitutional reform and the peace process, discussion about the sharing of natural resource revenues often connects to discussions surrounding federalism.¹⁰⁴ Management and benefit-sharing of these resources has been one of the most sensitive issues between the Government, non-state actors (NSAs) and local communities.¹⁰⁵

Resource revenues affect local political concerns, including armed conflict and incentives for peace. Efforts to control natural resource revenues, along with other funding sources such as cross-border trade and the narcotics industry, have fuelled conflict problems across the region for decades. The precise extent of forest and mineral resources and their extraction remains unknown. Public

¹⁰³Data about the percentages originating in southeastern Myanmar were not available.

¹⁰⁴Thet Aung Lynn and Oye, M. (2014). [Natural Resources and Subnational Governments in Myanmar: Key Considerations for Wealth Sharing](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

¹⁰⁵UNDP. (2014). [The State of Local Governance: Trends in Kayah \(Local Governance Mapping\)](#).

information about mining permits is extremely limited. In the past, the granting of business concessions to NSAs as part of informal ceasefire terms also played a role in the peace process. Income from mining, logging, agribusiness and other concessions enabled NSAs to sustain themselves legally and contributed to economic growth in their areas but also opened them up to charges of corruption. In recent ceasefire negotiations, NSAs have been careful to emphasise political goals.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Burma News International. (2015). [Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process 2015](#).

Figure 29: List of main natural resources, by State/Region

State/ Region	Types	Major sites - examples
Bago	Iron, gold, platinum, timber, oil, hydropower	Yenwe hydropower Minlan, Thanseik-ShweGyin iron Taunggu gold, platinum
Kayah	Tin, tungsten, antimony, limestone, timber, hydropower	Mawchi, Konsut and Peinchit antimony Lawpita, Beluchaung, others proposed hydropower
Kayin	Antimony, gold, limestone, lead, zinc, silver, tin, tungsten, timber, hydropower	Shwegyin gold Shwegyi hydropower Mawhki lead, zinc, silver
Mon	Limestone, gold, nickel, gas, oil, antimony, tin, tungsten, timber, hydropower	Payagon gas, oil Kadaik, Tabyu antimony Kayukway nickel Padatchaung tin, tungsten
Shan	Antimony, chromium, coal, diamonds, fluoride, iron ore, gold, gypsum, lead, limestone, manganese, platinum, quartz, rare earth, ruby, silicon, silver, zinc, copper, nickel, timber, hydropower	Pinpet iron Bawsaing, LonChein – lead, zinc, silver Tigyit coal power station Mongkannwe iron Mong Inn, Hopone nickel Tar Pin and Wansaw Wanpaing manganese Kengtawng, Nawngpha, Tasang, Yeywa, Zawgyi, many others proposed – hydropower
Tanintharyi	Coal, diamonds, tin, tungsten, heavy sand, offshore natural gas, pearls, gold, iron, manganese, limestone, timber, hydropower	Yadana, Yetagun, Zawtika offshore gas Russel island gold Theindaw diamonds Maputae and Kho Islands iron Powel Island manganese Hermyigy, Theindaw, others tin, tungsten

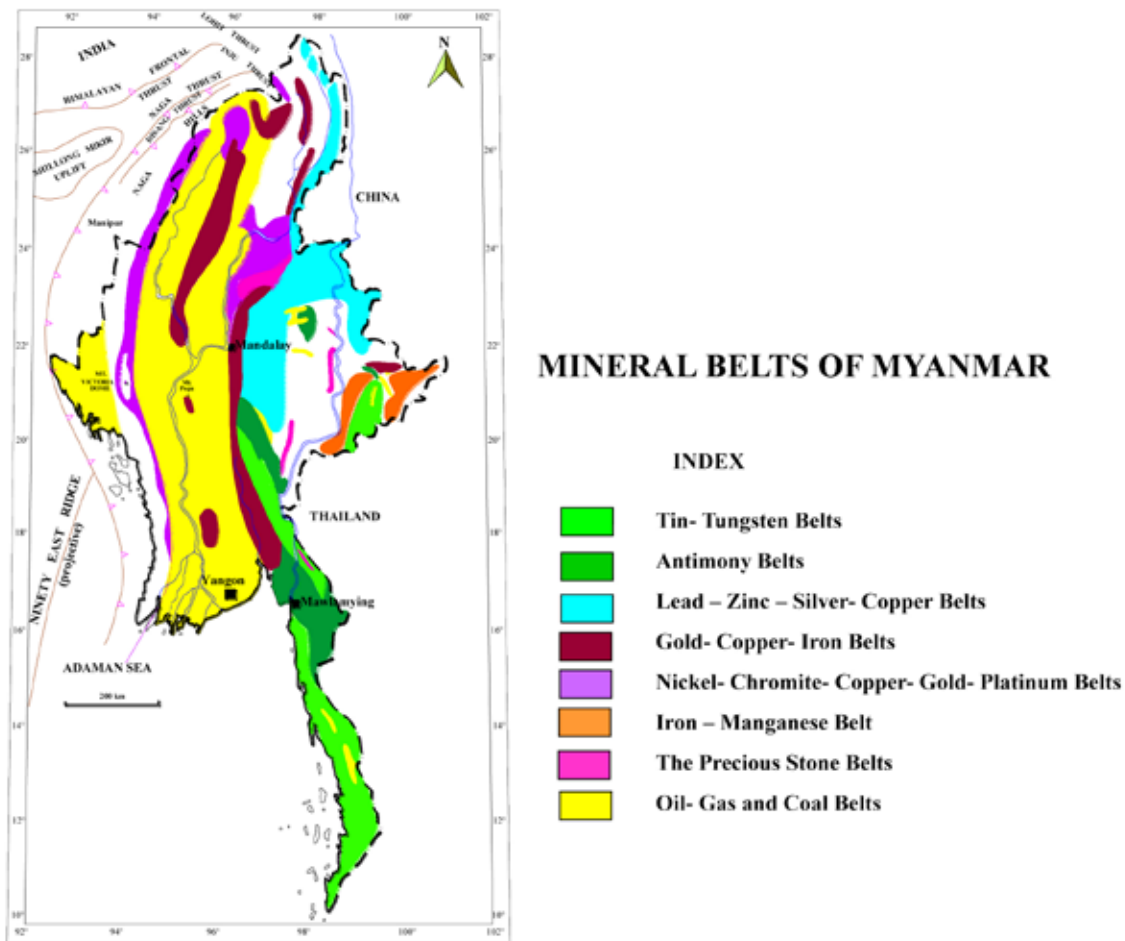
Source: Thet Aung Lynn and Oye, M. (2014). [Natural Resources and Subnational Governments in Myanmar: Key Considerations for Wealth Sharing](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

Minerals and energy

Southeastern Myanmar is rich in mineral deposits. Prior to World War Two, the Mawchi mines in Kayah State were the world's primary source of tungsten.¹⁰⁷ Antimony, used in batteries and electronics, is mined in parts of Shan, Kayah and Mon States; limestone for cement comes from Shan, Kayah, and Kayin States; and coal deposits are found in Tanintharyi.

¹⁰⁷Molo Women Mining Watch Network. (2012). [Lost Paradise: Damaging Impact of Mawchi Tin Mines in Burma's Karenni State](#).

Figure 30: Mineral belts of Myanmar



Source: Government of Myanmar Ministry of Mines. (2012). [Data Base Building in Ministry of Mines, Myanmar](#).

Energy production in southeastern Myanmar is a major source of income for the Government. Natural gas fields off the coast of Mon State and Tanintharyi Region feed pipelines that provide hundreds of millions of cubic feet of gas per day, most of it to Thailand.¹⁰⁸ In the fiscal year 2013/14, oil and gas revenues provided around USD2.7bn, or 40% of the Myanmar Government income.¹⁰⁹ Key beneficiaries of this income are national and international companies and the central Government.

Three of the country's major river basins flow through southeastern Myanmar the Sittaung, Than Lwin, and Tanintharyi all of which have major hydropower potential. In addition to existing dams, many new investments have been proposed: six projects are proposed for the Than Lwin River alone.¹¹⁰ In southern Shan State, large projects such as the Mong Ton (formerly Tasang) Dams that were previously delayed by armed conflict may now be started. Such projects have direct implications for local livelihoods and are at the centre of long-standing calls by some civil society groups to suspend large-scale development until communities' political grievances are resolved and addressed.

¹⁰⁸ Moores Stephens LLP. (2015). [EITI Report for the Period April 2013-March 2014 for the Oil, Gas and Mining Sectors](#). Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in Myanmar.

¹⁰⁹ Bauer, A. et al. (2016). [Sharing the Wealth: A Roadmap for Distributing Myanmar's Natural Resource Revenues](#). Natural Resource Governance Institute.

¹¹⁰ For more information, see: <https://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/current-status-of-dam-projects-on-burma%E2%80%99s-salween-river-7867>

Forests

Government data notes that over 46% of southeastern Myanmar's land was forested in 2010, though statistics vary depending on whether the definition includes plantation forests. Satellite imagery indicates that Myanmar lost 15% of its forests between 2002 and 2009.¹¹¹ Two-thirds of Tanintharyi Region and almost half of Kayin State still consist of forest land. Results shown in Figure 31 include data that is likely to overestimate forested areas, according to more recent satellite imagery.

Figure 31: Total forested area in southeastern Myanmar, by State/Region

	Total (1,000 acres)	2010 forested	Percentage forested (%)
Tanintharyi	10,712	7,304	68%
Mon	3,039	1,179	39%
Kayin	7,507	3,482	46%
Kayah	2,899	1,110	38%
Shan*	38,499	15,615	41%
southeastern Myanmar total	62,656	28,689	46%
Union total	167,186	75,300	45%

*includes northern Shan

Source: Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, quoted in Asian Development Bank. (2014). [Myanmar: Unlocking the Potential](#). (Note: figures have been converted from hectares to acres to standardise measurements throughout the report.)

Deforestation across Myanmar may be happening at the fastest rate in South East Asia, and most rapidly along the borders with China and Thailand.¹¹² Rapid rates of deforestation are not new: for instance, logging accelerated rapidly in parts of Kayah State following an unpublicised agreement between Thai politicians and Myanmar generals in the late 1980s. Legal commercial timber harvesting, illegal logging, and some agriculture including plantations, farms and shifting cultivation have all contributed to deforestation. In many areas of Myanmar, informal logging (ie without a permit) logging is thought to greatly exceed formal operations.

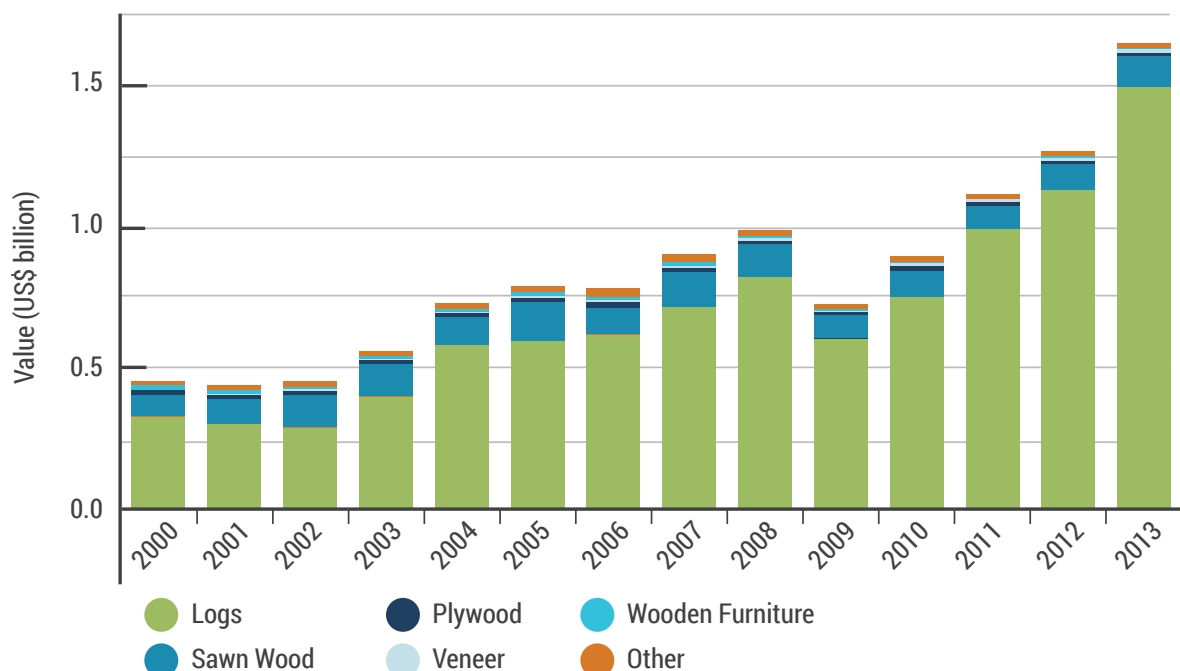
Since April 2014, raw timber may no longer be exported legally from Myanmar. In practice, however, logs continue to cross into China and Thailand. Myanmar has also begun to engage in initiatives to increase transparency and legality, such as the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade initiative.¹¹³

¹¹¹World Wildlife Fund. (2013). [Ecosystems in the Greater Mekong](#).

¹¹²USAID. (2013). [Property Rights and Resource Governance Burma](#).

¹¹³Forest Trends. (2015). [Analysis of the China-Myanmar Timber Trade](#).

Figure 32: Myanmar timber products export, by value



Source: Woods, K. (2015). [Commercial Agriculture Expansion in Myanmar: Links to Deforestation, Conversion Timber and Land Conflicts](#). Forest Trends. The graph uses importing country statistics from China, the EU, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand and the US to assess Myanmar's exports.

Environmental concerns

Parts of southeastern Myanmar contain significant biodiversity. Conservationists from around the globe prize the ecological richness of the mountains of Tanintharyi Region and their potential benefits: medicinal plants, clean water, protection from natural disasters, endangered species habitat and climate moderation. The Region's biodiversity is seen by local activists to be threatened by infrastructure development such as road planning. Many environmental considerations, such as the need for ecological corridors, have not been integrated into new developments.¹¹⁴ The Myeik Archipelago's Lampi Island in Tanintharyi is home to Myanmar's only marine national park and was proposed for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Site status in 2014.

The regulatory framework is gradually improving, although current environmental laws remain opaque and inconsistent. Major investment projects have previously been poorly regulated. Some principles and guidance are provided by the 2012 Environmental Conservation Law; however, its details are still not finalised.¹¹⁵ A new mining law was approved in December 2015, although revisions to the rules and regulations associated with this law have not yet been drafted. Discussion about safeguards has slowly begun to bear fruit. In January 2016, the Government released Environmental Impact Assessment procedures that specify the type and scope of environmental assessments required for all future investment projects.¹¹⁶ The National Land Use Policy (NLUP) was finalised in the same month.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴World Wildlife Foundation. (2015). [A Better Road to Dawei](#).

¹¹⁵Thet Aung Lynn and Oye, M. (2014). [Natural Resources and Subnational Governments in Myanmar: Key Considerations for Wealth Sharing](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

¹¹⁶Government of Myanmar Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry. (2016). [Environmental Impact Assessment Procedure](#).

¹¹⁷Government of Myanmar. (2016). [The Republic of the Union of Myanmar National Land Use Policy](#).

Myanmar will need to develop environmental regulations on natural habitat conservation, pollution, waste treatment and remediation, and will need to ensure that these regulations are enforced.¹¹⁸

Myanmar has also encouraged the work of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and was accepted as an EITI candidate in 2014. The initiative has already improved levels of public disclosure although some companies have not taken part, particularly those in the mining sector.¹¹⁹

Tension exists between agricultural and forestry land use including plantations in southeastern Myanmar – over authority and control of land, resources and revenue streams. In the Tanintharyi Region, agricultural concession lands that lie outside the jurisdiction of the Government's Forest Department are being logged for timber revenue. Fewer than one-fifth are then replanted or managed according to social or environmental safeguard procedures.¹²⁰ The growing area of concession land has been a primary driver of deforestation and associated loss of both animal habitat and climate resilience.¹²¹ However there is limited understanding of the extent of this loss as data is not collected consistently.

The large amount of land allocated to private agriculture concessions, often for large plantation crops such as rubber and palm oil has implications for local livelihoods, land tenure and food security. Many of the concessions are found in what recent Myanmar forest law defines as “wastelands”, often in the uplands, and often considered by local communities as “taungya” (shifting cultivation) plots.¹²² Although forest law includes provision for co-management of forests by rural communities, no Government management plans have included timber from community forests.¹²³

Natural disasters

Floods are the most frequent natural hazard in southeastern Myanmar. Monsoon rain combines with high tides on a seasonal basis, causing the region's major rivers to overflow.¹²⁴ Mountainous and hilly parts of Mon, Kayin and Shan States sometimes experience flash floods. Coastal sections of Mon State and Tanintharyi Region are vulnerable to storm surges, although these are not as bad as those found further west along the coast of Myanmar.¹²⁵ Such flooding affects livelihoods by damaging crops, livestock, homes, roads, and bridges, and also increases health problems. In 1997, flooding affected more than 100,000 people in five townships of Kayin State. More recently, seasonal flooding in Mon and Kayin States displaced an estimated 40,000 people in mid-2013 with the destruction of cash crops affecting food security well into 2014.¹²⁶

While the July-August 2015 floods affected Myanmar's southeastern areas less than other parts of the country, the region appears likely to face increased flooding in the future due to ongoing issues of climate change and environmental degradation.¹²⁷ People in flood-prone areas lack awareness of viable protection measures.¹²⁸ Women are often especially vulnerable to the outcomes of natural disasters, particularly if they have little access to productive agricultural assets or poor knowledge of emergency planning and evacuation.

¹¹⁸Asian Development Bank. (2014). [Myanmar: Unlocking the Potential](#).

¹¹⁹See <https://eiti.org/Myanmar>

¹²⁰Woods, K. (2015). [Commercial Agriculture Expansion in Myanmar: Links to Deforestation, Conversion Timber and Land Conflicts](#). *Forest Trends*.

¹²¹Becker, A. et al. (2015). [LIFT Uplands Programme: Scoping Assessment Report](#). *Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund*.

¹²²Woods, K. (2012). [The Political Ecology of Rubber Production in Myanmar: An Overview](#).

¹²³Srinivas, S. and U Saw Hlaing. (2015). [Myanmar: Land Tenure Issues and the Impact on Rural Development](#). *FAO*.

¹²⁴For information on flooding in 2016, see: <http://www.themimu.info/emergencies/floods-2016>

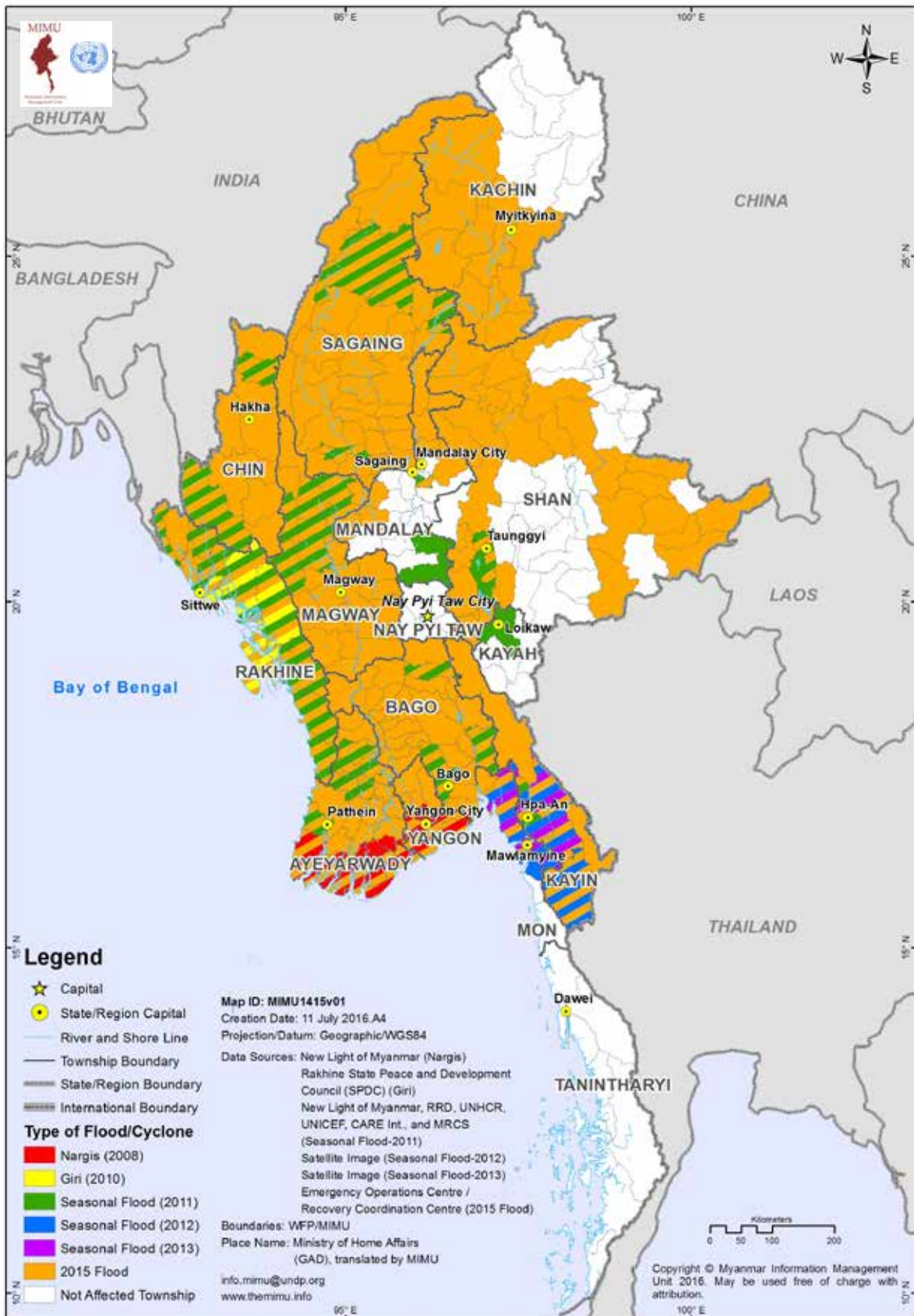
¹²⁵Government of Myanmar. (2009). [Hazard Profile of Myanmar](#).

¹²⁶UNHCR. (2014). *Durable Solutions to Displacement in and from South-East Myanmar: Looking Ahead*.

¹²⁷Government of Myanmar. (2013). *Hlaingbwe Township Disaster Management Plan, Kayin State*.

¹²⁸Asian Development Bank. (2014). [Myanmar: Unlocking the Potential](#).

Figure 33: Areas of potential vulnerability based on flooding and cyclone events, by township



Disclaimer: The names shown and the boundaries used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Some areas of southeastern Myanmar are also at risk from landslides, earthquakes and fires.

While these disasters have tended to be less life-threatening in the past, they can involve community evacuations and/or loss of property. Landslides occur regularly in the uplands. The most recent earthquake of note, which involved the Mae Chan and Nam Ma Faults, occurred in eastern Shan State in March 2011. Kayin and Mon States, lying along the Hpapun-Wan Chao and Three Pagoda faults, are considered to have a moderate earthquake risk.¹²⁹ Fire risk ranges from medium in Mon and Shan States to low in Tanintharyi Region and Kayin and Kayah States.¹³⁰

At the national level, disaster risk management is overseen by the Department of Relief and Resettlement under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, and by the General Administration Department (GAD) under the Ministry of Home Affairs. In southeastern Myanmar, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) partners with these governmental bodies on projects supporting township- and village-level disaster management committees to develop disaster risk management plans.¹³¹

¹²⁹Government of Myanmar. (2013). Hlaingbwe Township Disaster Management Plan, Kayin State.

¹³⁰Government of Myanmar. (2015). Kyaikmaraw Township Disaster Management Plan, Mon State.

¹³¹Few, R. et al. (2015). [Strategic Research into National and Local Capacity Building for Disaster Risk Management: Myanmar Fieldwork Report](#). Oxford Policy Management.

4. Services – education and health

KEY POINTS

- Most people report gradual improvements in education services and healthcare provision over recent years. The delivery of health and education services remains complex in southeastern Myanmar, involving a range of nationally recognised and supported stakeholders as well as ethnic-based departments associated with non-state actors (NSAs). Services are often complemented by national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), religious groups and private sector services. Some people near the border travel to Thailand to access health services.
- Literacy rates and school attendance rates vary across the area. Some statistics are close to the national average while others, such as literacy rates in eastern Shan State, are well below. Women record lower literacy rates than men across all States and Regions in southeastern Myanmar. Particular concerns exist over the standard of teacher training, the availability and quality of vocational education and the high numbers of children who only complete basic education.
- Infant mortality is higher than the national average. There is particular concern over the lack of available trained health personnel and access problems in remote and conflict-affected areas. Preventable diseases cause 42% of deaths in remote and displaced communities in southeastern Myanmar. As in other parts of the country, many maternal, reproductive and sexual health needs are not being met.
- Conflict and contested governance affect service delivery. Some NSAs assume responsibility for service provision in the areas that they control, either through parallel state mechanisms or through local NGOs. In contested areas, there is some mixed service provision involving the Government, NSAs and NGOs.
- Overall, conflict-affected areas have poorer access to health and education services, especially in the most remote areas. Service provision whether provided by the Government or NSAs is widely seen by local people as political. Some aspects, such as the language used in schools and the version of history being taught, can be highly controversial.

- Efforts to ensure better links between different service providers are ongoing and in many areas a pragmatic mixture exists on the ground. The notion of convergence may be resisted if it appears to promote central Government authority.
- Migrant groups and people near the border can have specific problems accessing services. People educated in NSA-held areas or camps in Thailand may not have the necessary qualifications or language skills to access better jobs or higher-level education within Myanmar.

Education

Improvements in education service delivery have been reported across southeastern Myanmar.

These reported improvements are built from a relatively low baseline which reflects decades of underinvestment, isolation and absence of standards. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Local Governance Mapping in southeastern Myanmar showed better primary education service delivery between 2011 and 2014. Seventy percent of interviewees in Shan State reported that education service delivery had improved, particularly in relation to infrastructure; in Mon State, 68% of interviewees with children in primary school reported improved education service delivery over the past three years. Higher figures were achieved in Tanintharyi Region (80%), in Kayah (75%) and in Kayin (78%).¹³²

Figure 34: Social service expenditures as a percentage of Union expenditures

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Education ^a	8.0 (PA)	7.5 (PA)	8.3 (PA)	10.1 (RE)	13.8 (BE)
Health ^b	1.1	1.2	1.2	3.3	3.8

Source: World Bank. (2015). Myanmar Public Expenditure Review 2015.¹³³

Many different groups outside of the Government system provide education services. Some providers, such as non-state actors (NSAs), administer parallel education systems that are tied to their broader struggle for self-determination.¹³⁴ There is no centralised data system or reporting mechanism to collect data on NSA-affiliated education services, although qualitative case studies provide an

¹³²UNDP local governance surveys contain useful data on education; see [Mon, Shan, Bago, Kayin, Kayah, Tanintharyi](#). UNDP. (2014). [The State of Local Governance: Trends in Bago \(Local Governance Mapping\)](#). This figure is an aggregate statistic for the whole of Bago.

¹³³a. Includes educational spending from all relevant ministries. PA means "preliminary actual estimate"; RE means "revised budget estimate" and BE means "budget estimate". Exchange rates correspond to fiscal years and use market values throughout. b. Ministry of Health and World Bank staff calculations.

¹³⁴NSA-parallel systems date back to 1948, when conflict between the Government and NSAs commenced.

indication.¹³⁵ Others, such as faith-based organisations, provide “gap-filling” education services where no Government services exist; monastic schools are an example of such organisations and provide classes for novices and nuns alongside other local children. However most monastic schools only provide primary education services. There is an important distinction between faith-based organisations that run private schools and those which offer non-formal education, such as monastic nurseries and pre-schools. Non-formal education plays a significant role in merging mother-tongue schooling with the Government’s basic education system. Education services are also provided on the Thailand border for migrants and refugee children.

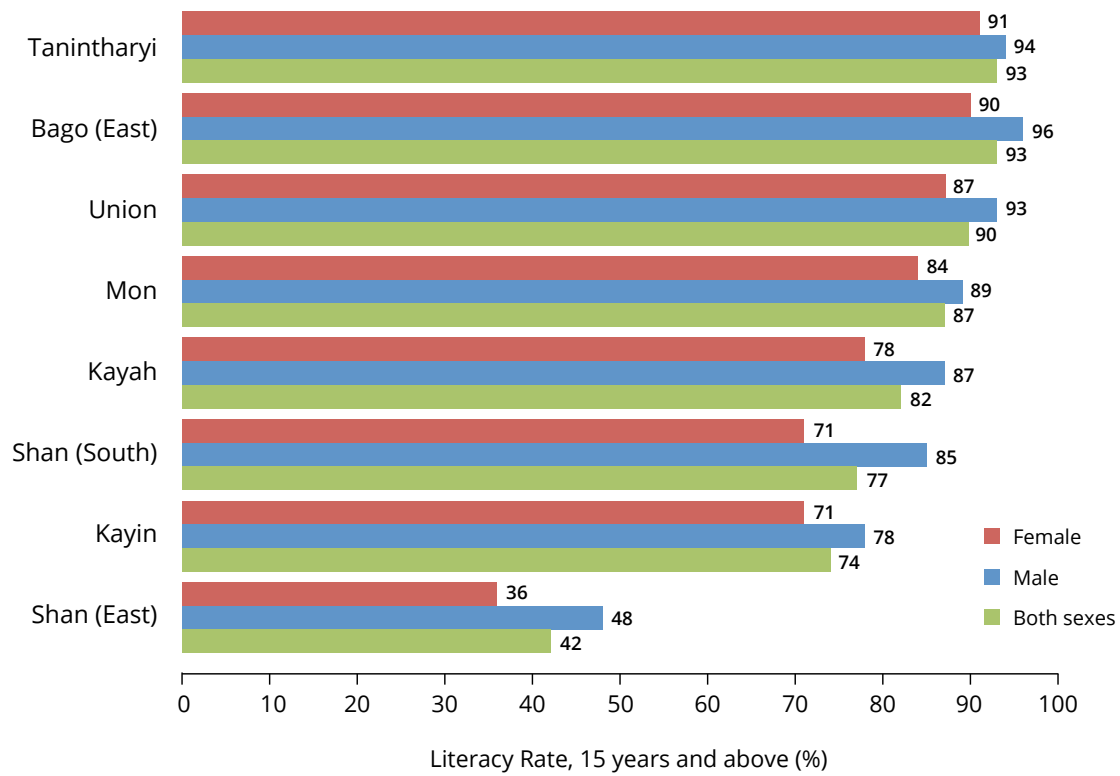
Literacy rates in Kayah, Kayin, Mon and Shan States are below the national average of 90%.

Literacy rates, as self-reported in the 2014 Census, vary between and within States/Regions, by gender, and in rural and urban populations. In southeastern Myanmar, only eastern Bago and Tanintharyi have literacy rates at or above the Union average (90%) whereas self-reported literacy rates are lowest in eastern Shan State (42%), Kayin State (74%) and Shan State (South) (77%). Women’s literacy rates are consistently lower than that of men in every southeastern State and Region, with the largest disparities found in Kayah State and eastern Shan State.

Literacy rates vary significantly within States/Regions. Higher literacy levels in some townships may mask very low levels in others: For example, the overall self-reported literacy rate in southern Shan State is 42% (48% for men, 36% for women), whereas the lowest township literacy rate in Mongkhet in eastern Shan is just 12% (14% for men, 9% for women). In Kayah State, 82% of the population is reported to be literate while the average literacy rate in Shadaw Township is just 43% (49% for men and 38% for women). Male literacy rates are higher in all townships, although the level of disparity varies widely, as can be seen on Figure 35.

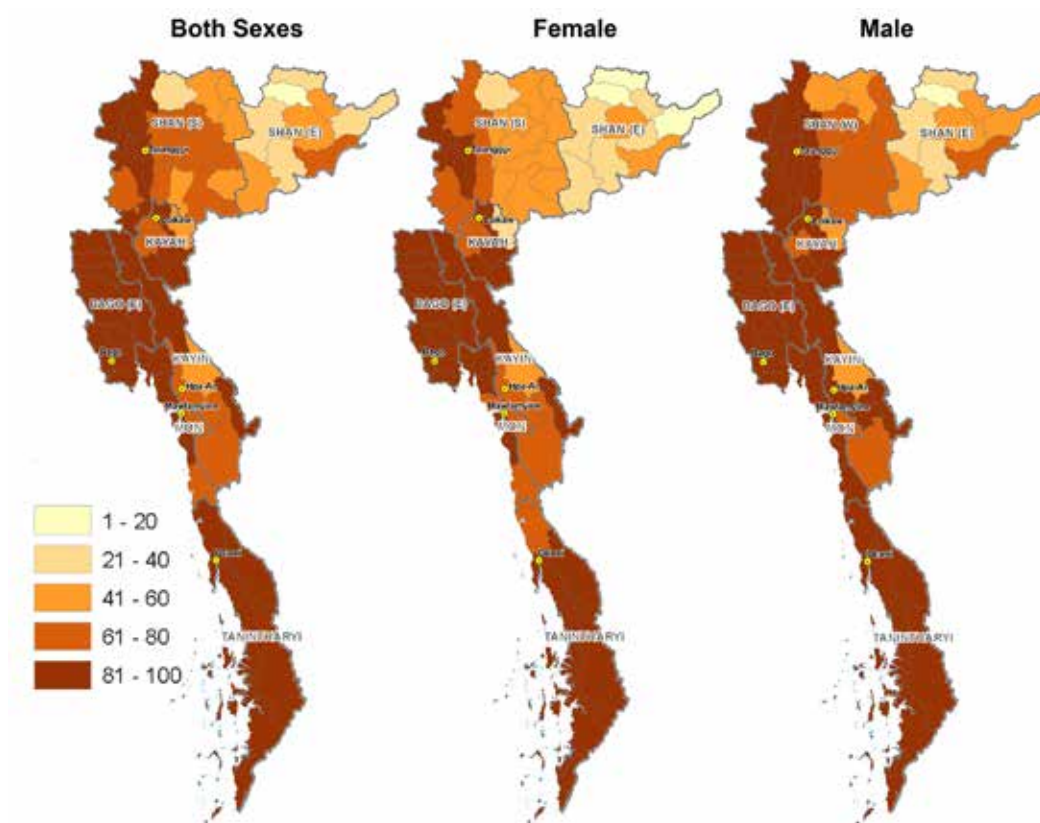
¹³⁵No numeric data exists in a centralised location on NSA education service delivery. For qualitative case studies on education provision in Kayin, Kayah, Mon and Shan States, see: Jolliffe, K. (2014). *Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar’s Contested Regions*. The Asia Foundation. For an in-depth study of Kayin, see: Lenkova, P. (2015). *Conflict Sensitivity in Education Provision in Karen State*. Thabyay Education Foundation; For a study on ethnic education and mother-tongue based education in Kachin, Kayin, and Mon, see: South, A. and Lall, M. (2016). *Schooling and Conflict: Ethnic Education and Mother Tongue-Based Teaching in Myanmar*. The Asia Foundation; Lall, M. and South, A. (2013). *Comparing Models of Non-state Ethnic Education in Myanmar The Mon and Karen National Education Regimes*. *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 44(2); UNDP’s Local Governance Mapping includes subnational analysis related to education, see: Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Shan, Tanintharyi, and Bago.

Figure 35: Literacy rates, by gender and State/Region



Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census.](#)

Figure 36: Literacy rates in southeastern Myanmar, by gender and township (%)

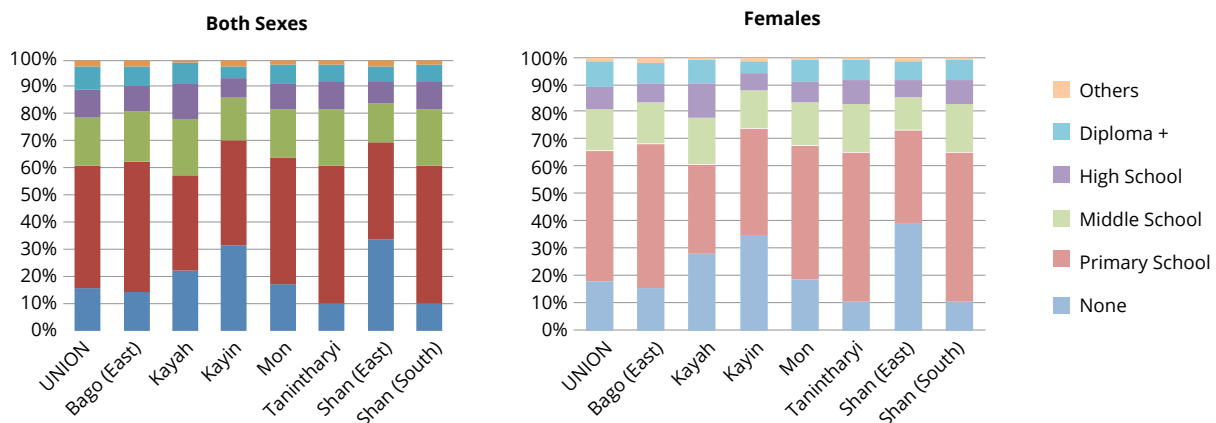


Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census.](#)

School completion rates vary across southeastern Myanmar. Tanintharyi has the highest primary school completion rate (72%) among all States/Regions; however large numbers of children have no access at all to primary education in some parts of southeastern Myanmar. A major barrier to education there and elsewhere is the lack of accessible infrastructure. The establishment of more education facilities will not automatically improve education indicators without concurrent efforts to make education delivery accessible. Interviewees highlighted the importance of conflict sensitivity in the context of establishing schools, particularly in areas impacted by conflict.¹³⁶

The Government has increased efforts to provide free primary and middle school education, although other costs associated with schooling contribute to low enrolment. School retention remains a concern in all States/Regions. Civil society organisations state that national education reforms do not yet benefit rural ethnic minority students.¹³⁷ The nationwide rate for school attendance is 64.3%; in southeastern Myanmar, 79.6% children attend school. That percentage drops to 45.4% among 12-18 year-olds, although rates vary widely across States/Regions and by gender (see Figure 37).¹³⁸ Interviewees highlighted that poverty and the need to supplement family income are associated with non-attendance.¹³⁹

Figure 37: Highest education levels achieved in southeastern Myanmar, by gender and State/Region



Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

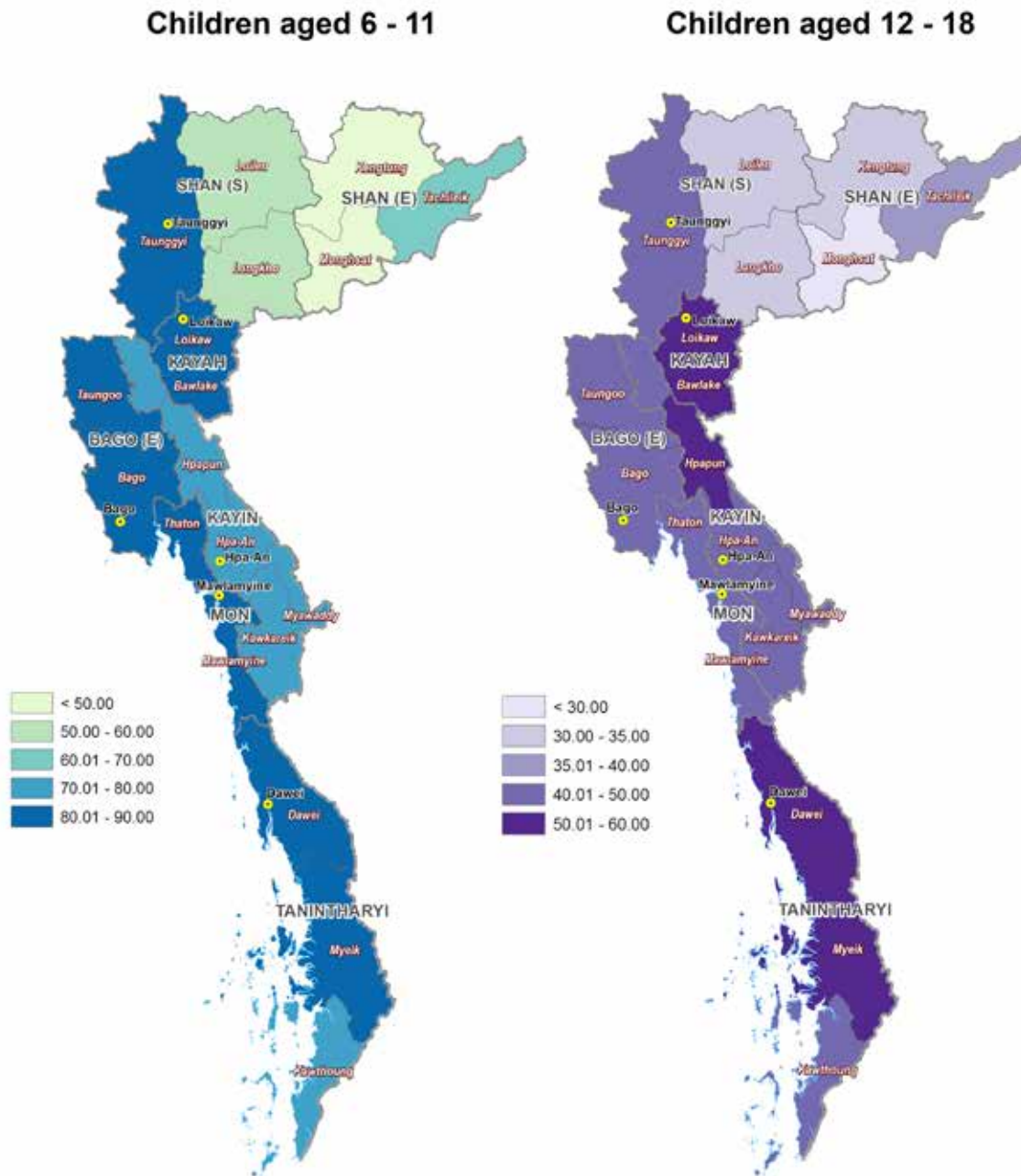
¹³⁶Lenkova, P. (2015). [Conflict Sensitivity in Education Provision in Karen State](#). Thabyay Education Foundation.

¹³⁷Women and Child Rights Project and Human Rights Foundation of Monland. (2015). [Inaccessible and Under-Resourced: Concerns Over Education in Rural Mon Communities](#).

¹³⁸Township-level data is available, disaggregated by gender, which can reveal intra-State/Region trends in regards to education completion.

¹³⁹Mercy Corps. (2013). [Kayah State Socio-Economic Analysis](#).

Figure 38: Percentage of children currently attending school, by age group and district



Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Improved teacher training is critical to enhancing education service delivery. Interviewees suggested that low salaries affect teacher recruitment, and other factors include entrenched traditions of rote learning. Some townships have particularly low numbers of education personnel, especially the townships of Mongkhet, Mongla and Mongyang in eastern Shan State. Interviewees articulated the need to improve teacher training at all levels: comprehensive assessments could be made to understand the gaps, opportunities and needs relating to teacher training. There is also an absence of knowledge and data on the gender dimensions of teacher training and education service delivery.

Figure 39: Government school, by State/Region

Education Level	State/Region	Number of schools	Number of students	Number of teachers	Pupil-school ratio	Pupil-teacher ratio
Primary school	Bago (E)	2008	335,640	12,132	167	28
	Kayah	339	35,083	1,382	103	25
	Kayin	1,335	180,824	5,074	135	36
	Mon	1,160	227,161	8,097	196	28
	Shan (E)	543	53,960	1,876	99	29
	Shan (S)	2,227	242,791	8,801	109	28
	Tanintharyi	1,021	186,465	5,369	183	35
Middle school	Bago (E)	108	155,541	3,828	1,440	41
	Kayah	34	19,041	511	560	37
	Kayin	97	67,973	1,965	701	36
	Mon	94	104,625	3,276	1,113	32
	Shan (E)	19	20,568	512	1,083	40
	Shan (S)	100	109,722	2,716	1,097	40
	Tanintharyi	76	77,819	2,043	1,024	38
High school	Bago (E)	86	41,989	1,609	488	26
	Kayah	16	6,011	350	376	17
	Kayin	56	16,140	733	288	22
	Mon	72	28,323	1,351	393	21
	Shan (E)	30	4,518	235	151	19
	Shan (S)	96	28,670	1,263	299	23
	Tanintharyi	50	17,825	756	357	24

Source: Myanmar Department of Education. (2014). Education Statistical Yearbook.

Linking vocational training to labour demands and economic need is increasingly important. Interviewees observed that youth need relevant skills for the local economy, even if wage disparities mean that many young people will continue to seek employment in Thailand, in other countries, and in Yangon or other urban centres.¹⁴⁰ Interviewees expressed some concern that training could cement existing gender stereotypes as to what are perceived as suitable occupations.

Education qualifications from refugee border camps and other places in Thailand are not recognised in Myanmar, reducing incentives to people to return to their country of origin. This issue also applies to children and youth refugees returning to primary and high schools.¹⁴¹ Inconsistencies in accreditation also cause significant problems.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰Lanjouw, S. (2015). [Livelihood Opportunities, Gaps and Training Needs Kayah State, Myanmar & Mae Hong Son Province, Thailand](#). Danish Refugee Council.

¹⁴¹Dare, A. (2015). [Beyond Access: Refugee Students' Experiences of Myanmar State Education](#). Save The Children; Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity et al. (2015). [Refugee Student Transition: Policy Position and Program Recommendations](#).

¹⁴²South-East Consultations Operations Meeting on Convergence, 19 June 2014.

Health

As with education, access to health services varies across southeastern Myanmar.¹⁴³ Despite the regular collection and compilation of State/Region and township health profiles by the Government, the most recent publicly available dataset is from 2011.¹⁴⁴ Long-standing insecurity, landmines, limited infrastructure, checkpoints, travel costs and restrictions, mountainous terrain and displacement are all barriers to accessing services.¹⁴⁵ Transport costs are particularly acute in remote areas. Multiple actors provide health services. Non-state and private providers offer alternative services or fill gaps in the Government system.¹⁴⁶ Some reports indicate that access to health services is improving much more rapidly in areas that enjoy relative stability, such as most of Tanintharyi Region. However people living on remote islands still struggle to access primary care.¹⁴⁷

As can be seen in Kayah State and elsewhere, a lack of qualified health care personnel hinders access to services.¹⁴⁸ Projects such as those currently supported by the 3MDG Fund are improving coverage and access across both Government and non-Government controlled areas. Government funding for the health sector has also increased significantly since 2011. In Shan State, a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report highlighted that 50% of survey interviewees reported improvements in health services over the past three years.¹⁴⁹ Nonetheless, health services remain constrained in Shan State where there is a higher risk of disease and death than in most of the rest of the country.¹⁵⁰

Infant and child mortality rates vary. Rates are generally higher in remote areas and in displaced communities.¹⁵¹ A survey of southeastern Myanmar conducted in 2013 found infant mortality to be higher than the reported average for Myanmar.¹⁵² The study showed that preventable diseases (diarrhoea, malaria, acute respiratory infections) caused 42% of deaths in remote and displaced communities. Ongoing but preventable, drivers of child mortality were found to be malnutrition, infections and complications during birth. More comprehensive data is required to understand health needs and issues specific to children.

Maternal, reproductive and sexual health needs in southeastern Myanmar are not being met. Maternal mortality rates vary between and within States/Regions. Figure 40 shows that State-level maternal mortality rates in southeastern Myanmar are similar to the national average of 1.2 deaths per 1,000 births (2011). At the township level, large disparities can be seen within States/Regions, in addition to revealing areas where data is unavailable (see Figure 40).

¹⁴³The Health Information System Working Group began conducting population-based, retrospective mortality and morbidity surveys of IDPs in southeast Myanmar in 2004 as a mechanism to assess priority health conditions of displaced populations. For the latest survey (2013), see: Health Information System Working Group. (2015). [The Long Road to Recovery: Ethnic and Community-Based Health Organisations Leading the Way to Better Health in Eastern Burma](#). Davis, B. and Jolliffe, K. (2016). *Achieving Healthy Equity in Contested Areas of Southeast Myanmar*. The Asia Foundation.

¹⁴⁴For information on this data-set, see: <http://www.themimu.info/baseline-datasets>.

¹⁴⁵Lanjouw, S. and Nwe Nwe Aye. (2013). [SDC Health Assessment in Southeast Region of Myanmar](#). Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

¹⁴⁶Christian Aid. (2014). [Working Towards Health Convergence](#). Jolliffe, K. (2014). [Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar's Contested Regions](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

¹⁴⁷UNDP. (2014). [The State of Local Governance: Trends in Tanintharyi \(Local Governance Mapping\)](#).

¹⁴⁸UNDP. (2014). [The State of Local Governance: Trends in Kayah \(Local Governance Mapping\)](#).

¹⁴⁹UNDP's Local Governance Mapping includes subnational analysis related to healthcare service delivery and highlights main areas of the health service delivery that are in need of improvement, see: [Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Shan, Tanintharyi](#) and [Bago](#).

¹⁵⁰Parmer et al. (2015). [Health and Human Rights in Eastern Myanmar after the Political Transition: A Population-Based Assessment Using Multistaged Household Cluster Sampling](#). *PLoS One*(10)(5).

¹⁵¹In 2012, UNICEF published "Snapshots of Child Well-Being", which analyses health and nutrition data with needs of children. See: [Kayin, Kayah, Mon, Bago, Tanintharyi](#) and Shan.

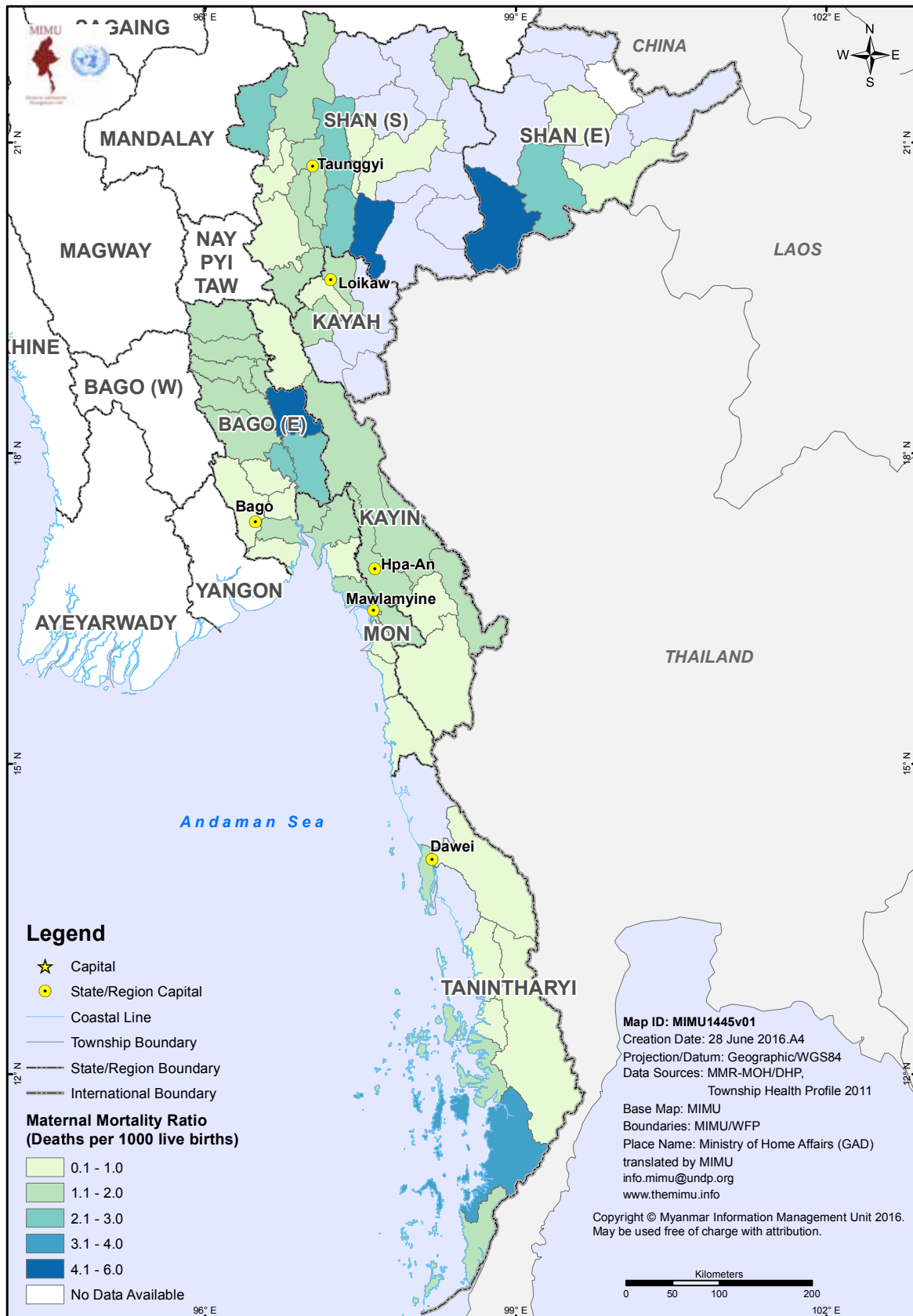
¹⁵²Health Information System Working Group. (2015). [The Long Road to Recovery: Ethnic and Community-Based Health Organisations Leading the Way to Better Health in Eastern Burma](#).

Fifty four percent of women are thought to have unmet contraceptive needs in southeastern Myanmar.¹⁵³ The most recent data on contraceptive prevalence rates and on the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel or antenatal care coverage was collected in 2009 at the township level.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³Unmet needs for contraception is defined as “the proportion of women not currently using contraceptive methods among those who stated they were not planning to have more children, or who were not currently pregnant and did not explicitly state they did not need contraception”, see: Parmar et al. (2015). [Health and Human Rights in Eastern Myanmar after the Political Transition: A Population-Based Assessment Using Multistaged Household Cluster Sampling](#). *PLoS One*(10/5); Health Information System Working Group. (2015). [The Long Road to Recovery: Ethnic and Community-Based Health Organizations Leading the Way to Better Health in Eastern Burma](#).

¹⁵⁴One study found predominant use of hormonal methods of birth control, including Depo-Provera injections (65.8%) and oral contraceptives (28.8%). Parmar et al. (2015). [Health and Human Rights in Eastern Myanmar after the Political Transition: A Population-Based Assessment Using Multistaged Household Cluster Sampling](#). *PLoS One*(10/5). MIMU's baseline data set contains quantitative data on Reproductive Health Statistics from 2009.

Figure 40: Maternal mortality ratio in southeastern Myanmar, by township (2011)



Disclaimer: The names shown and the boundaries used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

Source: Myanmar Ministry of Health. (2011). Township Health Profile.

Women in southeastern Myanmar continue to rely on Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) who have received specialised training from non-state health actors to improve their ability to detect the common danger signs during pregnancy, to conduct safe deliveries and to provide both ante- and post-natal care.¹⁵⁵ Seventy-three percent of women reported using a TBA during the delivery of their child.¹⁵⁶ TBAs also provide critical support functions such as caring, cooking and washing for new mothers. Interviewees highlighted a need to improve and provide ongoing training for TBAs. Health services – particularly for critical, complex and specialised problems – in areas near the border are often obtained by crossing into Thailand and accessing Thai Government hospitals, migrant clinics or health services in refugee camps.

International non-government organisation (INGO) focus is changing but access to funding remains limited for many ethnic organisations and community-based organisations (CBOs). INGO support to health service delivery now includes more emphasis on technical assistance and capacity building; however, rigid donor requirements and deadlines mean that funding remains inaccessible for many ethnic and CBOs. Previously INGOs directly provided for a host of health services in southeastern Myanmar. INGOs are increasingly addressing technical assistance and capacity-building elements along with direct service delivery. Interviewees highlighted a subtle shift in the approaches of international donors and NGOs from service delivery to capacity building for national health organisations, even if some reliance on international agencies for direct services continues in the medium term. National health agencies stress that the complex reporting processes required to meet donor funding requirements remain a challenge.

Migratory patterns of populations create challenges to the sustainability of health programming. The lack of a formal system to manage immigration and disease control places a strain on area-based public health systems.¹⁵⁷ Interviewees highlighted that the unique dynamics of many parts of southeastern Myanmar – out-migration, in-migration, forced displacement and low service availability – increase the difficulty of implementing sustainable programming, collecting health data, and conducting disease surveillance and control. Diseases such as malaria, dengue and TB were also seen as significant issues in for the many migrants who regularly cross the border into Thailand.

Access to drinking water and adequate sanitation needs improvement. Improved sources of drinking water reduce deaths, especially of children, from diarrheal disease, and these issues often top communities' lists of priority needs. Household access in many parts of southeastern Myanmar is below the national average of 69%.¹⁵⁸ In largely rural Shan and Kayah States, the rate is below 60% (54.1% and 58.3% respectively). Of the southeastern States/Regions, only Mon State achieves the national average.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵Health Information System Working Group. (2015). [The Long Road to Recovery: Ethnic and Community-Based Health Organisations Leading the Way to Better Health in Eastern Burma](#).

¹⁵⁶Health Information System Working Group. (2015). [The Long Road to Recovery: Ethnic and Community-Based Health Organisations Leading the Way to Better Health in Eastern Burma](#).

¹⁵⁷UNDP. (2014). [The State of Local Governance: Trends in Tanintharyi \(Local Governance Mapping\)](#).

¹⁵⁸"Improved" sources of drinking water, as defined in the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, refer to tap or bottled water, tube well/borehole, or protected well/spring. An "unimproved" source means a pool/pond/lake, river/stream/canal, or rainwater.

¹⁵⁹Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Service provision, conflict and non-state actors (NSAs)

Conflict-related tensions mean that the presence of Government staff, including health and education personnel, is limited in significant parts of every State/Region in southeastern Myanmar.¹⁶⁰ In some of the poorest and most remote areas, people suffer from a lack of public service provision across all sectors. For example, there is no middle school in Shadaw Township, Kayah State, or in Mongkeht, Mongla and Mongton in eastern Shan State. Health services are also limited: maternal mortality in NSA-controlled areas of Kayin State in 2013 was found to be considerably higher (7.21 deaths per 1,000 births) than the State average (1.9 per 1,000 births).¹⁶¹

Other service providers partially fill the gap. While some service providers are independent or operate purely as religious foundations, many are associated with NSAs. In areas held or strongly influenced by NSAs, services offered by ethnic organisations and CBOs are often more accessible and affordable than the Government's.¹⁶² Restricted access has prevented systematic understanding and data collection surrounding health and education needs. Interviewees highlighted that the lack of comprehensive data on needs and indicators of health status demonstrates the historical and ongoing challenges of reaching remote populations. Areas that are contested or held by NSAs are not necessarily integrated into national statistics.

Many NSAs consider the provision of services as integral to their role as patrons to their constituents and as a mechanism to maintain legitimacy.¹⁶³ Some NSAs including the KNU, NMSP and KNPP have been providing education, health and other services through different means. In some disputed areas with a majority Mon or Karen population, parallel NSA structures provide services. In other places provision is offered by a range of non-governmental or civil society organisations, many of whom are affiliated directly or indirectly with NSAs. In areas of mixed authority, individuals may access either Government or non-government health services. In some cases, a teacher whose salary is provided by an NSA or affiliated organisation uses a Government-funded school building.

In contested and NSA-held areas, health services are provided both by stationary clinics – mostly located in stable areas – and mobile health teams, such as the Backpack Health Workers.¹⁶⁴ Multiple organisations also support Government health services for both disease-specific issues (HIV, TB, malaria) and health system strengthening. Given access limitations, more support has been possible in Government-controlled areas than in NSA areas, with subsequent improvements in morbidity and mortality rates.

Foreign donors' funding modalities for public services are shifting. Previously, many donors based their funding activities for Myanmar in Thailand. However, efforts are now being made to support activities based in-country.¹⁶⁵ This has generated some resentment among those recipient organisations that have seen funding opportunities dwindle.

The preferred language of instruction in education and in service provision, such as health, is a political and not just a technical issue. While central Government promotes one national language,

¹⁶⁰For a more comprehensive review of health services in southeastern Myanmar (focusing on Kayah, Kayin and Mon) see: Davis, B. and Jolliffe, K. (2016). *Achieving Healthy Equity in Contested Areas of Southeast Myanmar*. The Asia Foundation. This document includes a review of health services provided by the Ministry of Health and Ethnic and Community-Based Health Organisations in southeastern Myanmar.

¹⁶¹Lanjouw, S. and Nwe Nwe Aye. (2013). *SDC Health Assessment in Southeast Region of Myanmar*. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

¹⁶²Health Information System Working Group. (2015). *The Long Road to Recovery: Ethnic and Community-Based Health Organisations Leading the Way to Better Health in Eastern Burma*.

¹⁶³Jolliffe, K. (2014). *Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar's Contested Regions*. The Asia Foundation.

¹⁶⁴The Backpack Health Worker Health Team was formed by Karenni, Mon and Karen health workers to provide primary health services and public health promotion to IDPs living along the border in southeastern Myanmar.

¹⁶⁵For a discussion on "perceptions of a donor shift", see: Davis, B. and Jolliffe, K. (2016). *Achieving Healthy Equity in Contested Areas of Southeast Myanmar*. The Asia Foundation.

minority activists and NSAs promote other indigenous languages as vital aspects of identity and political power. Ethnic language recognition is viewed by authorities within the broader context of debates over federalism and the overall peace process. Some progress has been made in recent years, in Mon State for example, where the Government has agreed to accept mother-tongue education in primary levels in at least some areas. Subjects are taught in the Mon language at the primary level. The transition to the Myanmar language (ie Burmese) then occurs at the middle school level.

Teaching in the mother tongue, and accessibility of education debates, are gaining traction.¹⁶⁶ In areas where Mon and Karen education regimes are significant, mother-tongue-based curricula reach over 170,000 students.¹⁶⁷ Interviewees suggested that for multi-ethnic students, access to minority languages in school, particularly during early years, is critical as young students often do not yet speak Myanmar, the main language of the Government curriculum.¹⁶⁸ This issue is particularly salient in southeastern Myanmar given the diversity of languages spoken. (See Figure 11 for main spoken languages in southeastern Myanmar.)

Vocational concerns: promoting indigenous languages is not a straightforward issue from the perspective of minorities. Young people who are not fluent in Myanmar language often struggle to enter higher education or gain formal sector employment. Interviewees highlighted the importance of non-agricultural vocational skills, especially for demobilising ex-combatants. The needs of women and men who have been connected with armed movements should also be considered. Some interviewees also noted the importance of ensuring that such training is accessible outside urban centres. Overall, interviewees highlighted the value of training based on local demand for skilled labour.

Cooperation between different systems is a growing issue of interest. Increased access and political space drive questions over how to manage multiple, uncoordinated service delivery systems.¹⁶⁹ Non-state service providers under the authority of NSAs could be displaced by the state system, or continue in parallel, or undergo convergence.¹⁷⁰ The notion of “convergence” is increasingly unclear as different links and types of exchange move forward. Some interviewees prefer the terms “cooperation” and “coordination” rather than “convergence”, pointing out that the Government does not recognise any education system other than its own as legitimate.¹⁷¹ Importantly, the text of the 2015 NCA recognises the role of NSAs as education service providers.¹⁷²

Health service cooperation in southeastern Myanmar is deepening in the area between Government health services and ethnic and community-based services, and in cooperation between services offered in Myanmar and across the Thai border.¹⁷³ In 2012, CBOs and ethnic organisations formed the Health Convergence Core Group to discuss policy options on how non-state and state

¹⁶⁶Buchanan, J. et al. (2013). [Developing Disparity: Regional Investment in Burma's Borderlands](#). *Transnational Institute and Burma Centre Netherlands*.

¹⁶⁷Jolliffe, K. (2014). [Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar's Contested Regions](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

¹⁶⁸Lall, M. and South, A. (2013). [Comparing Models of Non-state Ethnic Education in Myanmar The Mon and Karen National Education Regimes](#). *Journal of Contemporary Asia 44(2)*; South, A. and Lall, M. (2016). [Schooling and Conflict: Ethnic Education and Mother Tongue-Based Teaching in Myanmar](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

¹⁶⁹Jolliffe, K. (2014). [Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar's Contested Regions](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

¹⁷⁰South, A. and Lall, M. (2015). [The Peace Process and Ethnic Education in Myanmar](#). *Democratic Voice of Burma (18 October 2015)*.

¹⁷¹Thabyay Education Foundation. (2015). [Conflict Sensitivity in Education Provision in Karen State](#). For a discussion on health convergence and examples of these activities in southeastern Myanmar such as information sharing, joint training and programming, accreditation, study tours and more see: Davis, B. and Jolliffe, K. (2016). [Achieving Healthy Equity in Contested Areas of Southeast Myanmar](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

¹⁷²Section 25 of the NCA texts states that, “Ethnic Armed Organisations that are signatories to this agreement have been responsible for development and security in their respective areas. During the interim period of holding peace talks, we shall carry out the following programmes and projects such as those concerning health, education and socio-economic development of civilians in consultation with each other in said areas.”

¹⁷³Lanjouw, S. and Nwe Nwe Aye. (2013). [SDC Health Assessment in Southeast Region of Myanmar](#). Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

health service providers could meet within the context of Myanmar's peace process.¹⁷⁴ Ethnic health providers seek a decentralised health system that builds on their experience, access and trust with populations.¹⁷⁵

Efforts to work towards malaria elimination will require greater coordination and collaboration between Government and non-government health services.¹⁷⁶ Countries in the Asia-Pacific region have agreed to aim for malaria elimination by 2030¹⁷⁷. However, a survey of over 6,100 households in eastern Myanmar reported that malaria was the primary cause of death among all age groups. The survey showed that 63% of survey respondents were using a bed net; in this same study, of the 2,269 participants who agreed to be tested for malaria, 2.3% tested positive.¹⁷⁸ Due to the high levels of malaria prevalence and resistance to anti-malarial medicines in southeastern Myanmar, the Thai-Myanmar border is one of the most important areas for improvement in health systems and coordination.¹⁷⁹ Key to decreasing the high rates of morbidity and mortality due to malaria will be an increase in information sharing between actors and NSAs in order to properly track cases.¹⁸⁰

Conflict-sensitive programme management is important. Studies in the health sector indicate that unequal international support can be perceived as favouring one system and actor over another.¹⁸¹ This is particularly problematic if ethnic actors believe that the international community is supporting the Government's service delivery agenda and system over theirs. Some interviewees highlighted a lack of knowledge about both NSA social service policies and broader development priorities as obstacles to efficient service delivery. Similarly, conflict-sensitive programme management also seeks to value the skills and experience of all health workers through recognition of accreditation.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁴In 2015, the Health Convergence Core Group developed a policy paper on issues related to the decentralisation of health services in Myanmar, see: Health Convergence Core Group. (2015). [A Federal, Devolved Health System for Burma/Myanmar: Health Convergence Core Group. \(2013\). Statement: Building Trust and Peace by Working through Ethnic Health Networks towards a Federal Union.](#)

¹⁷⁵Christian Aid. (2014). [Working Towards Health Convergence.](#)

¹⁷⁶WHO. (2015). [Strategy for Malaria Elimination in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region \(2015-2030\).](#)

¹⁷⁷Asia Pacific Leaders push towards malaria-free region by 2030 See more [here.](#)

¹⁷⁸Parmar et al. (2015). [Health and Human Rights in Eastern Myanmar after the Political Transition: A Population-Based Assessment Using Multistaged Household Cluster Sampling.](#) *PLoS One*(10/5); Information System Working Group. (2015). [The Long Road to Recovery: Ethnic and Community-Based Health Organisations Leading the Way to Better Health in Eastern Burma](#)

¹⁷⁹In 2012, IOM published a [mapping](#) of population migration and malaria in southeastern Myanmar.

¹⁸⁰For nationwide analysis of Myanmar's malaria profile, see WHO. (2014). [Myanmar Malaria Profile.](#)

¹⁸¹Lanjouw, S. and Nwe Nwe Aye. (2013). [SDC Health Assessment in Southeast Region of Myanmar.](#) Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

¹⁸²Health Information System Working Group. (2015). [The Long Road to Recovery: Ethnic and Community-Based Health Organisations Leading the Way to Better Health in Eastern Burma.](#)

5. Governance, justice and land rights

KEY POINTS

- Myanmar remains highly centralised. National level authority is resented especially highly in ethnic minority states, contested conflict zones and some other areas of southeastern Myanmar.
- Efforts to decentralise have taken place but without adequate budgets and administrative support local parliaments remain weak. General Administration Department (GAD) officials, and in places the military, remain dominant at the local level. Village tract officials are now indirectly elected.
- Full Government control does not extend to all areas of southeastern Myanmar. Various administrative arrangements exist across the area. For example, much of Shan State is controlled by NSAs at the local level. Federalism is a pressing issue for ethnic leaders and local politicians and is closely related to the ongoing peace process.
- Access to justice is limited by widespread mistrust within and across ethnic groups, as well as between NSAs and Government. Many local people view any legal system as a repressive tool rather than a safeguard of rights. Barriers to accessing justice for men and especially for women exist in all areas with varying types of customary law frequently used as the primary mechanism for dealing with serious disputes.
- Although land use policy is improving and land registration is ongoing, cases of land rights abuses continue. The history of land seizure makes the issue especially sensitive. New development and rising land prices present additional threats.
- Particular groups, including potentially returning migrants or displaced people and upland shifting cultivators, are especially prone to abuses of land rights.

Subnational governance

Despite the formation of State/Regional governments under the 2008 Constitution, Myanmar's political processes remain highly centralised. Presidential appointment processes for Chief Ministers undermine the autonomy of State/Regional Parliaments, while fiscal devolution is limited by the small

size of local budgets and limited scope for prioritising expenditures.¹⁸³ Most civil servants working outside the national capital, Nay Pyi Taw, operate as deconcentrated representatives of the central Government, reporting to their respective national ministries. State/Region parliaments and politicians also have very limited administrative support.

Administrative decentralisation is challenged by an ambiguous relationship between the national ministry and its counterpart at the State/Regional level. Civil administration at the township level is led by the head of the township GAD, who is appointed by, and reports to, senior officials in Nay Pyi Taw. The GAD is part of the military-led Ministry of Home Affairs.¹⁸⁴ In many areas of southeastern Myanmar, military officials have effective authority at the local level, a legacy of decades of conflict. Other local bodies are also relatively disempowered. Self-administered zones (SAZs) are operational but have very limited budgetary authority or administrative capacity.

At the village and village tract level, there are aspects of democratic practice, and some element of local authority exists. Elections took place early in 2016. Heads of households, in individual clusters of 10 households, elect 10 household leaders through a secret ballot. The 10 household leaders then nominate candidates from among themselves. Finally, the 10 household leaders elect the village-tract and urban ward administrator by secret ballot. The person with the highest number of votes wins and is subsequently appointed by the GAD.¹⁸⁵ The elected officials have some authority over local affairs although they must report directly to higher Government authorities. Village-level officials are often selected by partially democratic local processes.

Federalism is a high-profile political issue and will continue to be a core part of peace discussions. Ethnic minority representatives including politicians, civil society leaders and members of non-state actors (NSAs) support a federal solution to Myanmar's ethnic conflicts. The gap between the ambitions of some ethnic advocates and national leaders remains significant. Any major change would involve adaptation of the 2008 Constitution, a step that has so far been resisted by influential Government military leaders.

Some territory is not fully controlled by the national Government. Across current and previously conflict-affected parts of southeastern Myanmar, different and complex local governance arrangements exist. In some areas, the national Government has never exerted local authority. This complex context has important implications for engagement by humanitarian and development actors.

¹⁸³Nixon, et al. (2013). [State and Region Governments in Myanmar](#). Myanmar Development Resource Institute and The Asia Foundation.

¹⁸⁴Kyi Pyar Chit Saw and Arnold, M. (2014). [Administering the State in Myanmar. An Overview of the General Administration Department](#). The Asia Foundation.

¹⁸⁵Kempel, S. (2016). [Myanmar's forgotten local elections](#). Myanmar Times (16 February 2016).

Figure 41: Types of administrative arrangements in southeastern Myanmar

Type 1:	SAZs In southeastern Myanmar, these cover the Danu and Pa-O SAZs in southern Shan State.
Type 2:	De facto state-sanctioned territories Examples of these are the numerous former Special Regions that have dissipated over time. Parts of Shan State fall into this category.
Type 3:	Older ceasefire territories These are areas held or heavily influenced by groups, including “militia”, that agreed ceasefires in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s such as the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA) in eastern Shan State, various Border Guard Forces (BGFs) and other small groups in Kayah State.
Type 4:	Bilateral ceasefire zones These are areas held or heavily influenced by groups that signed bilateral agreements in 2012 but did not sign the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), such as the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) in Kayah State and the New Mon State Party (NMSPP) in Mon State.
Type 5:	NCA 2015 ceasefire areas These are areas held or heavily influenced by groups that signed the NCA, including the KNU, the Pa-O National Liberation Front (PNLF) and Restoration Council of Shan State/ Shan State Army – South (RCSS/SSA-S).
Type 6:	Enclaves dominated by armed criminal organisations. These areas include small parts of Shan, Mon and Karen States. ¹⁸⁶

Rural communities are often subject to multiple authorities. While the GAD forms the backbone of administrative services in towns, village tracts and villages in areas under Government control, some NSAs have developed and implemented similar administrative structures and affiliated service providers, particularly related to health and education (for more information, see the Services health and education section). Some NSAs operate parallel government structures: in areas where the national Government does not operate, they serve as the main local authority. However, their local reach is inconsistent and many villages remain outside of most authority structures.

At the local level, the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw), NSAs, BGFs and various militia groups continue to take responsibility for things such as taxation and travel restrictions. Relations between local authorities from different NSA and Government agencies have been described as ranging between occupation, contestation and co-existence.¹⁸⁷

The legitimacy of authorities varies widely in southeastern Myanmar. According to interviewees, village leaders are generally perceived as being more accountable to local households, while township-level authorities are seen as a distant arm of the central state. Parallel systems of governance in contested areas, and frequently shifting lines of demarcation, increase the chances for repeated conflict. In some places local residents have to manage rival groups who charge taxes, mediate disputes and undertake other service delivery tasks.¹⁸⁸ Determining the legitimacy of a given authority in the eyes of local people is a major challenge. In conflict-affected areas, outside groups, both international and local, may find it difficult to establish which authorities to work with, resulting in some hesitation to commit long-term. However, pushing ahead in contested areas without local backing may inadvertently

¹⁸⁶Adapted from Jolliffe, K. (2014). [Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar's Contested Regions](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

¹⁸⁷Kempel, S. and Aung Thu Nyien. (2014). [Local Governance Dynamics in South-East Myanmar: An Assessment for Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation](#). *Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation*.

¹⁸⁸Jolliffe, K. (2014). [Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar's Contested Regions](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

intensify tensions.¹⁸⁹ Effective conflict sensitivity measures are essential for international interventions and should be actively reviewed and revised throughout the life of projects and programmes.

In contested areas of southeastern Myanmar, coordination between NSAs and the administrative arms of Government is slowly addressing capacity constraints and improving service delivery.

There is general acknowledgement that health and education services, as well as the issuance of land registration and Citizen Scrutiny Cards (CSCs), will be improved by strengthening links across conflict lines. However, obstacles to developing these operational relationships include a lack of clarity in the demarcation of contested areas, and the interim arrangements for power-sharing during the peace process.

Access to justice

Common barriers to accessing justice exist in southeastern Myanmar. A lack of clarity and information about laws and legal procedures, political interference in the administration of justice, and weak policing capacities have been identified as weaknesses in both formal and NSA judicial systems. Both systems tend to be highly centralised, with sign-off authority in the hands of the very few. Interviewees noted that community members often view any legal system as a repressive tool rather than a safeguard of rights. Corruption in the Government's police force and judiciary are identified as being particularly problematic for the concept of equality before the law.¹⁹⁰ Across southeastern Myanmar there are a host of interconnected social, cultural, religious and political barriers that exist for women attempting to access justice.¹⁹¹ (See Gender section for more information on barriers to justice and women's participation in public spaces more broadly.)

Access to justice in southeastern Myanmar is limited by widespread mistrust and a history of conflict: there are low levels of trust within and across ethnic groups, as well as between NSAs and the Government. Major concerns include protection for farmers and their land, access to natural resource benefits and problems caused by large development projects.¹⁹² Some NSAs including the KNU, NMSP and KNPP have codified justice systems that are largely based on colonial practice, although it has been noted that these systems typically have limited penetration at the village tract level.¹⁹³ The capacity of these systems to police behaviour and adjudicate disputes is mixed.

Legal aid services have begun to appear in southeastern Myanmar, but clients are sceptical that the legal system will satisfy their needs. Interviewees highlighted that a lack of confidence in Myanmar's judicial system is most pronounced in conflict-affected communities, particularly regarding justice services offered by the Government. Access to justice for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) is also limited by mistrust in formal justice systems; prevailing socio-cultural norms mean that such disputes are often resolved informally between families.

Perceptions about the meaning of "rule of law" vary widely throughout southeastern Myanmar.

As in the rest of the country, the term is considered to be an important indication of reform after decades of military rule. Some perceive it as the conventional maintenance of "law and order", while others believe that it emphasises "social justice". Interviewees noted a general feeling that laws do not always reflect the will of the people because Myanmar lacks a political culture of open dialogue and

¹⁸⁹ Jolliffe, K. (2015). [Ethnic Armed Conflict and Territorial Administration in Myanmar](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

¹⁹⁰ The Border Consortium. (2014). [Protection and Security Concerns in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#).

¹⁹¹ Karen Human Rights Group. (2016). [Hidden Strengths, Hidden Struggles: Women's Testimonies from southeast Myanmar](#); Justice Base. (2016). [Women's Access to Justice in Plural Legal Systems in Myanmar](#); Education Initiatives and Asia Justice and Rights. (2015). [Violence Against Women Prevention and Response Services and Access in Myanmar](#); Gender Equality Network (2015). [Raising the Curtain: Cultural Norms, Social Practices, and Gender Equality in Myanmar](#).

¹⁹² Pierce, P. and Reiger, C. (2014). [Navigating Paths to Justice in Myanmar's Transition](#). *International Centre for Transitional Justice*.

¹⁹³ The Border Consortium. (2014). [Protection and Security Concerns in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#).

diplomacy. Ethnic groups reportedly want amendments made to the Constitution before real dialogue can take place.¹⁹⁴

Communities are used to taking care of, and providing for, themselves, often through customary law. A 2013 survey of all southeastern States/Regions found that 74% of village tracts used village leaders and varying types of customary law as the primary mechanism for dealing with serious disputes and violent crimes.¹⁹⁵ Citizens say they have a better chance of accessing services and rights through village tract administrators and village leaders rather than higher-level authorities.¹⁹⁶ Remote communities in contested areas generally follow their own policing mechanisms to maintain social order. Little is written about such systems. More research is needed on the local practices or conflict-resolution practices that are already in use and which are found to be effective.¹⁹⁷

Women may be particularly marginalised by this use of customary law. Concerns about gender bias in judgements are especially strong in customary systems, largely due to a lack of female participation in dispute resolution practices.¹⁹⁸ Customary laws rarely fully address the rights of survivors of GBV given outstanding barriers to women accessing justice (for more information, see the Gender section). As in other parts of the country, women may be discouraged from reporting crime – particularly if gendered in nature.¹⁹⁹ A 2015 gender mapping report found little research and a lack of awareness activities about GBV in southeastern Myanmar.²⁰⁰

Land and land rights

Land is increasingly valuable in Myanmar and rural landlessness is rising. Twenty-five percent of farmers in Myanmar are already landless agricultural labourers, many of them having been pushed by a lack of livelihood options to sell their land for short-term gain.²⁰¹ Declining access to land results in increased unemployment, depletion of forest resources and out-migration – all of which are related to food insecurity.²⁰² Owning land often brings resources, wealth and security.²⁰³ Land prices continue to climb in both urban and rural areas.²⁰⁴ This situation sparks concern over the potential for a rise in land confiscations, for either public or business purposes. Road and bridge construction, natural resource extraction, dam and other infrastructure projects, military pursuits, and commercial agriculture have all expanded in the wake of Myanmar's transition to a market-based economy and with the negotiation of ceasefires.²⁰⁵ For the vast majority of households, land is the largest asset. Compensation is typically offered at below-market rates, meaning that displaced farmers cannot acquire new land in nearby areas.

The demand for land rights is associated with decades of military control. Reports highlight that until recently, confiscation of land and forced displacement by actors including the Government and the

¹⁹⁴ US Institute of Peace. (2013). [Burma/Myanmar Rule of Law Trip Report](#).

¹⁹⁵ Survey of 222 village tracts. The Border Consortium. (2014). [Protection and Security Concerns in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#).

¹⁹⁶ Kempel, S. and Aung Thu Nyien. (2014). [Local Governance Dynamics in South-East Myanmar: An Assessment for Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation](#). *Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation*.

¹⁹⁷ Pierce, P. and Reiger, C. (2014). [Navigating Paths to Justice in Myanmar's Transition](#). *International Centre for Transitional Justice*.

¹⁹⁸ The Border Consortium. (2014). [Protection and Security Concerns in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#).

¹⁹⁹ Minoletti, P. (2014). [Women's Participation in the Subnational Governance of Myanmar](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

²⁰⁰ Women's Organisations Network and Gender Equality Network. (2015). [WON-GEN Member Mapping Report](#).

²⁰¹ Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business. (2014). [Myanmar Oil & Gas Sector-Wide Impact Assessment \(SWIA\)](#).

²⁰² Food Security Working Group. (2011). *Upland Land Tenure Security in Myanmar: An overview*.

²⁰³ Becker, A. et al. (2015). [LIFT Uplands Programme: Scoping Assessment Report](#). *Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund*.

²⁰⁴ USAID. (2013). [Property Rights and Resource Governance Burma](#).

²⁰⁵ Karen Human Rights Group. (2015). ["With only our voices, what can we do?" Land Confiscation and Local Response in South-East Myanmar](#).

military has been commonplace across Myanmar.²⁰⁶ Confiscations were enforced for direct military use, private gain and for public development projects. States with ethnic minority populations, particularly conflict-affected areas, were especially badly affected. The issue is politically prominent and has served as a rallying cry for activists and political candidates seeking to build support and criticise the military.

Interviewees raised the connection between land issues and the peace process. Issues of past (and some recent) land confiscation undermine both stability and confidence in the peace process. Under the 2015 NCA's chapter on civilian protection, a clause related to land is included which states that parties to the agreement are to "avoid forcible confiscation and transfer of land from local populations".²⁰⁷ Land issues are also part of the NCA's interim arrangements and a matter highlighted for discussion in the framework on political dialogue.²⁰⁸

Formerly inaccessible areas of southeastern Myanmar are opening up with mixed results. On the positive side, a reduction in conflict has enabled farmers to work plots that had been previously been inaccessible, and delayed development projects are now being reconsidered. But tensions are rising: reports suggest that the ceasefire process, together with a changing investment climate in the area, has also increased land confiscation, sparking disagreements over ownership.²⁰⁹ After the negotiation of bilateral ceasefires in 2012, NSAs and community-based organisations (CBOs) in Kayin and Kayah States expressed concern that Government control would be exerted through an expansion of military presence and development projects controlled by external actors.²¹⁰ Business transactions with both Government officials and NSA officials are rarely transparent. Information about Government development plans proposed for ethnic minority areas is not widely available.²¹¹

Land access and tenure in southeastern Myanmar are particularly fragile for migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Southeastern Myanmar has historically provided the greatest number of economic migrants, refugees and IDPs, and many migrating families had to leave land idle either because their potential earnings were greater elsewhere or because conflict limited access to their land. However, increasing land values and the presence of ceasefires mean that large numbers of people are considering returning to their land. Access to livelihoods and land is a critical factor in the decision-making processes of many people displaced by conflict as they consider return and resettlement.²¹²

Interviewees noted that uncultivated land is at risk of occupation by many different groups, such as Government bodies, neighbours, private investors, religious officials, and armed actors including the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw), Border Guard Forces (BGFs) and NSAs.²¹³ The possibility of compensation for those unable to return to their original homes remains unclear. Lack of local documentation is also an issue for those attempting to access previously held land – one estimate suggests that only 15% of rural residents can show a land registration document.²¹⁴ Widespread landmine contamination further complicates the picture. Despite such concerns, a pattern is emerging of formerly displaced people re-occupying lands to dissuade outsiders from taking possession.²¹⁵

²⁰⁶ Civil society groups have also noted that NSAs are involved with land confiscation, see: Karen Human Rights Group. (2016). *Hidden Strengths, Hidden Struggles: Women's Testimonies from southeast Myanmar*; Kramer, T. (2015). [Ethnic Conflict and Lands Rights in Myanmar](#). *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 82(2).

²⁰⁷ Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. (2015). Chapter 9 (f).

²⁰⁸ Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. (2015). Chapter 25.

²⁰⁹ The Border Consortium. (2013). [Poverty, Displacement and Local Governance in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#).

²¹⁰ Displacement Solutions. (2013). [Bridging the HLP Gap](#).

²¹¹ Transnational Institute and Burma Centre Netherlands. (2013). [Access Denied: Land Rights and Ethnic Conflict in Burma. \(May\)](#).

²¹² South, A. and Jolliffe, K. (2015). *Forced Migration and the Myanmar Peace Process*. UNHCR.

²¹³ Karen Human Rights Group. (2015). ["With only our voices, what can we do?" Land Confiscation and Local Response in South-East Myanmar](#).

²¹⁴ Displacement Solutions. (2013). [Bridging the HLP Gap](#).

²¹⁵ South, A. and Jolliffe, K. (2015). [Forced Migration: Typology and Local Agency in Southeast Myanmar](#). *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 37(2).

Myanmar women face particular barriers to exercising their equal rights to land. Interviewees noted the lack of information on women's access to land and land rights. Civil society voices from Mon State point out that men have better access to employment and education, and therefore tend to prevail in land disputes related to confiscation or resettlement.²¹⁶ Also, despite laws granting women equal access to or control over land, in practice women encounter obstacles to effective registration, control, inheritance, and participation in decision-making involving land.²¹⁷ Advocates are aiming to ensure that members of Myanmar's rural communities are considered in policymaking.²¹⁸

Customary and communal use and tenure of land is a widespread and longstanding practice. Large areas of southeastern Myanmar are farmed through "taungya" (shifting cultivation).²¹⁹ Customary systems are ineligible for permanent agricultural land use titles. Local systems vary significantly depending on leadership structures. According to some interpretations, land under traditional and community use is considered vacant, fallow or virgin (VfV), and thus subject to allocation to private companies and others.²²⁰ Recently, industrial agricultural concessions have been prevalent in the uplands of Shan and Kayah States and Tanintharyi Region.²²¹

Formal land tenure rights are still very limited. Two recent laws intended to create a regulatory environment favourable to business opportunities and investment may have significant effects on smallholders. The 2012 Farmland Law, and the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Law, allow private investors to acquire land or land use rights, and for foreign investors to lease land. These laws have led to an increase in issuance of land use certificates to non-local interests in Government-controlled areas. Under the new laws, the Government can carry out compulsory acquisitions in the state or public interest, or rescind farmland use rights.²²² The Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Law's references to "abandoned" land have special significance in southeastern Myanmar, where conflict and migration patterns have left land status unclear for many people. NSAs question the classification of "vacant, fallow and virgin lands," saying that this situation does not apply in their territories.

Myanmar's National Land Use Policy will guide the governance of land and related natural resources going forward.²²³ Finalised in January 2016, the policy will be especially important for southeastern Myanmar, given the area's specific history of political and armed conflict and displaced populations.²²⁴ Some NSAs, such as the KNU, have developed unique land use policies based on existing customary tenure practices which can differ from the national policy. These issues are salient for the forthcoming political dialogue – the 21st Panglong Conference scheduled for end of August 2016 – and discussions of federalism and decentralisation.²²⁵

Land registration processes have been under way across Myanmar since 2012. In many areas, this has given formal status to many landholders, improving their financial security and increasing farmers' interest in investing in, and improving, their land. But many problems remain, including partial coverage, gender disparities in recognition of ownership and disputed titling.

²¹⁶ Displacement Solutions. (2013). [Bridging the HLP Gap](#).

²¹⁷ Gender Equality Network. (2014). [Towards Gender Equality in the National Land Use Policy](#).

²¹⁸ Transnational Institute. (2015). [Linking Women and Land in Myanmar: Recognising Gender in the National Land Use Policy](#), (February).

²¹⁹ Some estimates claim that 30-40% of land nationally is under "taungya". The figure for southeastern Myanmar is likely to be higher still. Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business. (2014). [Land from Oil and Gas Sector-Wide Impact Assessment \(SWIA\)](#).

²²⁰ USAID. (2013). [Property Rights and Resource Governance Burma](#).

²²¹ Woods, K. (2015). [Commercial Agriculture Expansion in Myanmar: Links to Deforestation, Conversion Timber and Land Conflicts](#). *Forest Trends*.

²²² Oberndorf, R. B. (2012). [Legal Review of Recently Enacted Farmland Law and Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Law: Improving the Legal & Policy Frameworks Relating to Land Management in Myanmar](#), (November).

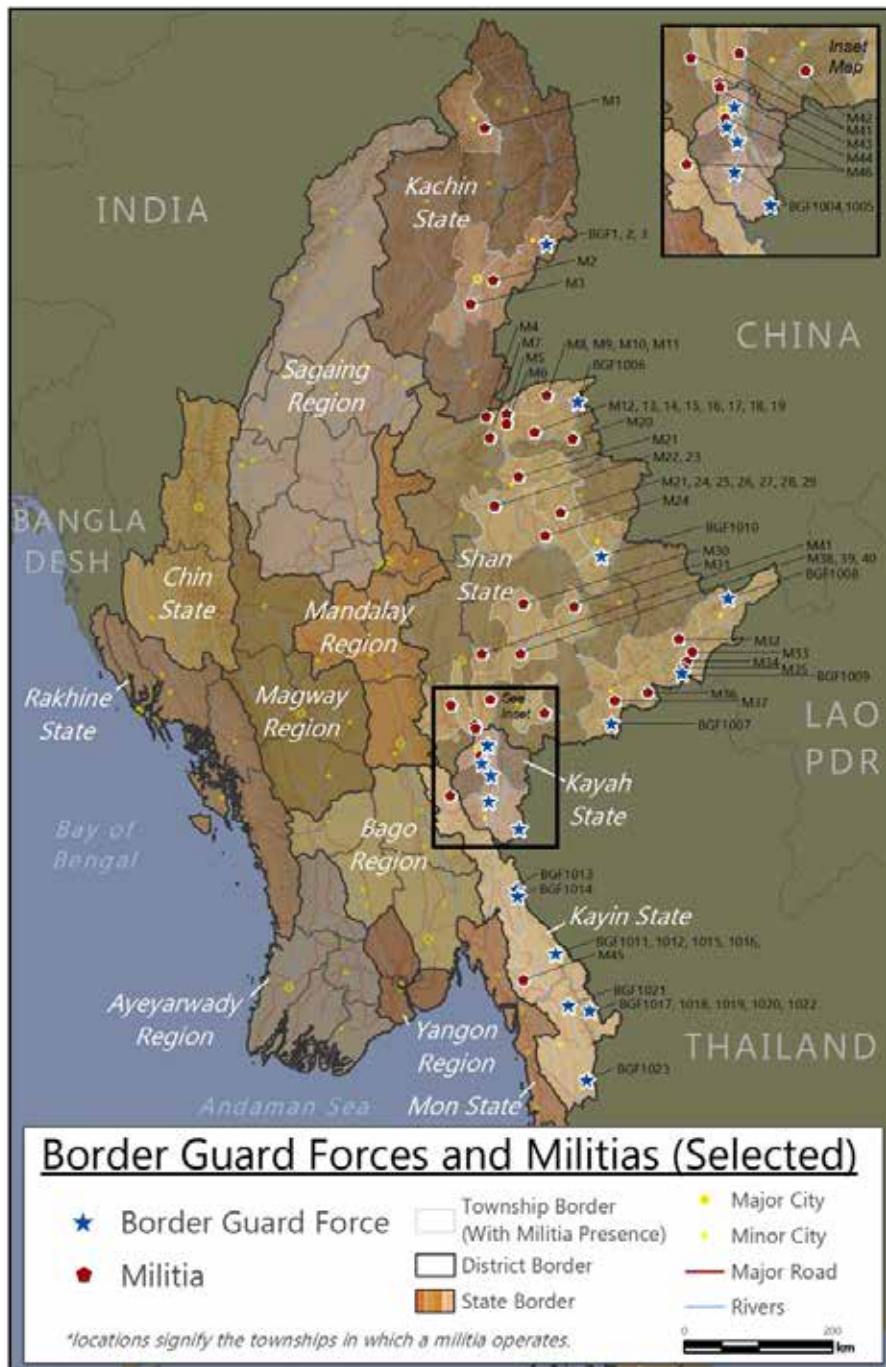
²²³ Government of Myanmar. (2016). [The Republic of the Union of Myanmar National Land Use Policy](#).

²²⁴ Transnational Institute. (2015). [Assessment of 6th Draft of the National Land Use Policy \(NLUP\)](#). Kramer, T. (2015). [Ethnic Conflict and Lands Rights in Myanmar](#). Social Research, (Summer). Myanmar Ethnic Community Development Forum. (2014). [Concerning Myanmar's National Land Use Policy](#).

²²⁵ Srinivas, S. and U Saw Hlaing. (2015). [Myanmar: Land Tenure Issues and the Impact on Rural Development](#). *FAO*.

Land use patterns are influenced by militia interests. Many semi-independent militia groups exist at the local level. They often have links with the Government military and are also involved with illegal activities, particularly in parts of Shan and Kayah States. These activities include the drug trade, border trade, natural resources exploitation and informal taxation. Interviewees suggest that members of these groups may number in the thousands. Some militia leaders have confiscated land in order to establish plantations, often in cooperation with military officials and businessmen from central parts of Myanmar and neighbouring countries.²²⁶

Figure 42: Map of selected BGFs and militia in Myanmar



Source: Buchanan, J. (2016). [Militias in Myanmar](#). The Asia Foundation.

²²⁶ Kramer, T. (2015). Ethnic Conflict and Lands Rights in Myanmar. Social Research, (Summer).

6. Peacebuilding

KEY POINTS

- An ongoing peace process seeks to end many decades of civil conflict. In southeastern Myanmar, five NSAs signed the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) but others chose not to do so. The conflict is fundamentally political, pitting local groups who claim to represent ethnic minorities against the central state.
- The peace process continues to encounter many obstacles, including a lack of unity among NSAs and a lack of trust between the parties in the process.
- Leaders of the process have made efforts to include different voices and community concerns, and to incorporate women, but only with minor impact. Women's organisations and some peace and security organisations are implementing programming to train and empower women peacebuilders to identify their priorities in the peace process. Women's organisations have also raised the need to implement a minimum 30% quota to foster the inclusion of women in the peace process.
- The international community is concerned about the appropriate way to engage with NSAs, especially those which have not been accepted as legal entities. Integrating civilian ceasefire monitoring mechanisms into formal ceasefire monitoring structures is a further challenge.
- Information on some issues is limited, including the significance of the informal economy at the local level and the prevalence of local, communal conflicts.

Addressing conflict: the ongoing peace process

In 2011-2012, the Government of Myanmar signed bilateral ceasefire agreements with many NSAs and efforts began to establish a comprehensive, national peace process. (A history of southeastern Myanmar's conflicts can be found in the Background and context section of this report.) In July 2014, non-state actors (NSAs) formed a collective negotiation bloc, the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT). This new body, building on decades of efforts to build alliances between NSAs, negotiated with the Government's Union Peace-Making Working Committee (UPWC). However, after nine rounds of formal negotiation, many differences remained. The most prominent controversy was over which groups were eligible to sign the NCA.²²⁷

Eight armed groups involved in the talks signed the NCA on 15 October 2015, including five which have a presence in southeastern Myanmar. These five groups are the Restoration Council of Shan State/

²²⁷ Euro-Burma Office. (2015). [The Last Hurdle to Signing the NCA](#).

Shan State Army – South (RCSS/SSA-S), Pa-O National Liberation Organisation (PNLO), Karen National Union (KNU), Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council (KNU-KNLA-PC) and the Democratic Kayin Benevolent Army (DKBA). (For more information, see Figure 43.) Other NSAs with a presence in southeastern Myanmar did not sign, including the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), New Mon State Party (NMSP), United Wa State Army (UWSA), Lahu Democratic Union (LDU), Wa National Organisation (WNO) and National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA). Various militia, Border Guard Forces (BGFs) and splinter groups were also not included in the process.²²⁸

The comprehensive nature of the agreement was also limited by the fact that some of the most influential NSAs outside southeastern Myanmar decided not to sign, including the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO). Other large NSAs, including the UWSA, were also not involved in the talks. Ongoing, serious violent clashes involving the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) and various NSAs in northern Shan State in 2015 and 2016 cast a further shadow over the process. In southeastern Myanmar, fighting occurred between DKBA and the Tatmadaw in Kayin State in 2015. Conflict also broke out in various locations around southern Shan State.²²⁹ These incidents affected trust between stakeholders.²³⁰

Despite these problems, overall levels of violence have declined significantly across southeastern Myanmar. Repeated statements from local residents in previously conflict-affected parts of Kayin, Mon and Kayah States demonstrate significant appreciation for the peace process at the local level, although there is an evident absence of sound communication about the process to and with communities.

²²⁸ The Asia Foundation published a report on the history of militias in Myanmar. This report contains a table of selected BGFs and militias, by township, in Kayah, Kayin and Shan States. See: Buchanan, J. (2016). [Militias in Myanmar](#). The Asia Foundation.

²²⁹ OCHA. (2015). [Myanmar: Snapshot of Humanitarian Issues \(as of 11 Dec 2015\)](#).

²³⁰ Naw Zipporah Sein. (2016). [Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement Flaws and Failings](#).

Figure 43: List of ceasefire agreements in southeastern Myanmar

Non-state armed group	Previous bilateral ceasefire signed	New bilateral ceasefire signed	NCA signed (15 October 2015)
Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)	1995 (broke down in 2010)	3 November 2011	Yes
Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army South (RCSS/SSA-S)	No	2 December 2011	Yes
Karen National Union (KNU)	No	12 January 2012	Yes
New Mon State Party (NMSP)	1995	1 February 2012	No – did not sign
Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council (KNU-KNLA-PC)	2007	7 February 2012	Yes
Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)	1994 (broke down in the same year)	7 March 2012	No – did not sign
Pa-O National Liberation Organisation (PNLO)	No	25 August 2012	Yes
National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA)	1989	7 September 2011	No – did not participate
United Wa State Army (UWSA)	1989	6 September 2011	No – did not participate

Source: This table shows NSAs in southeastern Myanmar and does not include groups that transformed in BGFs. For more information, see: International Crisis Group. (2015). [Myanmar's Peace Process: A Nationwide Ceasefire Remains Elusive](#).

A Framework for Political Dialogue (FPD) was launched following the signing of the NCA. Discussions to establish the Framework took place in November 2015 and January 2016.²³¹ A four-point proposal was approved at the conclusion of the January 2016 Union Peace Conference, including a commitment to at least 30% participation by women at different levels of political dialogue, although an acknowledgement was made that the incoming NLD Government may look to influence or otherwise adjust the process.²³² The NLD Government announced that a 21st Panglong Conference – the next iteration of the peace conference – will start on 31 August 2016. It is anticipated that peace process policies and institutions will continue to shift and evolve over time. For example, the NLD has created the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC).²³³

Code of Conduct and Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC) processes were launched according to the timeframe stipulated by the NCA. In January 2016, initial agreement was reached on the Terms of Reference for monitoring at the Union, State/Region and local levels. The first of the

²³¹ There were 700 participants at the first Union Peace Conference in Nay Pyi Taw in 2016. These comprised: Tatmadaw, 150; EAGs, 150; political parties, 50; Government, 75; Parliament, 75; other ethnic leaders not from armed groups and other invitees: 50 each. Non-signatories were permitted as observers.

²³² Global New Light of Myanmar. (2015). [The four-point proposal approved by the first Union Peace Conference](#). 16 January 2016.

²³³ For more information on the creation of NRPC, see: [Committee to transform MPC into National Reconciliation and Peace Centre formed](#)

seven planned state-level JMCs was set up in Shan State in January. State-level JMCs (JMC-S) are now established in Mon, Kayin and Shan States and Tanintharyi Region.

How to engage with signatories and non-signatories in the post-NCA environment is an ongoing issue: both operate in southeastern Myanmar.²³⁴ As signatories are removed from the Unlawful Associations Act, new opportunities emerge for them to broaden engagement with other stakeholders.²³⁵ Interviewees stressed the importance of trying to engage with both signatories and non-signatories to avoid further divisions between these groups. Both signatories and non-signatories have liaison offices which are a common first contact point for development agencies. Conflict-sensitive approaches are particularly salient in southeastern Myanmar given the presence of multiple NSAs and other armed groups, fears surrounding the use of ceasefires to expand Government influence, and the deepening of international and private sector engagement.²³⁶

²³⁴ LDU and WNO were also excluded as well as NSAs that were transformed into BGFs See: EBO Briefing Paper 3/2015.

²³⁵ Article 17(1) of the 1908 Unlawful Associations Act stipulates penalties – imprisonment – for those who lead or are associated with groups rendered unlawful.

²³⁶ Jolliffe, K. (2014). [Ethnic Conflict and Social Services in Myanmar's Contested Regions](#). The Asia Foundation; Karen Peace Support Network. (2014). [Critique of Japan International Cooperation Agency's Blueprint for Development in Southeastern Burma/Myanmar](#); Naw Zipporah Sein. (2016). [Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement Flaws and Failings](#).

Figure 44: NSAs in southeastern Myanmar

Non-state actors (NSAs)	State/Region
Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA-5/Klo Htoo Baw Battalion)	Kayin
Karen National Union (KNU)	Eastern Bago, Kayin, Tanintharyi and Mon
Karen Peace Force (KPF)	Kayin
Karenni National Development Party/Army (KNDP/A)	Kayah
Karenni National Peace and Development Party (KNPDP)	Kayah
Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF)	Kayah
Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)	Kayah
Karenni National Unity and Solidarity Organisation (KNUSO)	Kayah
Kayan National Guard (KNG)	Kayah
Kayan New Land Party (KNLP)	Kayah
KNU/Karen National Liberation Army (Peace Council) (KNU-KNLA PC)	Kayin
Lahu Democratic Union (LDU)	Eastern Shan State
Mergui-Tavoy United Front (MTUF)	Tanintharyi
Mon Mergui Army (MMA)	Mon
Mon National Defence Army (MNDA)	Mon
Mon Peace and Defence Front (MPDF)	Mon
National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA)	Eastern Shan State
New Mon State Party (NMSP)	Mon, Tanintharyi, and Kayin
Pa-O National Liberation Organisation (PNLO)	Southern Shan State
Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army – South (RCSS/SSA-S)	Southern Shan State
United Wa State Army (UWSA)	Eastern Shan State
Wa National Organisation/Army (WNO/A)	Southern Shan State

*NCA signatories highlighted in blue.

Note: there is no consistent definition of what constitutes an armed group, a non-state actor, or a militia. As a result, there may be inconsistencies throughout this document. Some of the groups listed in this table are very small, almost defunct, or operate as small militia. For more information, see: <http://mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/armed-ethnic-groups>

Issues of representation and consultation are ongoing in the context of the peace process.

Government and NSAs are not homogeneous actors. Chief Ministers and line ministries also play an important role in enabling operational access and there is significant variation in how these Government and Ministry stakeholders operate across southeastern Myanmar. In the case of NSAs, leaders do not exclusively represent or consistently act in the interests of their constituent communities. Merely because people are of a certain ethnic group does not mean that they are represented by an NSA of the same ethnic affiliation, nor that they support that NSA. Notably, there has been a process of unification among the Karen NSAs during the peace process. These groups all agree to recognise the KNU as their “mother” party and leading voice in political dialogue, even though they do not necessarily

agree that the NCA should have been signed. Religious identity adds another layer of complexity to NSA representation. The issue of representation is particularly acute in states where there are multiple NSAs of the same ethnic group.

Women are not well-represented or included in formal peace process negotiations and structures.²³⁷ Only two women from southeastern Myanmar participated directly in formal NCA negotiations – Naw Zipporah Sein, Vice-Chairperson of the KNU, as leader of the Senior Delegation; and on the Government side, parliamentarian Mi Yin Chan from Mon State’s Ye town as part of the Government’s Union Peacemaking Working Committee (UPWC). Some women leaders, such as Naw May Oo, play legal and/or technical advisory roles to NSAs. Outside of the commitments made to a minimum of 30% of women in political dialogue, the concerns and priorities of women, as well as gender perspectives, were largely absent from substantive negotiation discussions. It remains to be seen how this 30% quota will be honoured.²³⁸

Figure 45: Inclusion of women in peace process structures in Myanmar

Negotiation body	Inclusion of women	Percentage
Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT)	1 of 16	6.25%
Senior Delegation (SD)	2 of 15	13.3%
Union Peacemaking Central Committee (UPCC)	0 of 11	0%
Union Peacemaking Working Committee (UPWC)	2 of 52	3.8%
Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting	0 of 16	0%
Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC)	3 of 48	6.25%
Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC-Union Level)	0 of 26	0%
Union Peace Conference (Government 6/75; Hluttaw 2/75; Tatmadaw 0/150; NSAs 13/150; Political parties 10/150; Ethnic representatives 11/50; Academics and experts 10/50)	52 of 700	7.4%
Facilitators at UPC	6 of 20	30%

Source: Data extracted from: Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2015). [Women, Peace and Security Policymaking in Myanmar: Context Analysis and Recommendations](#).

In response to this exclusion, women’s organisations and some peace and security organisations are implementing projects to empower women peacebuilders and identify their priorities in the peace process. These organisations are also producing reports that detail the role of women in peace processes and which include policy recommendations on how to address exclusion.²³⁹ A report on gender in peacebuilding in Mon and Kayin States highlighted the different experiences of conflict on

²³⁷ PSF. (2016). [The Women Are Ready: an opportunity to transform peace in Myanmar](#). Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2015). [Women, Peace and Security Policymaking in Myanmar: Context Analysis and Recommendations](#).

²³⁸ Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2015). [Women, Peace and Security Policymaking in Myanmar: Context Analysis and Recommendations](#).

²³⁹ The Kayan Women’s Organisation (KyWO) published a document chronicling the involvement of Karenni women in the peace process. See: KyWO. (2016). A Report on Karenni Women and Peace Process. PSF. (2016). [The Women Are Ready: an opportunity to transform peace in Myanmar](#); Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2015). [Women, Peace and Security Policymaking in Myanmar: Context Analysis and Recommendations](#).

men and women in relation to physical abuse, gender-based violence (GBV), landmine accidents, loss of livelihoods, land issues, displacement and migration. This report also showed nascent signs of shifting gender roles in Mon and Kayin, such as indications that women are assuming new leadership roles in the public sphere.²⁴⁰

Operational access to some areas of southeastern Myanmar is improving as a result of the ceasefire process. Travel authorisation requirements have eased, although the degree of access varies by agency, location, and the sector of focus. Some interviewees from humanitarian and development agencies reported that communities appear increasingly comfortable with agencies' operational expansion.

Integrating civilian ceasefire monitoring mechanisms into formal ceasefire monitoring structures is a challenge. As the monitoring commissions are established, questions arise as to how to integrate existing civilian ceasefire monitoring activities and include civil society in monitoring processes. Several national and international organisations implement monitoring activities. Some of these initiatives seek to include women as ceasefire monitors, whereas other initiatives also seek to improve stakeholders' understanding of the NCA text. Specific attention is given to provisions relating to how conflict parties will monitor themselves. There is a need to include responses to cases of GBV and to bring attention to the specific protection needs of women in ceasefire monitoring training and implementation.²⁴¹ Observers have also highlighted a need for specific technical support to ensure that civilian monitors have the capacity to refer and respond in a way that protects the survivor and complies with principles such as confidentiality.

Initiatives are underway to understand the perspectives of communities in relation to the national peace process. Observers have noted the limited participation of civil society in the peace process to date.²⁴² To offset the top-down and security-focused nature of the process, civil society groups and international organisations are working with communities to learn about their priorities.²⁴³ Other civil society groups are organising NCA information sessions at the community level.²⁴⁴

Donors are pooling funding. While donors still provide bilateral support to activities directly related to the peace process and peacebuilding, they are also pooling funds. Two multi-donor trust funds are in place to provide specific support to the peace process: the JPF and the PSF.²⁴⁵ The PSF, established in 2014, seeks to enhance the likelihood of sustainable peace through financial support to initiatives that either contributes to the peace process or the reduction of inter-communal tensions. The JPF is a newer initiative which provides technical and financial support to national actors, institutions and other aspects of the nationally led peace process. With a budget of approximately USD100m, the JPF will support three key areas peace architecture, peacebuilding, and research and innovation over a six-year period.

²⁴⁰ UN Women, Gender and Development Initiative-Myanmar, Swisspeace. (2015). [Why Gender Matters in Conflict and Peace: Perspectives from Mon and Kayin States](#).

²⁴¹ Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2015). [Women, Peace and Security Policymaking in Myanmar: Context Analysis and Recommendations](#).

²⁴² See: Lathaw, J.N. et al. (2014). [Civil Society Contributions to Myanmar's Peace Process](#). Swisspeace; Petrie, C and South, A. (2013). [Mapping of Myanmar Peacebuilding Civil Society](#).

²⁴³ The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies is conducting a ceasefire monitoring listening initiative to understand and monitor community experiences and perspectives vis-à-vis ceasefires in Kayah, Kayin, Southern Shan and Mon States. For a sample of its findings, see: Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. (2014). [Listening to Communities Karen \(Kayin\) State](#). Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. (2015). [We Want Genuine Peace: Voices of communities from Myanmar's ceasefire areas in 2015](#).

²⁴⁴ The Research Institute for Society and Ecology (RICE) based in Kayin State, for example, created a document, "Report on Code of Conduct", in 2015, which they made available in in four languages (Myanmar, Pwo-Karen, Sagaw-Karen and Pa-O).

²⁴⁵ The PSF has a dual mandate and also provides funding to activities that support the reduction in inter-communal violence.

Inter-communal tensions may arise in some parts of southeastern Myanmar. Given the area's long-standing history of discrimination and exclusionary structures, it will be important to look out for an increase in other forms of tensions, such as inter-religious dynamics or land disputes.²⁴⁶

More data and knowledge is needed on the conflict economy. Several interviewees highlighted the existence of conflict economies – particularly relating to illicit drugs – as a barrier to sustainable peace. Opium is primarily cultivated in Shan State and parts of Kayah State (for more information, see the Economy and livelihoods section). Although there is some data, and knowledge will always be incomplete given the difficulties involved with conducting relevant research, there is a need for more information in order to better understand these complex processes.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ International Crisis Group. (2013). [The Dark Side of Transition: Violence Against Muslims in Myanmar](#).

²⁴⁷ On drugs, UNODC's Southeast Asia Opium Survey (2013) provides an overview. Other useful publications include reports by the Transnational Institute.

7. Landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW)

KEY POINTS

- Southeastern Myanmar contains the majority of the country's landmine-affected townships. Although local knowledge identifies some known minefields or dangerous areas, comprehensive information on victims and on mine locations is very limited.
- Mines have been planted by the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw), non-state actors (NSAs), and on occasion by local communities seeking to protect themselves.
- Data from 2014 indicates that there were 251 casualties in Myanmar due to mines and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), an increase from the 145 reported in 2013. Eastern Bago Region and Kayin State are the worst-affected parts of the country.
- Mine clearance is yet to begin. The NCA contained only limited commitments to address mine use and clearance.
- A few agencies, some with significant donor funding, are providing mine awareness messages. Current programme coverage is limited.

Six decades of armed conflict have left many areas of southeastern Myanmar contaminated by landmines. Myanmar has yet to accede to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty.²⁴⁸ Mine warfare was a regular feature of armed conflict between the Tatmadaw and ethnic or other armed groups. Areas thought to have significant mine contamination in southeastern Myanmar are eastern Bago Region and Kayin and Kayah States.²⁴⁹ Approximately 56 of Myanmar's townships (17%) have been identified as "suspected hazardous areas".²⁵⁰ Myanmar has the third highest number of landmine casualties in the world, behind Afghanistan and Colombia.²⁵¹

Data related to landmines has not been made available by official sources. There is a complete lack of official data on the extent of contamination. Interviewees reported a lack of information on the location of contaminated sites, extent of landmine use, casualties, impact of landmines, disabilities

²⁴⁸A total of 162 countries, or 80% of countries worldwide, have either ratified or acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty. A total of 35 countries, including Myanmar, remain outside of the Treaty.

²⁴⁹Fasht, R. and Simon, P. (2014). [Mine Action in Myanmar](#). The Journal of ERW and Mine Action 19(2).

²⁵⁰ICBL. (2015). [Landmine Monitor Myanmar/Burma](#). Other data estimates that as many as 56 of the 84 townships in southeastern Myanmar are contaminated by landmines, representing 71% of all landmine-contaminated townships in Myanmar.

²⁵¹MIMU. (2016). Townships with known landmine contamination (2015) and Casualties in Myanmar (as of December 2014).

caused by landmines and factors influencing the use of landmines.²⁵² However, local knowledge of unsafe areas is often strong.²⁵³ The absence of a coordinated Victim Information System in Myanmar makes it difficult to assess the extent of landmine contamination and the humanitarian consequences associated with contamination.²⁵⁴ A comprehensive system would enable better planning for landmine victim assistance programmes.

Data shows that since the beginning of Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) talks in Myanmar, approximately 53% of national landmine casualties have taken place in southeastern Myanmar.²⁵⁵ Data from 2014 indicated that there were 251 casualties due to landmines (and to a more limited extent other ERW), an increase from the 145 reported in 2013.²⁵⁶ The majority of landmine civilian casualties reported are confirmed as adult male (81%), with just four percent adult female and three percent children.²⁵⁷ The increase in known casualties between 2013 and 2014 may be a result of improved reporting. Emerging data noted a reduction in allegations of landmine use in the second half of 2014 and early 2015.²⁵⁸ However, it is thought that this data grossly underestimates the extent of landmine contamination in southeastern Myanmar. Local knowledge about the suspected locations of landmines is often extensive and may in many cases be fairly accurate, but it has not been formally recorded or tested for reliability.

²⁵² On the cultural and historical factors influencing the use of landmines, more information is required on use of landmines as part of the wider "Four Cuts" strategy used by the Myanmar military. See: Smith (1991). *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*.

²⁵³ See for example, Karen Human Rights Group. (2014) [The impact of anti-personnel and other mines in Southeast Myanmar since the January 2012 ceasefire.](#)

²⁵⁴ Fasht, R. and Simon, P. (2014). [Mine Action in Myanmar](#). *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* 19(2).

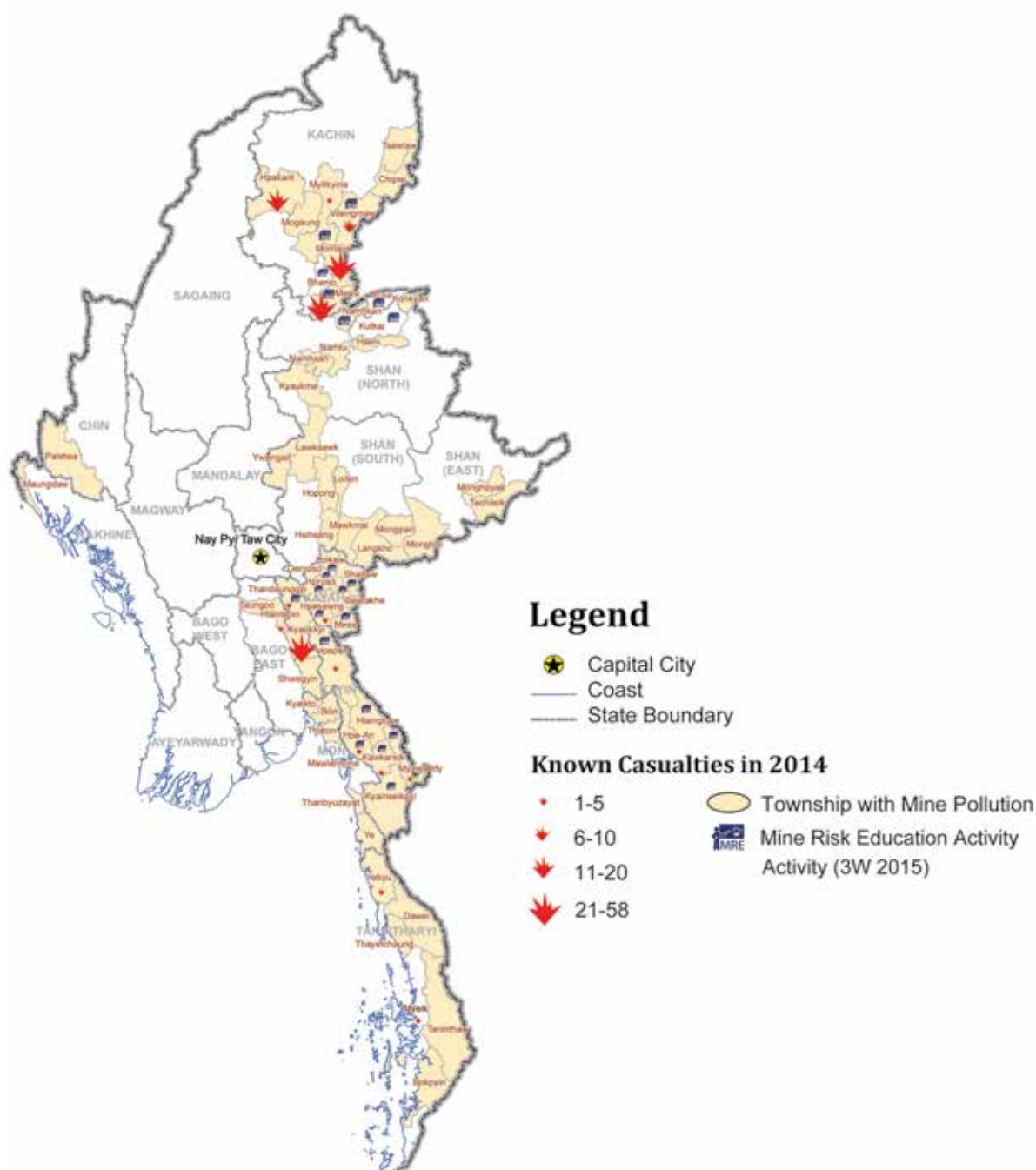
²⁵⁵ MIMU. (2016). Townships with known landmine contamination (2015) and casualties in Myanmar (as of December 2014).

²⁵⁶ The Landmine Monitor compiles figures based on reports and information provided by organisations and through data available in Government and media reports. The Monitor highlights that it is possible that data contains duplications that could not be verified.

²⁵⁷ In other cases, gender was unknown or not recorded. MIMU. (2016). Townships with known landmine contamination (2015) and casualties in Myanmar (as of December 2014).

²⁵⁸ ICBL. (2015). *Landmine Monitor Myanmar/Burma*.

Figure 46: Townships with known landmine contamination (2015) and casualties in Myanmar (as of December 2014)



Source: MIMU. (2016). Townships with known landmine contamination (2015) and casualties in Myanmar (as of December 2014).

Landmines remain a threat at the village level. One 2014 study suggests that mines affect 53% of the 222 village tracts surveyed in southeastern Myanmar.²⁵⁹ Conflict-affected communities approached to share perceptions of security in Kayah State named landmines as a key concern. Organisations such as the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) and International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) have called attention

²⁵⁹ The Border Consortium. (2014). [Protection and Security Concerns in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#). This study identified 23 townships in southeastern Myanmar that had sufficient capacity to conduct a survey. Within these 23 townships, 665 village tracts were identified and a stratified method of sampling was used to select the 222 village tracts surveyed. This survey defined southeastern Myanmar as: Shan, Kayah, Kayah, Mon, Tanintharyi and Bago East.

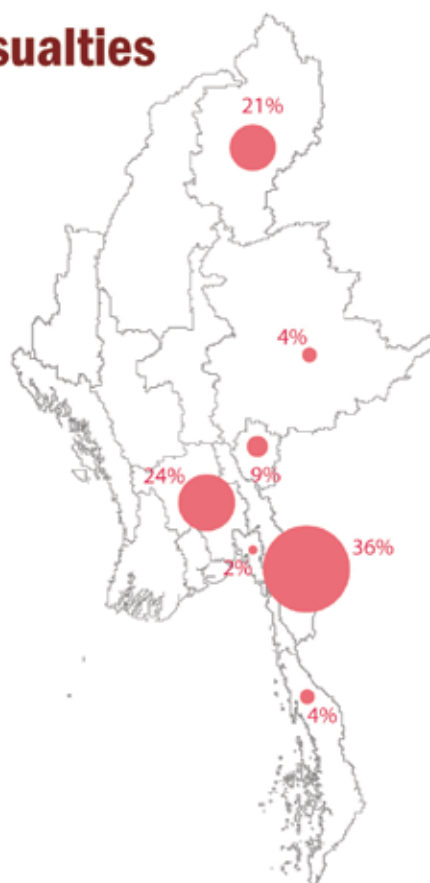
to the use of landmines by both the Government and NSAs.²⁶⁰ Interviewees highlighted that there is much interest from agencies with expertise in conducting technical surveys and demining. The Government and NSAs have linked ending the use of landmines and undertaking mine clearance to the ceasefire process, delaying action until further political negotiations take place.

Figure 47: Location of casualties from landmines and ERW (2007-2014)

Location of casualties

States with casualties
by known data:

Kayin 36%
Bago 24%
Kachin 21%
Kayah 9%
Tanintharyi 4%
Shan 4%
Mon 2%



Source: MIMU. (2016). [Townships with known landmine contamination \(2015\) and casualties in Myanmar \(as of December 2014\)](#).

National mine clearance standards have been created but not yet shared or implemented. A 2012 Presidential Decree tasked the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) to create a Myanmar Mine Action Centre (MMAC) to coordinate the five mine action pillars (mine risk education (MRE), victims assistance, advocacy, clearance, stockpile destruction). Mine clearance agency representatives resident in Myanmar assisted the MMAC in creating the Myanmar National Mine Action Standards, which the MPC agreed to implement upon signature of the NCA. However, interviewees reported that no action has yet been taken.²⁶¹

Having benefited from lessons learned about mine action from elsewhere in the world during the past 20 years, the Myanmar Mine Action Standards are suggested to be among the best globally. However their development was largely dependent on international technical inputs with limited consultation with national actors, including NSAs. MRE Mine Action Standards have also been

²⁶⁰ Karen Human Rights Group. (2012). [Uncertain Ground: Landmines in eastern Burma](#). KHRG has also reported on the gendered dimensions of landmines, see: Karen Human Rights Group. (2016). [Hidden Strengths, Hidden Struggles: Women's Testimonies from southeast Myanmar](#).

²⁶¹ For more information, see Mine Free Myanmar's article, [Myanmar Mine Action Standards drafted](#). 29 April 2014.

drafted in a more consultative manner. With no authorisation for mine clearance activities, organisations have been able to focus only on activities related to victim assistance and MRE.

The NCA states that signatories are obliged to “end planting of mines”.²⁶² Parties to the NCA are obliged to “cooperate on the process of clearing all landmines planted by both sides’ armies”.²⁶³ The NCA does not contain references to a mine ban, to the 1997 International Mine Ban Treaty, nor does it stipulate a timeframe for mine clearance or indicate what standards will be used.²⁶⁴ The NCA also omits references to MRE, survivor assistance, and the gendered dimensions of landmines. Interim arrangements outlined in the NCA do not include any explicit reference to landmines, although interviewees noted that it is likely that landmines will be included in discussions about humanitarian and development actions.

Mine clearance in Myanmar has not yet started.²⁶⁵ Government and NSAs have not given humanitarian demining organisations access in order to conduct mine clearance activities.²⁶⁶ Protection and mine action stakeholders have also advocated for the use of “marking and fencing” in affected areas and to agree on common danger signs, but this has rarely happened.

Landmines remain a sensitive issue for all combatant groups who consider clearance is possible only after a peace process which promotes trust.²⁶⁷ The Landmine Monitor reported that both the Tatmadaw and NSAs continued to plant mines in 2015, primarily in areas of ongoing armed conflict.

Some interviewees suggest that the NCA’s focus as the primary response to landmine issues in Myanmar has reinforced the strategy and security element of landmines over their impact on local populations.²⁶⁸ A 2014 study on landmines in southeastern Myanmar suggests that men and women view the use of landmines differently: in some areas, women reportedly saw landmines as a source of protection (ie to keep villages safe from external threats).²⁶⁹ Landmines can be seen as a form of protection not only from military but also from unwanted speculators, criminals and other outside interests.²⁷⁰

There are geographic gaps in the scope of MRE programming as it does not reach all townships with known landmine contamination. MRE was not designed to be a standalone programme but rather an intervention to take place after surveys had identified hazardous areas and prior to their clearance. However in Myanmar MRE has been launched prior to survey.

MRE activities are ongoing in all townships in eastern Bago, Kayin and Kayah that are known to have landmine contamination. The largest geographic gaps in MRE activities for landmine contaminated townships are in southern and eastern Shan State, and Mon State (see Figure 48). The extent to which MRE activities and programmes integrate gender perspectives in their implementation is unknown. The core coordination mechanism for MRE was established in 2012 when the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Rehabilitation, in cooperation with UNICEF, established a National Level Working Group on MRE. The principal objective of this working group is to serve as a multi-stakeholder (Government ministries, UN agencies, NGOs) coordination body for MRE activities across the country.

²⁶² Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, Chapter 3.

²⁶³ Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, Chapter 5(e).

²⁶⁴ ICBL. (2015). [Landmine Monitor Myanmar/Burma; The Mine Ban and the NCA.](#)

²⁶⁵ UNHCR’s State profiles for [Kayah, Kayin, Mon \(2014\)](#) include an overview on “protection and durable solutions” that includes an overview of mine issues, clearance and key actors.

²⁶⁶ Embassy of Switzerland in Myanmar. (2015). [Operational Concept on Protection for Myanmar 2015-2017.](#)

²⁶⁷ Fasht, R. and Simon, P. (2014). [Mine Action in Myanmar.](#) The Journal of ERW and Mine Action 19(2).

²⁶⁸ UNICEF/DCA. (2015). Knowledge Attitude and Practice Survey: The Impact of Landmines and other Explosive Remnants of War in South Eastern Region of Myanmar. (unpublished).

²⁶⁹ UNICEF/DCA. (2015). Knowledge Attitude and Practice Survey: The Impact of Landmines and other Explosive Remnants of War in South Eastern Region of Myanmar. (unpublished).

²⁷⁰ Cathcart, G. (2015). Landmines as a means of community protection. (unpublished).

Figure 48: Townships contaminated by landmines versus presence of MRE activities²⁷¹

State/Region	Township	Presence of MRE activities
Eastern Bago	Kyaukkyi	*
	Shwekyin	*
	Tantabin	*
	Taungoo	*
Kayah	Bawlake	*
	Demoso	*
	Hpasawng	*
	Hpruso	*
	Loikaw	*
	Mese	*
	Shadaw	*
Kayin	Hlaingbwe	*
	Hpa-An	*
	Hpapun	*
	Kawkareik	*
	Kyainseikgyi	*
	Myawaddy	*
	Thandaunggyi	*
Mon	Bilin	No
	Kyaikto	No
	Mawlamyine	No
	Thanbyuzayat	No
	Thaton	*
	Ye	No
Shan (East)	Monghpyak	No
	Mongton	No
	Tachileik	No
Shan (South)	Hopong	No
	Hsihseng	No
	Langkho	No
	Lawksawk	No
	Loilen	No
	Mawkmai	No
	Mongpan	No
	Ywangan	No
	Tanintharyi	Bokpyin
Dawei		*
Tanintharyi		No
Thayetchaung		*
Yebyu		No

Source: Landmine-polluted townships data from MIMU's map "Townships with known landmine contamination (2015)" and MIMU's 3W Southeast Myanmar (February 2016 update).

²⁷¹ Source: Landmine-polluted townships data from MIMU's map "Townships with known landmine contamination (2015)" and MIMU's 3W Southeast Myanmar (February 2016 update).

Landmine survivors require diverse forms of support, including psycho-social assistance, livelihood assistance and broader socio-economic reintegration.²⁷² Most physical rehabilitation services are located in urban centres, leading to access concerns for rural survivors.²⁷³

A Technical Group on Victim Assistance, established in 2014, helps to coordinate victim assistance. This Technical Group is a sub-working group of the MRE Working Group and comprises 17 members.²⁷⁴ In February 2016, MIMU's 3W update for southeastern Myanmar reported the presence of five projects, operating in 11 townships in southeastern Myanmar: in Bago (Kyaukkyi, Shwegyin), Kayah (Bawlake, Demoso, Hpasawng, Hpruso, Loikaw, Mese, Shadaw) and Kayin (Hlaingbwe, Thandaunggyi). Programmes are currently being implemented on victim assistance, offering significant scope for expansion elsewhere.

The presence of landmines undermines livelihoods and presents a major barrier against safe refugee and internally displaced person (IDP) return in parts of southeastern Myanmar.²⁷⁵ Mines have rendered areas which would otherwise be used for agriculture and settlement as dangerous.²⁷⁶ One UNHCR benchmark for the facilitation of voluntary group return to planned settlements is the confirmation that demarcation of suspected or confirmed hazardous areas is either underway or completed.²⁷⁷ This however requires technical surveys of mined areas and no such surveys have yet been carried out.

²⁷²Fasht, R. and Simon, P. (2014). [Mine Action in Myanmar](#). *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* 19(2).

²⁷³ See Landmine Monitor Myanmar/Burma 2015 for an overview of victim assistance, physical rehabilitation, economic and social/inclusion and laws and policies.

²⁷⁴ICBL. (2015). [Landmine Monitor Myanmar/Burma](#).

²⁷⁵ICBL. (2015). [Landmine Monitor Myanmar/Burma](#).

²⁷⁶The Border Consortium. (2014). [Protection and Security Concerns in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#).

²⁷⁷UNHCR. (2015). [Strategic Roadmap for Voluntary Repatriation: Refugees from Myanmar in Thailand 2015-2017](#).

8. Displaced people and migration

KEY POINTS

- Due to decades of violence, people from conflict-affected parts of southeastern Myanmar have been displaced both internally (internally displaced persons, IDPs) and across the border to Thailand (refugees).
- Displaced people do not fall into a simple category. Some have been displaced many times, others have now settled permanently in another location. There are those who wish to return to their original area once it is considered sufficiently secure.
- There are an estimated 400,000 IDPs within southeastern Myanmar and approximately 104,000 verified refugees in camps in Thailand. Others who were displaced are working across Thailand rather than living in the border camps.
- Plans exist to return refugees to Myanmar although concrete steps have been delayed along with the peace process. The United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is encouraging standards that prohibit involuntary return, insist on sufficient security and follow other standards. Refugees have diverse needs and strategies. Many will not wish to return to their places of origin. Some may have trouble integrating into Myanmar although other refugees have already returned spontaneously.
- Several million migrants from Myanmar live in Thailand, most coming from the southeastern Myanmar. A majority migrated primarily for economic reasons. An estimated USD2.9bn was remitted from Thailand to Myanmar in 2013, of which about 80% went to southeastern Myanmar, primarily through unofficial channels.
- Concerns include labour conditions in Thailand, trafficking of people, infectious disease transmission, and the need for businesses in southeastern states and regions to import labour from elsewhere in Myanmar.

Refugees and IDPs

Decades of protracted armed conflict in southeastern Myanmar have displaced communities and created long-standing refugee populations.²⁷⁸ Violent clashes between the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) and non-state actors (NSAs), and in particular specific policies designed to cut off support for NSAs by forcing local populations to move, led to repeated forced migration within Myanmar. Violent clashes also forced people to cross to Thailand in the 1980s and eventually led the Thai Government to create nine “temporary shelters” (refugee camps) in the 1990s. Some of these have turned into long-term settlements which almost resemble small towns.

Currently, almost 104,000 verified Myanmar refugees live in nine camps in Thailand. Within the camps, 48.4% of the population is between 18 and 59 years old (25.1% are female, 23.3% male). Approximately half of the current refugees have arrived in the camps since 2005, when the Thai Government suspended registration of new arrivals. At the peak of refugee movements in 2006, there were an estimated 150,000 refugees in Thailand. This figure has since decreased primarily due to the resettlement of refugees to third countries. While both the registered and unregistered refugees receive assistance and protection in the camps, there are approximately 53,000 (February 2016) unregistered who are ineligible for resettlement in Thailand.²⁷⁹

In 2015, 6,132 Myanmar refugees were resettled to third countries from the camps in Thailand. Approximately 100,000 refugees in total have been resettled since 2005, principally to Australia, the United States and Canada.²⁸⁰ In early 2015, UNHCR and the Thai Government conducted a verification exercise in each of the nine refugee camps; while not changing the registration status of any individuals, this confirmed that all of the 104,149 verified Myanmar refugees are still in the camps, thereby making them eligible for return and reintegration assistance.²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ For a definition of [refugees](#) and [IDPs](#), see: www.unhcr.org. For a typology of conflict-induced migrants, see: South, A. and Jolliffe, K. (2015). *Forced Migration and the Myanmar Peace Process*. UNHCR.

²⁷⁹ UNHCR. (2016). RTG/MOI-UNHCR Verified Refugee Population.

²⁸⁰ UNHCR. (2015). *Resettlement of Myanmar Refugees from Temporary Shelters in Thailand* (November 2015).

²⁸¹ This figure of 104,149 verified refugees is valid as of 31 July 2016. See <http://data.unhcr.org/thailand/regional.php> for updated information related to refugees.

Figure 49: Refugee and IDP camp populations (April 2016)



Source: The Border Consortium. (2016). <http://www.theborderconsortium.org/media/72373/2016-08-aug-map-tbc-unhcr.pdf>

Registered Myanmar refugees in Thailand are predominately from southeastern Myanmar, especially Kayin State. Of the total population of Myanmar refugees in Thailand, 64% are from Kayin State, 15% from Kayah State, seven percent from Tanintharyi Region, five percent from Bago Region, and four percent from Mon State. In terms of ethnicity, 83% of refugees are Karen, 11% are Karenni, 4% are Bamar and 1% are Mon.²⁸²

²⁸² RTG/MOI-UNHCR Verified Refugee Population. (February 2016).

Southeastern Myanmar has significant numbers of IDPs, especially in Kayin and Shan States.²⁸³

The most commonly cited estimate of the number of IDPs in the area is 400,000. Some communities have had to move on more than one occasion and so double-counting presents a statistical challenge. It can be difficult to define IDPs and their needs given many different types and duration of displacement and the overall protracted nature of conflict. Some former IDPs may now be integrated in areas other than their place of origin.

Significant numbers of IDPs have established long-term livelihoods in their new locations. They may still be vulnerable, although not necessarily for reasons linked to their original displacement. Protection and socio-economic needs vary according to location.²⁸⁴ Interviewees pointed out that even people who have never been displaced need protection, suggesting the need to develop vulnerability criteria that target all conflict-affected communities.

Displacement continues, in smaller numbers, from both natural disasters and sporadic armed clashes. More recently, large-scale displacement has decreased significantly in southeastern Myanmar. According to estimates just over 10,000 people have been displaced since the launch of the national peace process in 2011.²⁸⁵ Seasonal natural disasters such as flooding still cause some temporary displacement.²⁸⁶ Localised, violent clashes between the Tatmadaw and NSAs continue to cause displacement, although most of those displaced typically return within a few days. Recent examples include clashes in Kyethi and Monghsu in Shan State where two-thirds of the 6,000 people reportedly displaced in 2015 in southern Shan State have already returned home.²⁸⁷ Humanitarian organisations are not given access to respond to needs that arise from sporadic clashes. (For more information, see the Infrastructure and investment section.)

Refugees are returning spontaneously, often to their township of origin, although not always to their village of origin.²⁸⁸ UNHCR monitoring of spontaneous return movements identified over 6,600 IDP returnees and approximately 1,336 refugee returnees from 2013 to 2015.²⁸⁹ Refugee return movements largely comprise individuals rather than entire households, and small group returns have not yet been formally organised.²⁹⁰ More information is needed on the gender and age dynamics of spontaneous return movements. The pace of the peace process and ongoing protection or security concerns, including militarisation in some areas, has so far inhibited organised voluntary return and reintegration.²⁹¹ The trend of spontaneous refugee return is likely to increase with greater freedom of movement and a reduction in both human rights violations and conflict in southeastern Myanmar.²⁹² It is also likely that if camps were closed and they had to enter Myanmar, many refugees would find a way to return to Thailand along with the large numbers of other migrant workers.

²⁸³ The Border Consortium. (2012). [Changing Realities: Poverty and Displacement in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#).

²⁸⁴ UNHCR. (2015). [Strategic Roadmap for Voluntary Repatriation: Refugees from Myanmar in Thailand 2015-2017](#).

²⁸⁵ South, A. and Jolliffe, K. (2015). Forced Migration and the Myanmar Peace Process. *UNHCR*.

²⁸⁶ The Border Consortium. (2014). [Protection and Security Concerns in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#). (2014). [Truce or Transition? Trends in Human Rights Abuse and Local Response in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 Ceasefire](#).

²⁸⁷ OCHA. (2016). [Myanmar: Snapshot of displacement and population movement in 2015](#).

²⁸⁸ UNHCR. (2015). [Strategic Roadmap for Voluntary Repatriation: Refugees from Myanmar in Thailand 2015-2017](#).

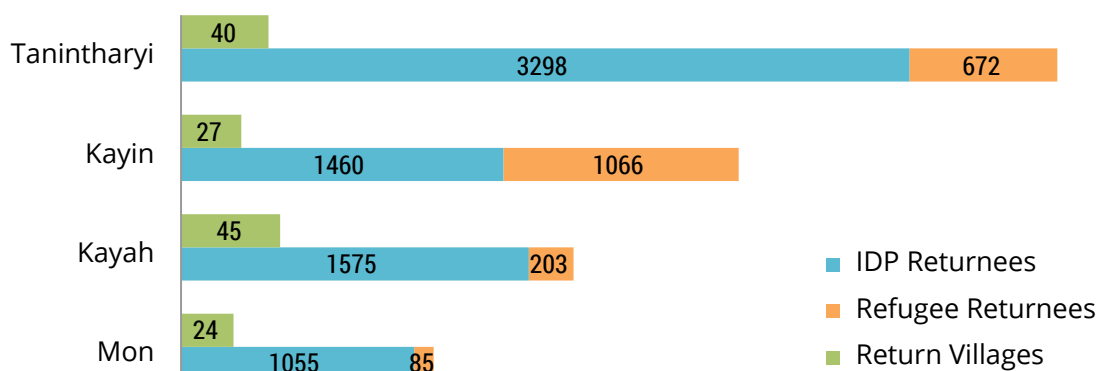
²⁸⁹ UNHCR. (2015). South-East Myanmar Situation Update (31 December 2015). UNHCR's SE Operation started its current returnee monitoring project in 2013 in Kayah State, Kayin State, Mon State and Tanintharyi Region using a community-level assessment process to confirm the presence of refugees in villages. UNHCR's monitoring is limited to spontaneous, unassisted return as no organised voluntary repatriation process is currently in operation. Spontaneous returnees are not deregistered from the camp, and could therefore still participate in an organised return process in the future.

²⁹⁰ The Border Consortium. (2015). [The Border Consortium Programme Report \(January to June 2015\)](#).

²⁹¹ The Border Consortium. (2014). [Protection and Security Concerns in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#).

²⁹² For information on the specific conditions and benchmarks for repatriation, see: UNHCR. (2015). [Strategic Roadmap for Voluntary Repatriation: Refugees from Myanmar in Thailand 2015-2017](#).

Figure 50: Number of villages with returnees and number of returnees to those villages in southeastern Myanmar (since 2012)



Source: UNHCR. (2016). Myanmar SE Operations – Return Assessments.²⁹³

Refugees are increasingly making exploratory visits back to Myanmar. These voluntary, informal and low-profile visits involve individuals coming into Myanmar, often repeatedly and over extended periods, to scope out livelihood options, access to land and security risks. These are often, but not inevitably, a first step towards return and reintegration.²⁹⁴ Currently no data exists on the number and frequency of such visits, although anecdotal information suggests that there has been an increase since 2012. One study conducted in 2013 and 2014 showed that few interviewees indicated an intention to return to Myanmar at that time.²⁹⁵ Given significant changes in the peace process, most notably the partial signing of the NCA in October 2015, more data and analysis is required to understand the extent to which refugees will return to Myanmar.

Among refugees there is a common feeling of mistrust in ceasefires, and many share concerns over security including the presence of landmines.²⁹⁶ Interviewees highlighted that many refugees, particularly younger generations, would prefer to seek job opportunities in Thailand rather than going back to Myanmar.

Both refugees and IDPs are diverse. Both groups were displaced by armed conflict, but IDPs and refugees have distinct needs according to gender, age, education and ethnic backgrounds etc. While the primary protection and security concerns are similar, local authorities find it easier to discuss IDP return and resettlement than refugee issues that have a high international profile.

Planning continues for the organised voluntary repatriation of refugees from Thailand. The UNHCR Strategic Roadmap for 2015-2017 distinguishes between three modes of return – spontaneous, facilitated and promoted – and outlines the conditions and benchmarks needed for voluntary repatriation to occur, employing Do No Harm principles. The benchmarks indicate that return must be voluntary and that security is a prerequisite. Reintegration assistance in the facilitation phase will focus on core protection issues, including access to civil documentation and safety and security monitoring. It will be complemented by food assistance and cash grants for transport along with other costs.

²⁹³ Numbers are based on UNHCR-assessed villages. UNHCR does not attempt to represent the total number of returnees in a state, or the region as a whole. [UNHCR. \(2016\). Myanmar SE Operations – Return Assessments.](#)

²⁹⁴ The Border Consortium. (2015). [The Border Consortium Programme Report January to June 2015.](#) Jolliffe, K. (2015). [Refugee Decision-Making Processes, Community-Based Protection and Potential Voluntary Repatriation to Myanmar.](#) UNHCR.

²⁹⁵ Mae Fah Luang Foundation. (2014). Displaced Persons in the Temporary Shelters along the Thai-Myanmar Border: Future Hopes and Aspirations. This study was predominately conducted in 2013/2014 and the question about return was not prefaced with discussion about pre-conditions. More data and analysis is required to understand the extent to which Myanmar refugees in Thailand will return.

²⁹⁶ UNHCR. (2014). [South-East Myanmar Return Monitoring Update \(September 2014\).](#) UNHCR. (2014). Durable Solutions to Displacement in and from South-East Myanmar: Looking Ahead.

UNHCR plans for up to 15,000 facilitated returns in 2016, fewer than earlier predicted as benchmarks for promoting returns have not been met.²⁹⁷ The enabling conditions have progressed more slowly than originally anticipated partly as a result of the delays, partial coverage and the incomplete nature of the peace process to date.

Information on the core protection issues facing returning refugees is limited, especially on housing, land and property (HLP) rights. Concerns include civil documentation and access to social services, awareness of rights, livelihood concerns in rural and urban settings, restitution and/or compensation, and institutional capacity (administration, management, dispute resolution). Interviewees noted that land access is arguably the most complex protection issue facing returnees, in part due to a scarcity of information.²⁹⁸ For example, it is not clear whether returnees without Citizenship Scrutiny Cards (CSCs) will face obstacles accessing land. Further issues include return when people were landless prior to displacement, and questions when returning parents may not have sufficient land for their children. Female returnees, like women elsewhere in Myanmar, will likely experience additional challenges in accessing land and property rights. (For more information, see the Governance, justice and land rights section.)

Potential group return sites are being selected in southeastern Myanmar. Sites for returnees have not been fully confirmed and no group return movements have yet occurred. Potential sites can be broadly divided into two types: 1) project sites identified by the Government and NSAs; 2) sites identified by representatives and leaders in refugee camps in Thailand. The former is a model employed by authorities in various situations elsewhere in Myanmar, sometimes termed “pilot projects” or “model villages”. Interviewees highlighted that these projects are not always created in consultation with needs of returnees, raising protection concerns. Although limited data exists on these potential group return sites and possible beneficiaries, international and domestic actors are tracking developments.

Migration

Up to four million Myanmar migrants may live in Thailand. As can be seen in Figure 51, a clear majority (about 80%) are from southeastern Myanmar.²⁹⁹ A 2013 survey of 5,000 migrants from Myanmar living in Thailand found the major ethnic groups to be Bamar (44%), Shan (18%), Mon (15%) and Kayin (13%).³⁰⁰ Migrants take on a variety of employment including construction, manufacturing, domestic work, garment production and sales, fisheries, seafood processing, and agriculture.³⁰¹ Migrants to Thailand who have passports receive 50% higher salaries on average than those who do not. Workers without passports find it difficult to access rights due to them under Thai laws on matters such as education, birth registration, health services and other fields.

²⁹⁷ UNHCR. (2015). [Strategic Roadmap for Voluntary Repatriation: Refugees from Myanmar in Thailand 2015-2017](#).

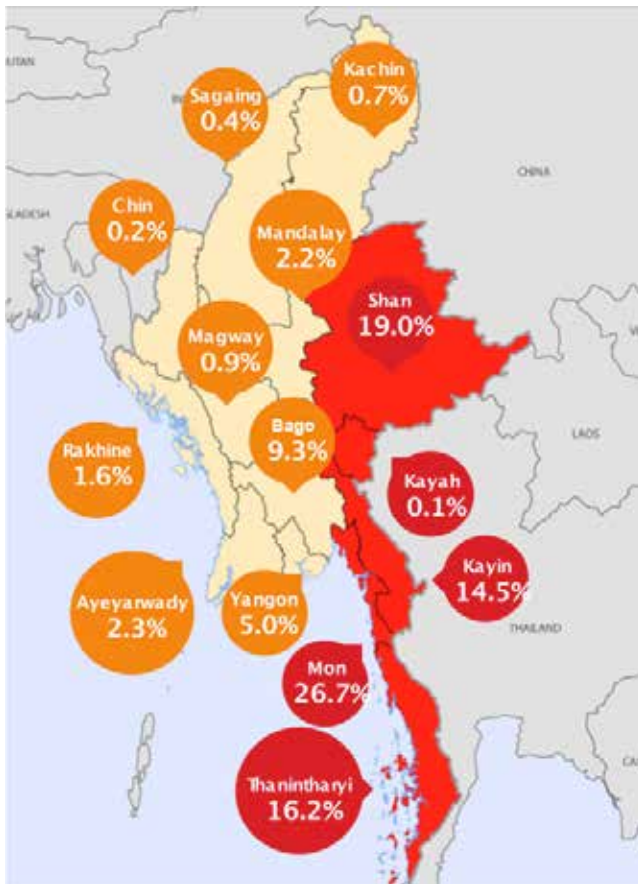
²⁹⁸ A presentation on housing, land and property issues was conducted at UNHCR's Operations meeting in December 2015.

²⁹⁹ This IOM estimate of four million comes from the total of Myanmar migrants who were under various registration statuses as of late last 2015. Both migrants and their employers in Thailand were required to register by October 2015, and millions of unregistered migrants came forward. The newly registered migrants, together with those already registered, totalled 3.5 million. IOM estimates that there are approximately 500,000 migrants who did not register. This figure is based on a study conducted by IOM and the Asian Research Centre for Migration. (2013). [Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand](#). The dataset of this study was used to generate the percentage of migrants who reported to have come from southeastern Myanmar.

³⁰⁰ IOM and the Asian Research Centre for Migration. (2013). [Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand](#). The study surveyed Myanmar migrants in: Bangkok, Samut Sakhon, Chiang Mai, Tak, Ranong, Surat Thani and Kancharaburi.

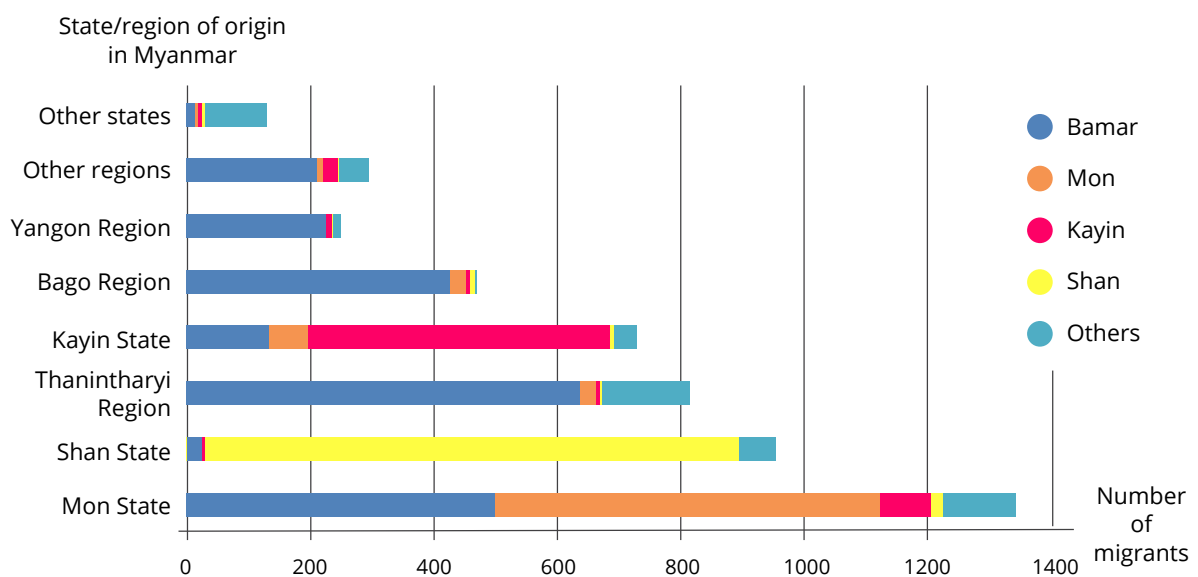
³⁰¹ See the IOM-ARCM study for breakdown of most common employment sector by province in Thailand.

Figure 51: Surveyed migrants' States and Regions of origin in Myanmar



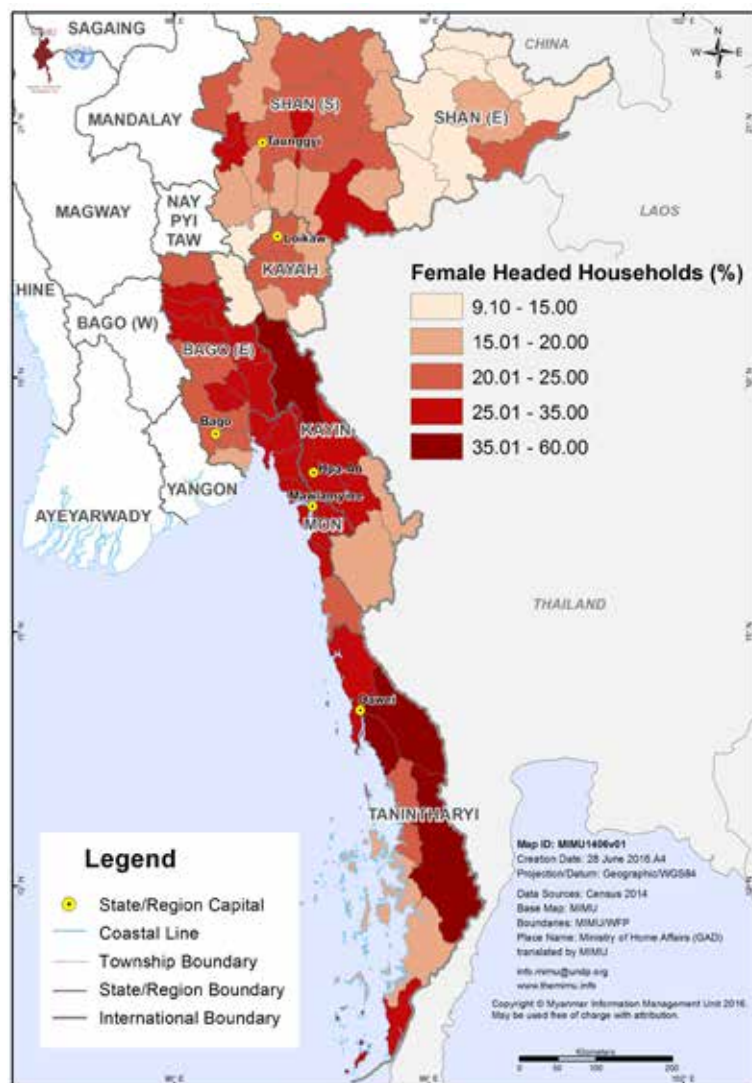
Source: IOM and the Asian Research Centre for Migration. (2013). [Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand](#).

Figure 52: Ethnicities of surveyed migrants by State/Region of origin in Myanmar



Source: IOM and the Asian Research Centre for Migration. (2013). [Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand](#).

Figure 53: Percentage of female-headed households in southeastern Myanmar, by township



In 2013, 75% of Myanmar migrants surveyed were found to have moved to Thailand for economic reasons, such as better incomes and employment opportunities.³⁰² However, some fled from conflict-related vulnerability and insecurity, or “refugee-like causes of displacement”.³⁰³ More young women than men migrate (15-24 years old), while in older age categories men outnumber women.³⁰⁴ The same survey found more male migrants than females from all of Myanmar’s States/Regions except Shan and Kayah. Out-migration from Myanmar has steadily increased, according to interviewees. Nonetheless, 80% of Myanmar migrants in Thailand expressed a willingness to return to Myanmar at some future point.³⁰⁵ Interviewees also highlighted that Thailand’s continued political and economic uncertainty could reduce migration flows. Out-migration trends may also shift as Myanmar’s economic reform progresses and ceasefires create more stability in southeastern Myanmar.

³⁰² IOM and the Asian Research Centre for Migration. (2013). [Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand](#).

³⁰³ South, A. and Jolliffe, K. (2015). Forced Migration and the Myanmar Peace Process. *UNHCR*.

³⁰⁴ IOM and the Asian Research Centre for Migration. (2013). [Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand](#).

³⁰⁵ IOM and the Asian Research Centre for Migration. (2013). [Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand](#).

The absence of parents through labour migration may be linked to some social problems facing youth, including drug abuse.³⁰⁶ High dependency ratios recorded by the 2014 Census, especially in Kayin State and Tanintharyi Region, indicate the absence of productive age populations in these areas due to out-migration.

Remittances have become a major source of income for many households in southeastern Myanmar. An estimated USD2.9bn was remitted from Thailand to Myanmar in 2013, of which 80% went to southeastern Myanmar, primarily (83%) through unofficial channels.³⁰⁷ In a recent survey in southeastern Myanmar, 4.6% of the surveyed rural households reported that remittances were the primary source of income, while 8.9% noted remittances as one of their income sources.³⁰⁸ However, the semi-legal or illegal nature of much migration due to unclear legislation in Myanmar and a lack of travel documentation on the part of many migrants means that significant under-reporting is very likely. It is apparent that remittances have led many households to change livelihood strategies, in some cases stopping land cultivation. Data shows that migrants from Shan State send back less, approximately USD 545 per annum, than those from other parts of southeastern Myanmar. Approximately USD 1,185 per migrant is remitted annually back to Mon, USD 973 to Tanintharyi, and USD 1,134 to Kayin.³⁰⁹

Migrants gain skills through migration. Data from a 2014 International Organisation for Migration (IOM) study shows that nearly three-quarters of migrants in Thailand reported having gained technical skills while working there. Only 48% of those surveyed thought that skills gained in Thailand would help them to find employment in Myanmar. Interviewees highlighted that migrants also gain “soft skills” such as improved self-confidence and the ability to work in a multicultural environment through migration. Several interviewees reported that a lack of recognition and accreditation for migrants’ experience and skills makes it harder to reintegrate in Myanmar.³¹⁰

Land issues arise as a result of migration. Interviewees reported that when some migrants leave home, their land is ripe for land expropriation. This issue is further exacerbated by unclear land policies and, in some areas, contested authority. Land ownership issues may lead to mistrust and tension, particularly when migrants return home.

Human trafficking is an ongoing issue in southeastern Myanmar.³¹¹ Migration, especially of young and/or undocumented people, increases vulnerability. While the Government has an arrangement for the official return of trafficked individuals, many individuals are unofficially “rescued” and returned by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or friends and thus not recorded via Government channels. Official returns of trafficked persons have typically involved China rather than Thailand. There are no reliable estimates on the numbers of trafficked individuals returned through unofficial channels. While certain risks are most acute for younger women, such as forced recruitment into the sex industry, other risks predominantly affect men, including forced labour on fishing boats. While there is little public documentation available on trafficking trends specific to southeastern Myanmar alone, plentiful research has been conducted over decades of cross-border programmes run by governments, NGOs, UN agencies and others.

³⁰⁶ IOM. (2014). Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment and Qualitative Study of Selected Communities in Ye Township, Mon State.

³⁰⁷ IOM and the Asian Research Centre for Migration. (2013). [Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand](#). This estimate was calculated using the study’s dataset.

³⁰⁸ 7,582 rural households were surveyed. FAO. (2015). [Initial Research Findings from a Nation-Wide Survey and Analysis on Social Protection and Poverty](#).

³⁰⁹ IOM and the Asian Research Centre for Migration. (2013). [Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand](#).

³¹⁰ IOM (2014). Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment and Qualitative Study of Selected Communities in Ye Township, Mon State.

³¹¹ Discussion of trafficking from southeast Myanmar is in relation to Thailand. Regarding the country as a whole, the biggest destination country for trafficking is China.

Increased mobility may be associated with increased transmission of HIV and other infectious diseases. The unsafe and isolated conditions that are often associated with labour migration can give rise to behaviour associated with increased vulnerability to HIV.³¹² Movement of people also enables the spread of infectious disease. Newly constructed road corridors can increase the risks of HIV transmission for migrants, travellers and local populations. Migrant and local communities often lack the knowledge and skills to prevent HIV infection if mitigation measures are not in place.³¹³ An assessment of mobility and HIV vulnerability by IOM found key gaps in HIV knowledge, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment services.³¹⁴

There is also significant migration into southeastern Myanmar. Internal migrants from other parts of Myanmar fill gaps in the labour supply created by the out-migration of locals. Internal migrants arrive to perform jobs that are available for a variety of reasons: increased stability over the past decade, proximity to Thailand and cultivation of high-value cash crops. In-migration can be all-year or seasonal. The population of Tanintharyi's Bokpyin Township, for example, can reportedly increase by 150,000 during peak periods associated with rubber tapping and fishing.³¹⁵ Interviewees note that the overwhelming majority of these migrants are young people. Limited data exists on in-migration dynamics. More information is needed on how in-migration trends are changing and to understand the differences between men and women migrants.

Permanent in-migration is leading to ethno-demographic shifts. In-migrants, mainly from Bago, Yangon, Ayeyarwady, Magwa, and Mandalay Regions, are predominantly ethnic Bamar.³¹⁶ Interviewees noted a reluctance in some communities to accept Bamar migrants. A recent study revealed concerns at the village level in Mon's Ye Township over tension between locals and in-migrants.³¹⁷ The wider context is of concern over the loss of local political authority and ethnic identity. Related aspects include migration to towns from outside the region for long-term commercial opportunities and Government employment, leading over time to urban populations that are ethnically different from the surrounding rural hinterland. Local people also regularly perceive that business opportunities have been monopolised by non-locals, both migrants and people residing elsewhere in Myanmar (typically Yangon). These inter-ethnic tensions as a result of migration would benefit from further investigation and documentation.

³¹² Asian Development Bank. (2013). *HIV Among Migrant Workers in the Greater Mekong Subregion: Program and Policy Issues*.

³¹³ IOM and Asian Development Bank. (2009). *HIV and Infrastructure: Customizing Education and Behaviour Change Activities for HIV Prevention in the Road Construction Setting*.

³¹⁴ Inkocharan, M. et al. (2015). [HIV Vulnerability and Service Availability in Mobility Settings of Myawaddy and Kawkaeik](#). IOM.

³¹⁵ UNDP. (2014). [The State of Local Governance: Trends in Tanintharyi \(Local Governance Mapping\)](#).

³¹⁶ Helvetas. (2015). [Internal Labour Migration Study in the Dry Zone, Shan State and the SouthEast of Myanmar](#).

³¹⁷ Helvetas. (2015). [Internal Labour Migration Study in the Dry Zone, Shan State and the SouthEast of Myanmar](#).

9. Gender

KEY POINTS

- Several factors are contributing to evolving gender dynamics in southeastern Myanmar. For instance, there is an increasing number of female headed households in southeastern Myanmar largely due to the out-migration of men. While there has been some improvement in the 2015 elections, low levels of women's inclusion in local and national parliaments persists. Significant barriers limiting the participation of women in politics and governance include the socio-cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality, and gendered leadership cultures and societal roles that relegate women to private, household responsibilities.
- Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a critical issue across southeastern Myanmar and women's organisations continue to run awareness campaigns to highlight the issue. Access to justice issues exist for women and girls due to a host of reasons including socio-cultural norms, reliance on informal dispute resolution mechanisms, and low levels of women's participation in legal systems. The barriers to women and girls accessing justice has been documented by civil society groups.
- Despite the well-documented obstacles to gender equality in southeastern Myanmar, important gains are being made. These include the creation of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013-2022 (NSPAW) and efforts by political parties, networks and NGOs to boost the role of women in public life and to monitor the gender impact of new projects.

Predominantly male out-migration from southeastern Myanmar is likely to be increasing the number of households headed by females. The gendered dynamics of out-migration vary in southeastern Myanmar.³¹⁸ The 2014 Census shows that female-headed households across the region are a little higher than the Union-level average of 24%: 29% in Tanintharyi Region and Mon State, 26% in Kayah State, and 23% in Kayah State.³¹⁹ (For more information, see the Displaced people and migration section – Figure 53.) More data is needed to understand levels of vulnerabilities among female-headed households that receive remittances from male household members in Thailand or elsewhere, and among other female-headed households. Interviewees observed that southeastern Myanmar has seen an increase in “skipped-generation households” in which dependents (typically grandparents) take care of dependents (children). Data is, however, limited and there are historical and cultural precedents to these trends.

³¹⁸ IOM and the Asian Research Centre for Migration. (2013). [Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand](#).

³¹⁹ Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Significant barriers exist to the participation of women in all levels of politics and governance in southeastern Myanmar.³²⁰ These barriers include the socio-cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality, and gendered leadership cultures and roles that relegate women to private, household responsibilities.³²¹ A 2014 nationwide survey on civil knowledge and values found that three-quarters of women surveyed reported that men make better political leaders than women.³²² There are few women parliamentarians at national and subnational levels. The 2015 elections brought 146 women countrywide to any level of parliamentary representation, compared to 975 men (87%). Fifty six of these women representatives a third came from southeastern Myanmar (see Figure 54).

Women now hold 14% of seats in the Upper House (Amyotha Hluttaw) and Lower House (Pyithu Hluttaw) of the national Parliament. While this is an improvement from the previous election, where women held 4.5% of seats, Myanmar continues to have one of the lowest proportion of women parliamentarians across Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). At the State/Region level, 79 women were elected countrywide (23 from southeastern Myanmar), compared to 551 men. There are low levels of women's participation in the peace process. For example, out of 26 representatives there were no female participants in the Union-level JMC. (For more information, see the Peacebuilding section.)

Figure 54: Women elected in Myanmar Hluttaw for southeastern Myanmar, by State/Region (2015)

State/ Region	Amyotha Hluttaw (upper)		Pyithu Hluttaw (lower)		State/Region Hluttaw	
	Total seats	Percentage of seats occupied by women	Total Seats	Percentage of seats occupied by women	Total Seats	Percentage of seats occupied by women
Bago	12	16.7%	28	21.4%	56	12.5%
Kayah	12	25%	7	42.9%	14	0%
Kayin	12	33.3%	7	14.3%	14	14.3%
Mon	12	25%	10	30%	20	25%
Shan	12	8.3%	48	10.4%	96	7.29%
Tanintharyi	12	0%	10	20%	20	10%
UNION	168	13.7%	323	13.6%	630	12.6%

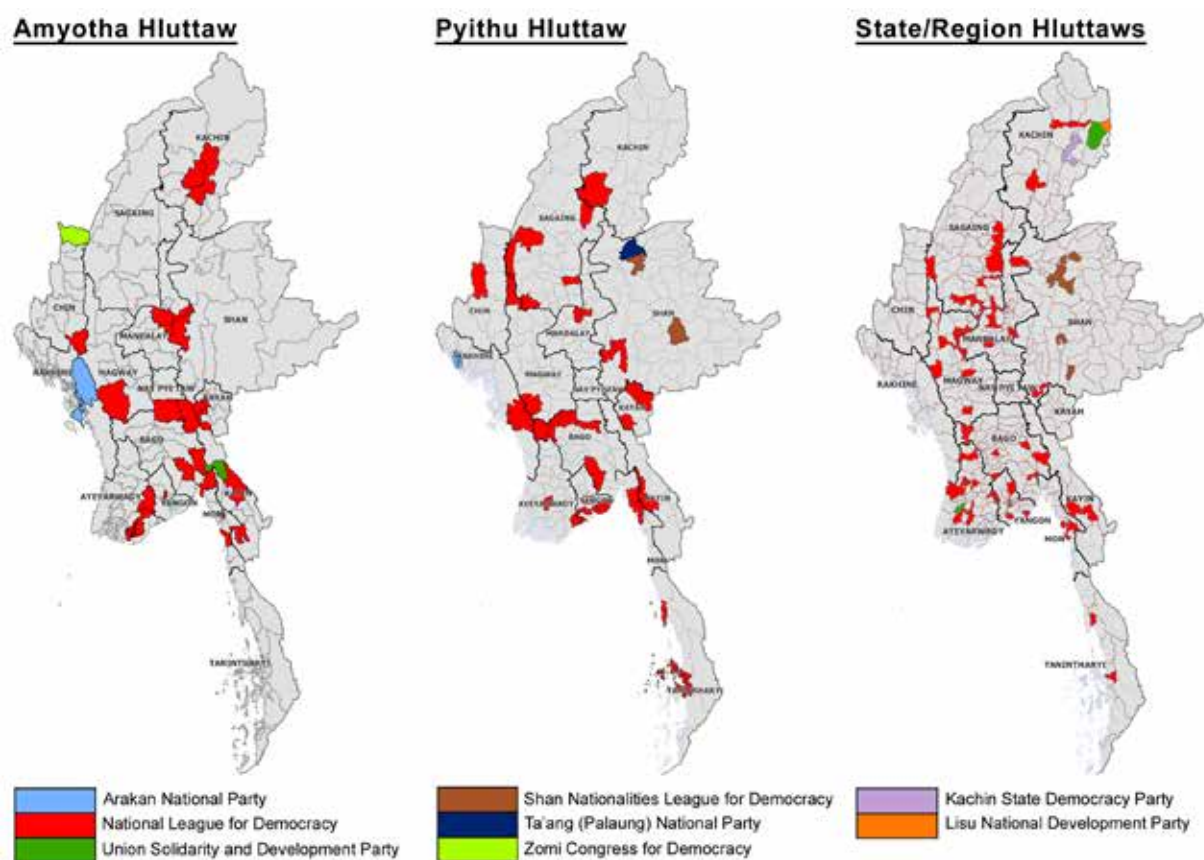
Source: MIMU and IFES. (2015). [Myanmar Election Maps 2010-2015](#).

³²⁰ Gender Equality Network (2015). [Raising the Curtain: Cultural Norms, Social Practices, and Gender Equality in Myanmar](#). This GEN study collected primary data from Mon State, Kayah State, Kayin State and Tanintharyi Region to inform analysis, although analysis presented in the report is not disaggregated by State/Region. Minoletti, P. (2016). [Gender \(in\)Equality in the Governance of Myanmar](#). *The Asia Foundation*; Minoletti, P. (2014). [Women's Participation in the Subnational Governance of Myanmar](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

³²¹ Oxfam, CARE, Trocaire, Action Aid. 2014. [Women and Leadership](#).

³²² The Asia Foundation. (2014). [Myanmar 2014: Civic Knowledge and Values in a Changing Society](#).

Figure 55: Women in southeastern Myanmar elected in the 2015 general elections, by constituencies



Source: MIMU and IFES. (2015). [Myanmar Election Maps 2010-2015](#).

The inclusion of women is minimal at lower levels of governance. Women are largely excluded from township-level administration, the General Administration Department (GAD) and leadership at the village tract/ward level. In 2014, there were no women township administrators in the whole of Myanmar.³²³ In the 2012 village tract and ward elections, out of 16,785 successful candidates only 42 (0.25%) were women. In Mon and Kayah States, no women were elected as village tract/ward administrators. Female candidates in other parts of southeastern Myanmar did not fare much better.

Despite the numerous obstacles to women entering public space in Myanmar, important developments are taking root which promote the participation of women in the public sphere. A Mon Woman's Party was created in 2014.³²⁴ The goal of this party is to increase the participation of women in Parliament, but also to develop policies and practices that seek to promote gender equality in Myanmar's political and social spheres. While the party is limited to Mon State, its development is significant because it represents a concerted effort to highlight the exclusion of women in politics. In 2016, Tin Ei, an MP from Mon State, was selected as Myanmar's first female speaker of a subnational parliament.³²⁵ Union-level data, while not disaggregated by State/Region, shows that women MPs are more educated than male MPs: 93.9% of women MPs hold at least the equivalent of a bachelor's degree,

323 Minoletti, P. (2016). [Gender \(in\)Equality in the Governance of Myanmar](#); *The Asia Foundation*. Minoletti, P. (2014). [Women's Participation in the Subnational Governance of Myanmar](#). *The Asia Foundation*.

324 Initially this party was called the 'Woman's Party'; however, after formally registering this political party name, the group of women entered into a long debate with the Election Commission. While the party is now limited to Mon State, it seeks to contest at the national level and include all States/Regions. For more information, see: The Irrawaddy. (2015). [Women's political party backs down amid govt pressure to change name](#).

325 The Irrawaddy. (2016). [Mon State Elects Parliament's First Female Speaker](#).

against 77.7 % of men. Furthermore, 22.7 % of women MPs have obtained post-graduate degrees, compared with 8.5% of their male counterparts. Women MPs are more likely than the men to have prior experience in political and civil society.³²⁶

The National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) 2013-2022 was a significant step, and while nationwide in focus, the roadmap that NSPAW provides is relevant to the southeastern region. NSPAW includes 12 priority areas: livelihoods, education, health, violence against women, emergencies, economics, decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights, the media, environment, and girls.³²⁷ Observers noted that this policy framework currently lacks an implementation strategy and that NSPAW has yet to be disseminated at the subnational level given resource constraints.³²⁸

Women's organisations are active in raising awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) in southeastern Myanmar.³²⁹ They have documented the widespread prevalence of GBV, particularly among women from ethnic minorities.³³⁰ This includes mostly historical allegations that armed groups, especially but not only the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw), used rape as a military tactic. Some women's organisations focus on documenting conflict-related sexual violence, particularly those forms of violence committed by Government soldiers. More data gathering and systematic analysis is required to understand relevant trends and needs related to all forms of GBV in both conflict and non-conflict areas.

Initial findings of a 2015 assessment indicate that domestic violence is commonplace and often normalised within a family environment.³³¹ The assessment notes that domestic violence serves as a key barrier to women's participation in decision-making. The study also found that high levels of out-migration and drug use contribute to increased levels of GBV, particularly in relation to children and young people.

Few comprehensive GBV response models exist in southeastern Myanmar. Prevention services have been largely limited to the provision of safe houses and awareness-raising activities.³³² Multi-sectoral response programmes are yet to be implemented in the area, with the exception of Mon State, where a case management group meets to support adequate and safe referrals. GBV survivors often do not seek medical services or legal redress owing to stigma and a lack of trust in the justice system. Access to medical support is often hindered by past requirements for a police report before accessing services. This provision has now changed but public awareness of the change may be limited.

³²⁶ Ninh, Kim N. B. (2016). [Myanmar Elections Usher in Unprecedented Number of Women Parliamentarians](#). *The Asia Foundation* (2 March 2016).

³²⁷ The 12 priority areas are the same as those areas identified by the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), the only difference is that the BPfA's 'women and conflict' is reframed as 'women and emergencies' in NSPAW. See: Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs. (2013). National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2013-2020).

³²⁸ PSF. (2016). [The Women are Ready: an opportunity to transform peace in Myanmar](#).

³²⁹ The Gender Equality Network and Women's Organisations network conducted a mapping of their members, which provides an overview of women's organisations active in addressing GBV in southeastern Myanmar. See: Women's Organisations Network and Gender Equality Network. (2015). [WON-GEN Member Mapping Report](#); Karen Human Rights Group. (2006). *Dignity in the Shadow of Oppression: The abuse and agency of Karen women under militarisation*. Asia Justice and Rights. (2015). [Opening the Box: Women's Experiences of War, Peace and Impunity in Myanmar](#).

³³⁰ The first major report released by a women's organisation, the Shan Women's Network (SWAN), called attention to GBV committed by the Tatmadaw in Shan State. This report was seminal because it garnered international media attention. See: Shan Human Rights Foundation and Shan Women's Action Network. (2002). [License to rape: The Burmese military regime's use of sexual violence in the ongoing war in Shan State](#).

³³¹ This assessment was conducted by UNFPA and focused on Mon, Kayin, Kayah and with some consultation with civil society in Tanintharyi. The final report is expected to be released by end of 2016.

³³² Awareness-raising can increase vulnerabilities unless accompanied by a range of other activities. GEN and WON conducted a mapping of their members, which provides an overview of women's organisations active in addressing GBV in southeastern Myanmar. See: Women's Organisations Network and Gender Equality Network. (2015). [WON-GEN Member Mapping Report](#). For information on GBV in Kayah State, see: Ferretti, S. (2014). [Knowledge Attitudes Practices Study On Violence Against Women in Myanmar](#). Action Aid.

Observers also point out common concern over fears of reprisal, especially if the perpetrator is from an armed organisation.

Women's civil society organisations are documenting the gendered impact of infrastructure projects.³³³ Civil society groups in southeastern Myanmar are actively contesting and reporting the impact of economic development and infrastructure on communities, highlighting the conflict-insensitive nature of many such processes. Women's organisations have sought to raise awareness on the different impact of these developments on women and girls. For example, the Tavoyan Women's Union has conducted a study showing how developments surrounding the Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ) have led to livelihoods displacement and income insecurity for women in the area.³³⁴ The Molo Women Mining Network has reported on the social and community impact of tin mines in Kayah State.³³⁵ Concerns were also expressed by interviewees surrounding the potential for an increase in GBV as a result of incoming infrastructure and industries with imported labour.³³⁶

Women and girls face barriers in accessing justice in southeastern Myanmar. In remote, rural areas, informal dispute mechanisms are the primary way in which a host of social and community disputes are resolved, including GBV. These mechanisms are often led by men and leave little room for the participation of women. Outcomes of dispute resolution mechanisms are often focused on paying reparation to the family of the perpetrator. A study on protection and security concerns in southeastern Myanmar reported that the lack of female participation in dispute resolution mechanisms can lead to gender bias, particularly in relation to property inheritance. This report also showed that gender-biased judgements are prevalent in customary, non-state-led dispute resolution mechanisms.³³⁷ The reliance upon informal justice systems means that case resolution is often not formally reported.

There is a lack of comprehensive gender power analysis in the development, humanitarian and peace sectors in southeastern Myanmar. While documentation is increasing, largely due to better access to previously remote areas, it has been observed that there is a need to ensure that data, research and analysis is inclusive of gender perspectives. Other gendered gaps in knowledge and research include, but are not limited to: gender inclusive security policy, female-headed households, violent conflict and migration, masculinities, gender-sensitive public service delivery, constitutional reform, natural resource management and drug addiction.³³⁸

³³³ Tavoyan Women's Union. (2015). [Our Lives are Not for Sale: Tavoyan Women Speak Out Against the Dawei Special Economic Zone Project](#).

³³⁴ Tavoyan Women's Union. (2015). [Our Lives are Not for Sale: Tavoyan Women Speak Out Against the Dawei Special Economic Zone Project](#).

³³⁵ Molo Women Mining Watch Network. (2012). [Lost Paradise: Damaging Impact of Mawchi Tin Mines in Burma's Karenni State](#).

³³⁶ Initial finding of UNFPA GBV assessment of southeastern Myanmar.

³³⁷ The Border Consortium. (2014). [Protection and Security Concerns in South-East Burma/Myanmar](#)

³³⁸ For more knowledge and analysis gaps, including research questions, see: PSF. (2016). [The Women are Ready: an opportunity to transform peace in Myanmar](#).

10. Vulnerable groups (undocumented residents and children)

KEY POINTS³³⁹

- A lack of formal identification and of full citizenship status increases vulnerability for many in southeastern Myanmar. Documentation is an important protection tool to counter forced marriage, secure rights to nationality, prevent trafficking, and enforce labour laws. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable when they do not have civil documentation.
- Child welfare varies across southeastern Myanmar. For example, children in predominantly rural southern and eastern Shan State show stunting rates of 42% and 39%, above the national average of 35%. Kayin and Mon States measured 29% and 30%, significantly below the national average.
- Child labour, including some allegations of continued child recruitment into armed groups, remains a concern. Migration also generates vulnerabilities; protection services are still more limited in conflict-affected areas than elsewhere.

Identifying vulnerable groups and their specific needs is an emerging trend in the context of conflict-sensitive aid programming. Interviewees highlighted that developing vulnerability criteria to target and prioritise programming is vital to a conflict-sensitive approach. Although most conflict in southeastern Myanmar stems from political tensions and disputed governance rather than local dynamics between or within villages, favouring one group over another through development interventions nonetheless risks exacerbating pre-existing tensions and/or inequalities. This is the case in conflict-affected areas and elsewhere. Different stakeholders may not share definitions and criteria for vulnerability. A lack of common understanding around vulnerability in programming is a factor that can deepen community divisions.³⁴⁰

Conflict has generated many vulnerable or affected groups. Specialised services are generally patchy or absent, especially in conflict-affected areas and among conflict-affected people. Concerns include disabled people, torture victims, other psychologically traumatised people, and larger groups including displaced people and those whose livelihoods have been seriously disrupted. (For more information on specific groups including landmine victims, landless farmers etc see other sections.)

³³⁹ This section is not exhaustive and does not cover all vulnerable groups that exist in southeastern Myanmar. It focuses on two particularly vulnerable groups: undocumented residents and children.

³⁴⁰ Mercy Corps. (2013). [Kayah State Socio-Economic Analysis](#).

Undocumented residents

Lack of civil documentation is an ongoing issue in communities in southeastern Myanmar.³⁴¹ As defined by the 1982 Citizenship Law, “Pink Cards” or Citizen Scrutiny Cards (CSCs) enable full citizenship rights.³⁴² Those without a Pink Card do not have access to basic rights and services, which significantly increases their vulnerability. Protection issues arise when individuals without documentation are unable to exercise rights including freedom to vote, to buy and sell land, to access tertiary education, and freedom of movement. Civil documentation enables people to access government services. Interviewees highlighted that documentation is an important protection tool to counter forced marriage, secure rights to nationality, prevent trafficking, and enforce labour laws. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable when they do not have civil documentation.

Historically, many people did not have Pink Cards, limiting their ability to exercise basic rights and access services. Those without Pink Cards are more likely to be from ethnic minority groups and to live near borders or in remote and conflict-affected areas. The problem is partly caused by the continued lack of engagement with state services including birth registration and documentation in remote and conflict-affected areas, and exacerbated by discriminatory official attitudes concerning minority ethnicities and religions. At the national level, approximately 28.4 million people, or 69%, of those over the age of 10 have Pink Cards. In southeastern Myanmar, the figure is just slightly lower at 66%. There is variety within southeastern Myanmar: in Kayin State only 57% of the population has a Pink Card compared with 90% of the population in Kayah State. More people in urban areas (74%) in southeastern Myanmar have one than in rural areas (63%). Again there are variations: one in two people in rural parts of Kayin State do not have a Pink Card (see Figure 56). Sex-disaggregated 2014 Census data on identity cards is not available. Efforts such as the Moe Pwint Special Project led by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population are working to address the problem by accelerating the issuance of Pink Cards.³⁴³

³⁴¹ The Norwegian Refugee Committee (NRC) partnered with the Ministry of Immigration and Population (MoIP) to accelerate the issuance and distribution of national identification cards to conflict-affected communities in southeastern Myanmar. From 2012-2014, a total of 226,984 beneficiaries benefitted from NRC’s ICLA support, covering more than 2,629 villages.

³⁴² The 1982 Citizenship Law created several categories of citizenship: an Associate Citizenship Scrutiny Card or “Blue Card” grants Associate Citizenship; a Naturalised Citizenship Scrutiny Card, or “Green Card” grants Naturalised Citizenship. For more information on these cards, see: Transnational Institute-BCN. (2014). [Ethnicity without Meaning. Data without Context: The 2014 Census, Identity and Citizenship in Burma.](#)

³⁴³ In 2012 NRC initiated a civil documentation rights project with the Ministry of Immigration and Population (MoIP) in Kayin State, which expanded to Kayah State, Tanintharyi Region into parts of Southern Shan and Mon States in 2013 and 2014.

Figure 56: Identity cards, by State/Region

State/ Region	Identity cards, 10 years old and over, in total								
	Total population	Citizenship Scrutiny Card (CSC)		Naturalised Scrutiny Card		National Registration Card		No identity card	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Bago (East)	2,304,756	1,456,766	63	33,936	1.47	20,839	0.9	765,727	33
Kayah	220,247	197,933	90	575	0.26	1,381	0.63	19,238	9
Kayin	1,148,665	650,024	57	5611	0.49	17,639	1.54	461,470	40
Mon	1,645,018	1,086,371	66	6,674	0.41	60,703	3.69	469,621	29
Shan (East)	704,926	445,206	63	748	0.11	2,166	0.31	239,439	34
Shan (South)	1,920,643	1,381,485	72	4,841	0.25	15,905	0.83	501,930	26
Tanintharyi	1,095,900	743,224	68	2,905	0.27	26,601	2.43	312,270	28
southeastern Myanmar	9,040,155	5,961,009	66	55,290	1	145,234	2	2,769,695	31
Union	40,988,693	28,397,519	69	170,352	0.42	692,288	1.69	11,207,769	27

Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Figure 57: Identity cards (urban), by State/Region

State/ Region	Identity card (urban), 10 years old and over								
	Total	Citizenship Scrutiny Card		Naturalised Scrutiny Card		National Registration Card		No identity card	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Bago (East)	580,212	408,289	70	7,358	1.27	8,116	1.4	144,900	25
Kayah	59,547	54,482	91	185	0.31	469	0.79	3,939	7
Kayin	264,839	181,047	68	1,136	0.43	5,033	1.9	73,148	28
Mon	477,588	328,072	69	1,981	0.41	29,408	6.16	110,174	23
Shan (East)	145,703	120,995	83	312	0.21	834	0.57	15,692	11
Shan (South)	532,824	428,171	80	2,315	0.43	4,645	0.87	90,496	17
Tanintharyi	277,306	211,482	76	1,224	0.44	5,674	2.05	55,070	20
southeastern Myanmar	2,338,019	1,732,538	74	14,511	1	54,179	2	493,419	21
Union	12,649,939	9,558,657	76	78,914	0.62	272,121	2.15	2,470,421	20

Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Figure 58: Identity cards (rural), by State/Region

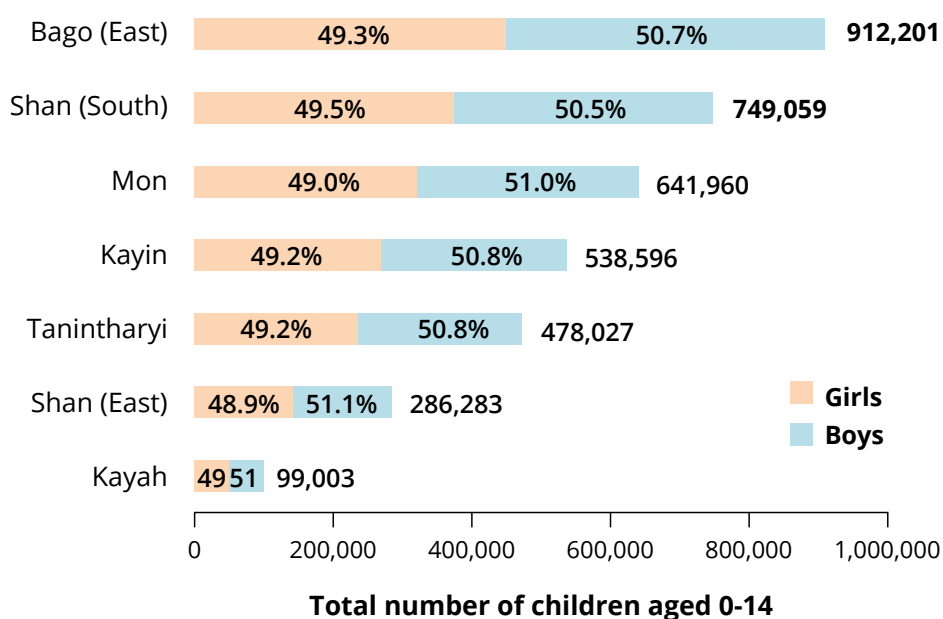
State/ Region	Identity card (rural), 10 years old and over								
	Total	Citizenship Scrutiny Card		Naturalised Scrutiny Card		National Registration Card		No identity card	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Bago (East)	1,724,544	1,048,477	61	26,578	1.54	12,723	0.74	620,827	36
Kayah	160,700	143,451	89	390	0.24	912	0.57	15,299	10
Kayin	883,826	468,977	53	4,475	0.51	12,606	1.43	388,322	44
Mon	1,167,430	758,299	65	4,693	0.4	31,295	2.68	359,447	31
Shan (East)	559,223	324,211	58	436	0.08	1,332	0.24	223,747	40
Shan (South)	1,387,819	953,314	69	2,526	0.18	11,260	0.81	411,434	30
Tanintharyi	818,594	531,742	65	1,681	0.21	20,927	2.56	257,200	31
southeastern Myanmar	6,702,136	4,228,471	63	40,779	1	91,055	1	2,276,276	34%
Union	28,338,754	18,838,862	66	91,438	0.32	420,167	1.48	8,737,348	31

Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Children

The 2014 Census recorded 3.7 million children under 15 years in southeastern Myanmar, making up 26% of the country's total.

Figure 59: Total number of children aged 0-14, by State/Region

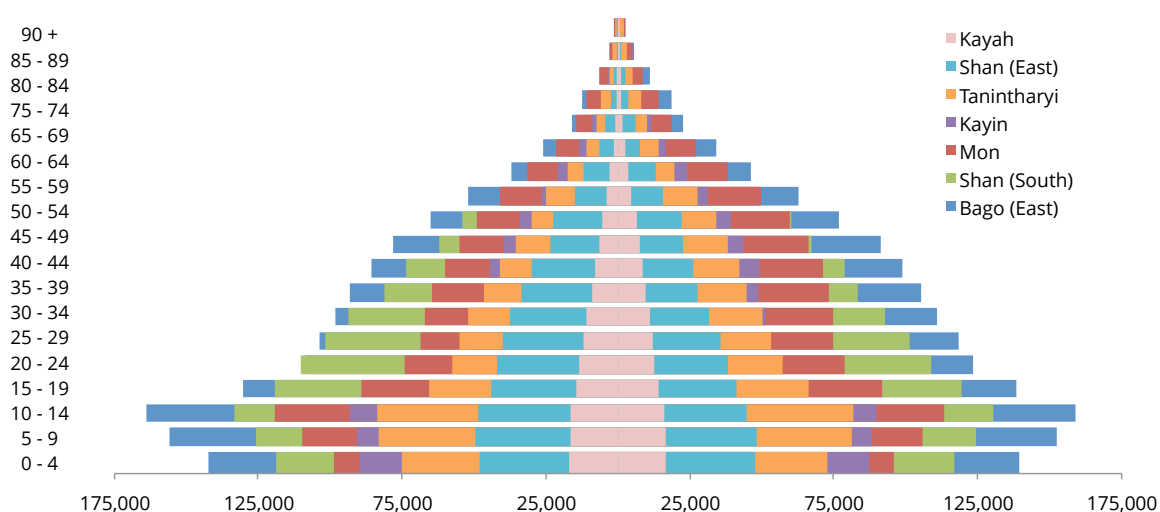


Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

2014 Census data enables analysis of gender and age dynamics of child and adult populations.

General national population trends are replicated in southeastern Myanmar, but closer analysis reveals some variations. For example, in Kayah State there is a higher proportion of children (both male and female) than at the national level, reflecting higher birth rates. In most southeastern States/Regions, the population is “pot-shaped”, more closely resembling the national level pyramid (see Figure 60). In Mon State, for example, the largest population cohort there is aged 10-14 years, reflecting declining birth rates after decades of population growth. Other traits are also identifiable, including in several states a deficit of middle-aged men when compared with women. This is probably a result of male-dominated out-migration.

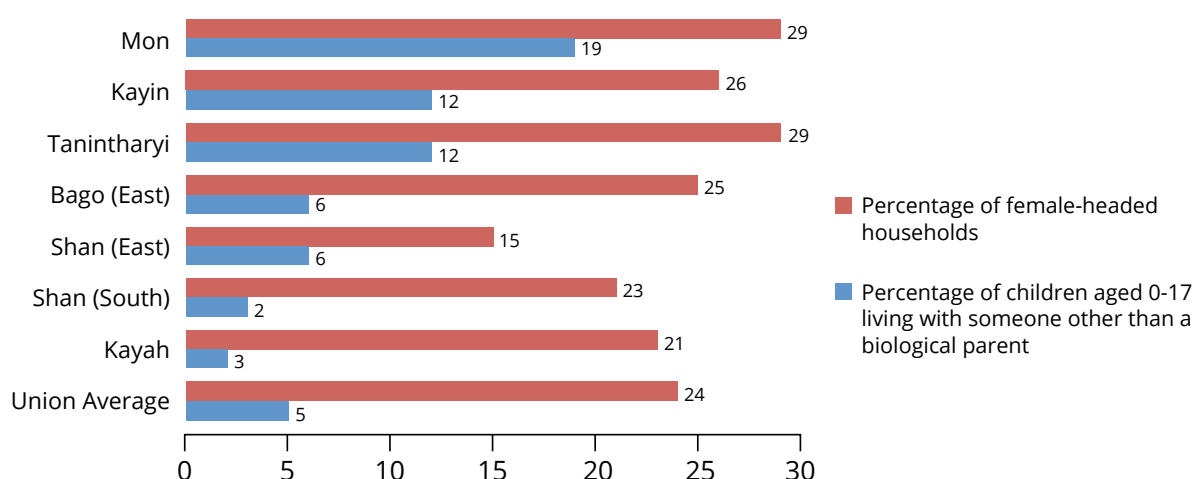
Figure 60: Population pyramid of southeastern Myanmar by State/Region



Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

Children are uniquely affected by migration and displacement in Mon and Kayin States, and Tanintharyi Region. Significant numbers of children live without a biological parent in Mon (19%) and Kayin (12%) and Tanintharyi (12%). No other State/Region in the country has a higher percentage; the national average is 5.4%.³⁴⁴ Most of these children have parents working abroad or outside the locality. Data from a 2010 survey shows that the percentages of children who live with neither parent, but whose parents are both alive, are highest in Mon (16%) and Kayin (10%) and Tanintharyi (nine percent).

³⁴⁴ UNICEF. (2012). [Snapshots of Child Wellbeing in Myanmar](#), available by State/Region. Note: data was collected for the [Myanmar Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2009-2010](#), conducted by the Government of Myanmar's Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, Ministry of Health, and UNICEF.

Figure 61: Family situation in southeastern Myanmar, by State/Region

Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#). UNICEF (2012). [Snapshots of Child Wellbeing in Myanmar](#).

Documentation is problematic for many children in southeastern Myanmar. Unregistered children are more susceptible to exploitation, trafficking and recruitment into armed groups. Birth registration rates varied in 2010 from 54% in eastern Bago State to 95% in eastern Shan State, compared with the national average of 72%.³⁴⁵ A wide gap in registration rates existed between urban (94%) and rural (64%) families. Boys and girls were equally likely to be registered. Registration rates have since improved, partly thanks to a 2015 Government drive in Kayah and Kayin States (as well as Ayeyarwady Region), during which about 100,000 free birth certificates were issued to all unregistered children under five, regardless of their place of birth within Myanmar.

In Mon State, fewer children die before their fifth birthday than elsewhere in Myanmar. At 48 per 1,000 live births, the figure is lower than all other States/Regions, including Yangon.³⁴⁶ In most other parts of southeastern Myanmar the number appears to be close to the national rate of 72 per 1,000. In 2013, nationwide under-five mortality was estimated to be reducing by 3.3% per year in Myanmar. This reduction was primarily explained by a decline in deaths due to infectious diseases such as diarrhoea; however, deaths due to diarrhoea appeared to be an ongoing problem in Kayah State.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ UNICEF. (2012). [Snapshots of Child Wellbeing in Myanmar](#).

³⁴⁶ Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

³⁴⁷ Government of Myanmar Ministry of Health. (2014). [Study on Cause of Under-Five Mortality](#).

Figure 62: Moderate to severe stunting and wasting, by State/Region

State/Region	Stunting, moderate and severe under 5 years	Wasting, moderate and severe under 5 years
Kayah	34.6%	2.5%
Shan (South)	34.2%	5.1%
Shan (East)	32%	2.3%
Bago (East)	27.8%	7.2%
Tanintharyi	26.3%	8.4%
Mon	23.7%	4.9%
Kayin	22.6%	3.9%

Source: Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, Ministry of Health and UNICEF. Myanmar Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2009-2010)

The release of underage soldiers is ongoing, although they continue to be recruited by NSAs in southeastern Myanmar. In line with the June 2012 Plan of Action signed between the Government and the UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting, 745 soldiers who were underage at the time of the signing had been released in 12 batches by March 2016. The number and sex of children remaining in armed conflict is unknown. Reports suggest that recruitment and coercion of children continue, both by the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) and by several NSAs. These groups have cooperated to varying degrees with the spirit of the aforementioned Plan of Action.³⁴⁸ Five armies found within southeastern Myanmar groups are listed by the UN Secretary-General as “persistent perpetrators” in the use of children: the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), KNU/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council (KNLA-PC), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), and Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army – South (RCSS/SSA-S). After children are discharged from armed groups they require assistance including services such as remedial education, vocational training and psychosocial support in order to reintegrate.

Conflict in southeastern Myanmar affects children in several ways. Armed conflict has limited children’s access to education and slowed economic development over many years. It is also difficult for children to understand the ramifications of conflict, such as the use of landmines. A 2014 survey in Tanintharyi Region, eastern Bago Region and Kayah, Kayin and Mon States found that 50% of children did not know what an unexploded device is; one in five said there were places they could not go because of explosive devices; and one in ten said that they knew how to protect themselves from explosive devices.³⁴⁹

As conflict lessens in southeastern Myanmar, opportunities for child protection increase. Social work case management for child victims of violence, abuse and exploitation has begun in southeastern Myanmar, along with programmes to prevent trafficking. Information is incomplete on many issues such as access to education, recruitment of child soldiers, child labour, and relevant health indicators. Government and local NGOs expect to be able to expand social work case management in 27 townships for children, with the involvement of township child rights committees.

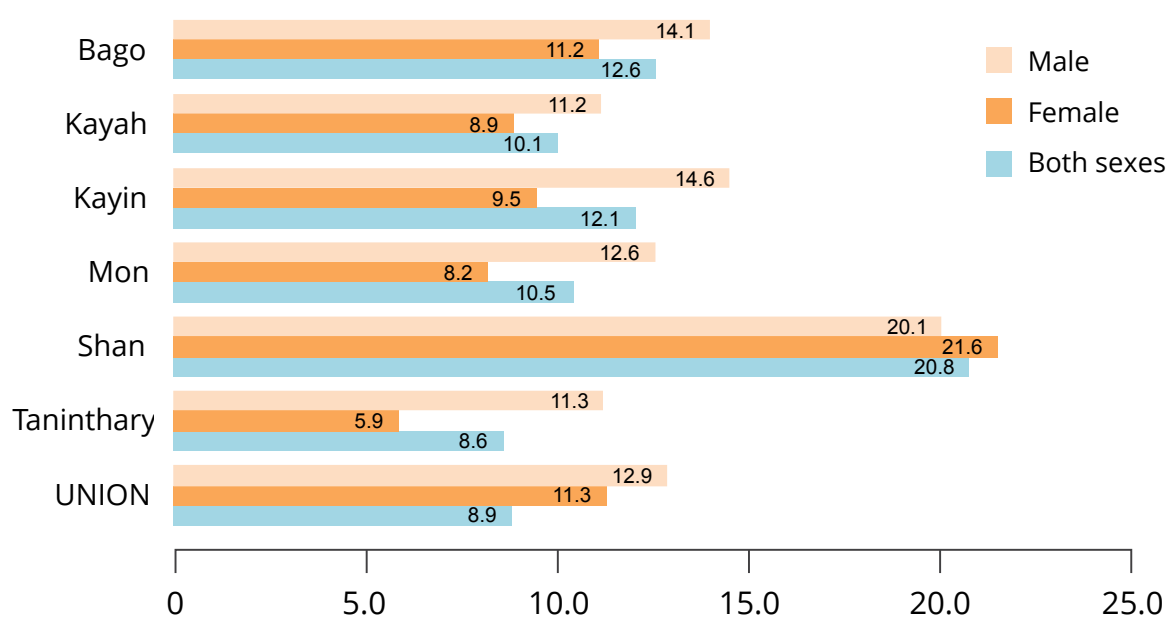
³⁴⁸ Child Soldiers International. (2015). [Under the Radar: Ongoing recruitment and use of children by the Myanmar army.](#)

³⁴⁹ As of September 2015, the final report had not been released, but findings were quoted in ICBL. (2015). [Landmine Monitor Myanmar/Burma.](#)

Malnutrition is high among children in southeastern Myanmar. As elsewhere in the country, an alarmingly high percentage of children under five are moderately and severely malnourished.³⁵⁰ Girls and boys appear to be equally at risk. More research is needed to better understand current and local contexts, as 2010 findings vary widely across the area. Children in predominantly rural southern and eastern Shan State show stunting rates of 42% and 39%, above the national average of 35%. Kayin and Mon States measured 29% and 30%, significantly below the national average.³⁵¹

Child labour participation rates are affected by migration rates in southeastern Myanmar. The 2015 Child Labour Index ranks Myanmar among the worst 12 countries in the world for child labour. The practice is common, often seen in Myanmar and elsewhere as an antidote to household poverty.³⁵² A recent report noted that where working-age adults have migrated from Mon State to Thailand, children are motivated to help offset the family's poverty, and commonly begin working by the age of 13.³⁵³ However interviewees noted that many children in the country are involved in work, so the link with migration may not be valid. Child labourers in Mon State frequently work in agriculture, mainly on rubber and betel nut plantations, and then rarely return to school. Laws regarding the minimum age for work are not often enforced, and work in households and family businesses is legal. Although information breaking down child labour rates by gender is scarce, it is thought that data may underestimate girls' working hours given unrecorded labour that they are involved with, such as household chores, fetching water and so on. The growing impact of tourism on child labour participation rates was also mentioned as an area worthy of further study.

Figure 63: Percentage of economically active children, by gender and State/Region



Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. (2014). [The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census](#).

³⁵⁰ Government of Myanmar Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and Ministry of Health and UNICEF. (2011). [Myanmar Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2009-2010](#).

³⁵¹ UNICEF. (2012). [Shan State A snapshot of Child Wellbeing](#).

³⁵² ILO. (2015). [Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Study on Child Labour in Yangon, Ayeyarwady Region and Mon State](#).

³⁵³ Woman and Child Rights Project. (2013). [Children for Hire: A Portrait of Child Labor in Mon Areas](#).

11. Lessons learned

Interviewees provided a host of lessons learned from their organisational and professional experiences working in southeastern Myanmar. The following lessons are grouped by theme. All are anecdotal and could be relevant to a wide group of international and national actors operating in the area. Importantly, these lessons learned are not recommendations, nor intended to be prescriptive.

Approaches

External actors often arrive with a predetermined plan and do not spend enough time listening and appreciating local context. International agencies and donors operating in southeastern Myanmar are seen as having their own agendas, which interviewees noted often mirror those of the State/Region government. Interviewees suggested that international actors often focus on addressing problems they already have experience with, rather than listening to community concerns or encouraging more far-reaching political solutions. Interviewees encouraged the design and implementation of programmes in concert with communities, as close to the grassroots level as possible, while also highlighting the importance of making township-based plans not just State/Region-level plans.

Relationships need to be built with a multiplicity of local actors. Interviewees stressed the importance of establishing a solid connection with whichever Government, NSA or civil society actor operates anywhere near the territory where an organisation aims to work. A sustained presence in the field facilitates these relationships.

Community consultations should include women and youth. At present these consultations often leave little space for the meaningful participation beyond male elders. Consultations should not exclusively privilege male elders, who are often seen as the “gatekeepers” to communities.

More trust between actors in southeastern Myanmar needs to be encouraged. Interviewees highlighted that mistrust and suspicion runs in multiple directions among stakeholders. Whether in relation to political transition, or ceasefire processes, or possible return of refugees and IDPs, interviewees suggested that the main issue at stake is trust: between Government and NSAs, local communities and Government officials, as well as between the military and state government. Interviewees highlighted that building trust takes time but is an important process in which to invest when operating in southeastern Myanmar and building conflict-sensitive programming.

There should be more sharing of best practices and improved understanding of how to engage local organisations. Better understanding is required to ensure that the voices, needs and concerns of communities including refugees and IDP populations in southeastern Myanmar are taken into account in programming and operations. Interviewees highlighted that it is important to meet a diversity of actors during project design, and that it is equally important to sustain engagement with partners in a continuously shifting context.

Civil society strengthening should not focus primarily on improving service delivery. It is important for international organisations to support civil society to meet their goals and priorities, not simply to act as implementers and service delivery agents. Some interviewees cautioned that a focus on strengthened service delivery often supports externally driven goals rather than the longer-term development of sustainable capacities in civil society.

Donors and international organisations need to offer more realistic timeframes for achieving programme impact. Interviewees highlighted that donors expect organisations to follow tight timeframes that restrict the scope for strong, long-term interventions. Interviewees noted that process is equally important as results, especially in conflict-affected environments. Longer project cycles are essential; projects with cycles of six months to one year have very limited impact, given the difficulty of planning and relationship-building in southeastern Myanmar. Furthermore, longstanding international organisations in the area have a humanitarian focus, while current needs are more developmental in nature. A shift is needed to create outcome-oriented interventions that address needs.

Conversations about thematic issues must occur in concert with discussions of macro processes. For example, interviewees highlighted that discussions of natural resource extraction must happen in parallel to discussion of the peace process. Interviewees also suggested that there was a need to place the peace process within the broader context of political and economic reform.

Diverse context

Southeastern Myanmar is vast and nuanced, making it difficult to generalise. Successful implementation of programming in one area does not necessarily translate to the rest of the region. A multifaceted understanding of areas and administrative control is required.

Lines of territorial control and authority are complicated. Interviewees suggested a need to understand the meaning of “mixed-control”. Sometimes Government and NSAs compete for legitimacy in a given area; in other areas, two or more NSAs vie for control. Interviewees highlighted that the number of areas controlled exclusively by NSAs is fairly limited in southeastern Myanmar, and noted that the meaning of mixed-control or “contested” places varies tremendously. Sometimes the term means only that a Government school exists there; other times that Government troops pass through, and so on.

There is a need for ongoing micro-level research to understand how mixed-control areas work on the ground. It is also important to acknowledge the difficulty in capturing rapidly changing ceasefire dynamics.

Conflict sensitivity

International organisations need to improve their understanding of power dynamics. Without understanding the underlying power and unequal structures of a particular context, external organisations risk feeding and exacerbating pre-existing drivers of conflict. Such understanding is especially important in the context of NCA signatories and non-signatories. Working with one NSA whether signatory or non-signatory does not mean that the same methodology and approach can be applied to another. Interviewees overwhelmingly highlighted the need for awareness of conflict- and gender-sensitivity in programming.

One group of vulnerable people should not be privileged over another. Interviewees highlighted the importance of establishing broadly applicable vulnerability criteria. This process is important in southeastern Myanmar as the lines between vulnerable communities are blurred, particularly those communities affected by voluntary or forced migration.

The experience of multiple service delivery providers, inside and outside southeastern Myanmar, should be recognised. For over 20 years, a large portion of aid has been delivered through NSA- and community service-delivery mechanisms, or through civil society groups operating in both southeastern Myanmar and on the border. Interviewees highlighted that despite this experience, recognition by international actors of local approaches is more theoretical than substantive.

Working relationships with Government and non-state service providers need to be established.

Interviewees highlighted the need to analyse the wider consequences of working relationships. Integrating conflict-sensitive and Do No Harm approaches within programme design, implementation and monitoring is essential.

Work should not be limited to accessible areas. Interviewees highlighted the importance of accepting increased risk when working in southeastern Myanmar. Many international agencies gravitate towards working in the most accessible townships, typically lowland Government-controlled areas, rather than in conflict-affected and remote communities. Avoiding areas entirely because they are considered too high-risk is counterproductive as it could generate more risks than it alleviates. Interviewees proposed integrating dynamic risk management into programme design as a mechanism to mitigate concerns related to high-risk areas of engagement.

Representation

Government and NSAs are not homogeneous actors. The Government of Myanmar is not a monolith. Working relationships between staff officers from the line ministry, officials at the state government, and township and village administrators, can be complex. All are relevant spokespersons, even if their degree and source of effective power may vary. Not all township administrators are driven by the same motivations. A detailed assessment of project areas is key.

Some NSAs are more centralised than others. Each local unit is unique and not necessarily fully aligned with or representative of their NSA leaders. For example, interviewees noted variety within and between KNU bodies. In a post-NCA environment, the question of who legitimately has the authority to represent constituents is acute and unresolved.

There is a need to deconstruct dominant narratives. Groups or stakeholders are often generalised and described in simplistic terms. One such example is when groups in southeastern Myanmar conflate the Union Government with the Bamar majority. Interviewees highlighted the importance of ensuring that programming does not feed into dominant narratives without testing their relevance and accuracy.

Coordination

Coordination is critical at the subnational level. The ability of UN agencies and international organisations to coordinate at the State/Region level varies. Interviewees noted the importance of coordination mechanisms in an uncertain and dynamic context, and the inadequacy of efforts to date.

There is no substitute for direct interaction in the field. Interviewees suggested that the location of decision-makers, especially international staff of UN agencies and INGOs, affects how they absorb a rapidly changing field context. Interviewees stressed the value of having decision-makers based in the field, and not only in Yangon, in order to improve understanding.

As more development actors engage, there is an increasing need for coordination. Historically, humanitarian organisations were the main aid actors in southeastern Myanmar given its history of armed conflict and refugee populations. Development organisations are now increasingly active, covering humanitarian and development needs. Many organisations are still in a start-up phase so it is not too late to create strong coordination mechanisms which address development and humanitarian concerns. Interviewees proposed that such mechanisms could be put in place locally so that discussion would involve local CSOs.

Information sharing

It is important to learn from other transitional contexts. Lessons can be learned from situations in other countries: interviewees highlighted cases of Nepal (Ministry of Peace) and Sri Lanka (National Peace Council) as offering relevant lessons to Myanmar's transition from conflict to peace.

Information-sharing cultures should be fostered. Interviewees noted data and knowledge gaps, articulating the need to improve data collection, but also the need to make such information accessible so it can be used to inform coordination. Access to many parts of southeastern Myanmar remains difficult, but even where there is access, collecting data is often a sensitive task.

Annex 1: Information gaps

Several interviewees surveyed during this process raised areas where they felt further data and research was needed to improve understanding of the complexity of southeastern Myanmar. Key information gaps are identified below. Areas for further research and analysis are also highlighted throughout the text.

The list of information gaps below is not comprehensive and some of these gaps may be covered by existing information which was not identified or accessible during the research process. It remains difficult to know the full extent of available information across all sectors given the lack of routine sharing of information and data.

General

- Data requires more disaggregation by State/Region and by township
- Data needs more gender disaggregation, accompanied by gendered analysis of such data
- Data and analysis is needed in areas with significant NSA influence areas of inquiry include welfare and poverty, governance, economic activities and development initiatives

Economy

- More data is needed on economic activities, such as the business interests of armed actors (including NSAs, militias, BGFs)
- More comprehensive data on major development and infrastructure plans is required
- Quantitative and qualitative data on drug addiction and illicit economy, including implications and issues for youth, is needed
- Data on the informal economy is needed. Such data was noted as being inherently difficult to assess, but critical in addressing the economic aspects of peacebuilding and ensuring sustainable economic development

Health

- Township-level health profiles need updating
- Data on health requires further investigation, more coordination and better programming response

Gender

- An integration of gender power analysis is needed across development, humanitarian and peace sectors
- A deeper understanding of the drivers and impacts of female-headed households is required
- A greater understanding of gendered dimensions of drug addiction, particularly among youth, is needed

Governance

- A more nuanced understanding of the various forms of local governance at township and village levels, including customary and formal systems, is required

- More data and analysis needed of evolving local politics, particularly vis-à-vis ethnic political parties, especially after the 2015 General Elections

Land and land rights

- More analysis is needed on landless farmers, including rights, status and laws and regulations

Livelihoods

- Poverty data requires updating
- Upland livelihoods concerns need more quantified and qualitative data in order to better improve understanding

Migration

- A broader understanding is required of the complexities of in-migration, including how shifting demographics impact local relations, political concerns and community dynamics
- A deeper understanding is needed of remittances, particularly the degree to which households depend on them, and the social implications that they have across southeastern Myanmar

Vulnerable groups

- Data on child labour, and the experiences of both girls and boys, is required
- No comprehensive data – such as a Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Study – exists relating to stunting and malnutrition among children

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