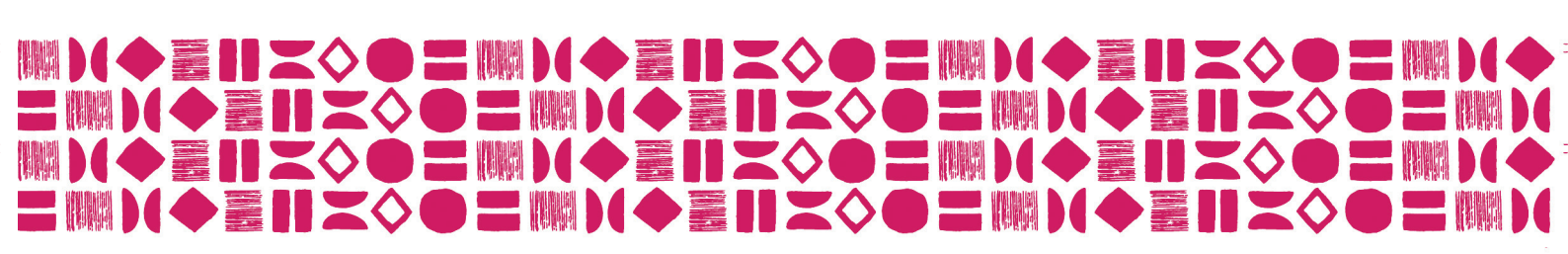#youthtransformingMyanmar

# YOUTH & EVERYDAY PEACE IN MYANMAR

Fostering the untapped potential of Myanmar's youth
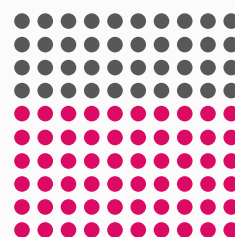
# WHO ARE THE YOUTH?

**18-35 YEARS**

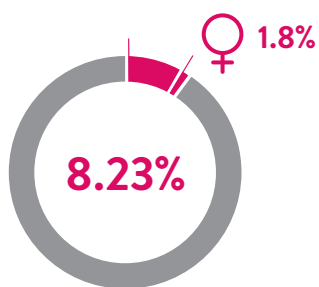Youth are defined as **18-35 years old** (no official definition yet)

**27**

National Median age in Myanmar is **27 years old**

Approximately **60% of the population** are under the age of 35

# WHERE ARE THE YOUTH?

♀ 1.8%

**8.23%**

Percentage of **individuals aged 35 or under** in Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (excluding Tatmadaw representatives)

**0**

**Number of youth representatives** on Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC)

**0**

**Number of young men/women** on Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) – Union Level

**Employment**
74.8% of young men and 55.3% of young **women** are employed

**Education**
Nearly 70% of young **people (18-34)** have not completed high school

**Migration**
80% of the 4.25 million Myanmar migrants abroad are **between 15-39**

**Faciliators**

**Technical Advisors**

**Policy Advocates**

**Documenters**

**Tech-innovators**

**Logisticians**

**Visionaries**

# YOUTH BEHIND THE SCENES

**YOUTH POLICY DUE END OF 2017**

**PAUNG SIE FACILITY**

# YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY: FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

## Transform the views and behaviours of decision-makers on youth inclusion

**1**

- Engage with the views and behaviours of decision-makers
- Identify 'champions for youth' and leverage role-modelling
- Increase channels for dialogue between decision-makers and youth leaders

## Strengthen the capacity of youth leaders and youth organisations

**2**

- Invest in building soft and technical skills of young leaders
- Support the strengthening and sustainability of youth organisations
- Enhance strategic coordination between and within youth organisations
- Invest in core funding and earmark funding to support youth programming

## Address knowledge and analysis gaps

**4**

- Youth power analysis
- Youth mapping and directory
- Myanmar-specific Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) indicators
- Needs assessment of young combatants
- Youth policy implementation

## Transform structural barriers to youth inclusion into opportunities

**3**

- Adopt and implement structural youth inclusion mechanisms in public decision-making
- Establish and invest in evidence-based drug policy and services
- Invest in quality and conflict-sensitive education reform
- Invest in economic opportunities and meaningful job creation

# Table of Contents

# Acknowledgements

*Photo, left: "Myanmar youth shape their own destiny", Rose Kyaw , Karenni State Women Network, KNPLF-Youth*

**To the Reader**

This *Discussion Paper* offers a starting point for discussion rather than a definitive statement on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) in Myanmar. It reflects on the status of youth inclusion since 2011 in peacebuilding, analysing opportunities and barriers to engaging young men and women. Seeking to develop a common understanding of policy and programmatic initiatives, the *Discussion Paper* also hopes to act as a catalyst for further engagement and research on youth inclusion in peacebuilding and social cohesion in Myanmar. The *Discussion Paper* includes three "YPS Essentials" which provide an overview of good practice related to youth inclusion for the reader to consider when reflecting on youth inclusion in the Myanmar context. Discussion questions are interspersed throughout the *Paper* to encourage readers to reflect on the ways in which they can engage young people in programming and policy. Readers are encouraged to share their comments, feedback, and ideas regarding this *Discussion Paper* with the Paung Sie Facility (PSF) by email: analysis@paungsiefacility.org.

## THINKING ABOUT YOUTH: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

To stimulate discussion about the links between youth and sustainable peace, and how programming and policies can be designed and implemented to integrate youth perspectives, readers are invited to consider the following questions when reflecting on this *Discussion Paper*:

- Why is the participation and substantive inclusion of young women and men necessary for sustaining peace?

- What mechanisms currently exist for youth involvement in the peace process and peacebuilding?

- How can young people more effectively participate in the peace process and peacebuilding?

- What barriers need to be addressed to promote youth inclusion in the peace process, peacebuilding, and social cohesion? How are the barriers facing young men and young women different?

- How can national and international stakeholders strategically coordinate to enhance the inclusion of youth in public decision-making?

- What are the long-term consequences of overlooking the inclusion of young women and men in the peace process, peacebuilding, and social cohesion in Myanmar?

- How can good global practice on youth inclusion be tailored to the Myanmar context?

- What new approaches can your organisation consider to better include young people and integrate youth perspectives into policy and programming?

*Photo, left: "Myanmar Youth wants to move from individual peace to peace for all", Wai Lwin Oo, Mandalay Youth Network and Khun Htee, Pa-O Youth Organisation*

# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| ABFSU | All Burma Federation of Student Unions |
| ABSDF | All Burma Students' Democratic Front |
| AKSYU | All Kachin Students and Youth Union |
| ALP | Arakan Liberation Party |
| AMDP | All Mon Region Democracy Party |
| ATS | Amphetamine-type stimulants |
| CCNEYC | Coordinating Committee for National Ethnic Youth Conference |
| CDES | Centre for Development and Ethnic Studies |
| CDNH | Center for Diversity and National Harmony |
| CESR | Comprehensive Education Sector Review |
| CNF | Chin National Front |
| CSO | Civil society organisation |
| CYP | Children and Youth in Peacebuilding |
| DKBA | Democratic Karen Benevolent Army |
| DPN | Delegation for Political Negotiation |
| DRC | Democratic Republic of Congo |
| DSW | Department of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement |
| EAO | Ethnic Armed Organisation |
| EC | Education College |
| ENAC | Ethnic Nationalities Affairs Center |
| EYC | Ethnic Youth Conference |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| GPS | Gender, Peace and Security |
| IANYD | United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development |
| ICT | Information, Communication, Technology |
| IDP | Internally displaced person |
| INGO | International non-governmental organisation |
| JICM | Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting |
| JMC | Joint Monitoring Committee |
| JMC-U | Joint Monitoring Committee-Union Level |
| LGBTIQ | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning |
| KDP | Kachin Democratic Party |
| KIO | Kachin Independence Organisation |
| KNLA-KPC | Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council |
| KNLA | Karen National Liberation Army |
| KNU | Karen National Union |
| MASC | Myanmar Art Social Project |
| MNP | Mon National Party |
| MPC | Myanmar Peace Center |
| MSWRR | Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement |
| MYEO | Myanmar Youth Educator Organisation |
| MYF | Myanmar Youth Forum |
| NCA | Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement |

# Acronyms (continued)

| | |
|---|---|
| NCA-S | Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement Signatory |
| NCCT | Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team |
| ND | National Dialogue |
| NDC | National Dialogue Conference |
| NESP | National Education Strategic Plan |
| NEYA | National Ethnic Youth Alliance |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| NLD | National League for Democracy |
| NYC | National Youth Congress |
| NRPC | National Reconciliation and Peace Center |
| PBSO | United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office |
| PI | Pyidaungsu Institute for Peace and Dialogue |
| PNLO | Pa-O National Liberation Organisation |
| PPST | Peace Process Steering Team |
| PPWT | Peace Process Working Team |
| PSF | Paung Sie Facility |
| PYO | Pa-O Youth Organisation |
| RCSS | Restoration Council of Shan State |
| SAZ | Self-Administered Zone |
| SD | Senior Delegation [Team] |
| SGD | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SI | Scholar Institute |
| TCDI | Thazin Community Development Initiative |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| TSC | Technical Secretariat Center |
| TSYU | Ta'ang Students and Youth Union |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational Education and Training |
| TYO | Tavoyan Youth Organisation |
| UKSY | Union of Karenni State Youth |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UNFC | United Nationalities Federal Council |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNOY | United Network of Young Peacebuilders |
| UNSCR | United Nations Security Council Resolution |
| UNV | United Nations Volunteers |
| UPC | Union Peace Conference |
| UPCC | Union Peacemaking Central Committee |
| UPDJC | Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee |
| UPWC | Union Peacemaking Working Committee |
| WPAY | United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth |
| WPS | Women, Peace and Security |
| YPS | Youth, Peace and Security |

# Conceptual Framework and Definitions

**Youth:** No formal definition of youth exists in Myanmar, however youth are broadly understood as those individuals between the ages of 18-35. The forthcoming National Youth Policy will set Myanmar's definition of youth. The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 considers young people to fall between 18-29 years.

**Youth inclusion, representation and participation:** Inclusion refers to strategies and techniques used to secure the presence of youth or youth issues within structures and processes.[1] Youth inclusion is a numeric or quantitative presence of that does not automatically equate to substantive participation or influence as often youth are limited in their ability to influence decision-making processes when hierarchical socio-cultural norms prevail.[2] Representation refers to instances where young people act as interlocutors or representatives of youth issues, interests, perspectives or voices – essentially where young men and women are selected to represent youth as a constituency. Participation refers to the ability of youth to influence and directly contribute to decision-making and processes through roles such as participants, facilitators, advisors, and negotiators. For example, young people are included in public decision-making processes and fully participate as equals to their non-youth peers.

**Youth empowerment:** Youth empowerment is as an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process where young people gain the ability and authority to make decisions and implement change in their own lives; they are empowered as full participants in society, rather than only threats or victims needing protection.[3] Empowerment is often a gateway to intergenerational equity, civic engagement, democracy and peacebuilding.[4]

**Peace process:** For the purposes of this research, the "peace process" is defined as the national negotiations related to the ethnic armed conflict in Myanmar. Peace process architecture relates to initiatives since 2011, spanning bilateral ceasefires, the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), the Union Peace Conferences (UPC), Joint Monitoring Committees (JMCs), and the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC). Inclusion in the peace process has been categorised into "direct" participation (contribution to decision-making and supporting roles within peace architecture). "Indirect" inclusion refers to contributions that are outside the formal process and associated institutions.

**Peacebuilding:** Peacebuilding is defined as initiatives that foster and support sustainable structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful coexistence, and decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence, or continuation of violent conflict.[5] Peacebuilding refers to initiatives that seek to mitigate inter-ethnic, inter-faith and inter-communal tensions, and promote social cohesion.

**Gender:** Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that determine our understanding of masculinity and femininity. The question of gender difference and the construction of masculine and feminine is not universal but culturally specific and strongly influenced by other factors such as ethnicity, religion, age and class.[6]

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

# Introduction

*"Peace will not be achieved without the people's support. Peace will not be born in a conference room. Peace requires the active support of the people."*[7]

—State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

In January 2017, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi gathered 18 young people from across Myanmar for a Peace Talk in Nay Pyi Taw. These youth, representing a range of ethnic identities, shared their fears, hopes, and insights on how to transform conflict into peace, and how to build trust between, and within, communities. While the Peace Talk was considered by some to be symbolic rather than substantive, the meeting brought the issue of youth inclusion to the fore and reaffirmed previous statements delivered by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi calling for greater engagement of youth in peace.[8]

Throughout Myanmar's history young men and women have been active at the community level in activities ranging from youth-led social affairs groups (*Tha-yay Nar-yay ah thin*) to supporting social and community projects such as free funeral and wedding services, cultural activities, blood donations, among many others. In the more formal peacebuilding sphere, youth have supported and sustained peacebuilding processes but have rarely featured in formal, influential public decision-making roles. In the lead up to the partial signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in October 2015, young men and women were the backbone of Government and Ethnic Armed Organisation (EAO) coordination structures, but were never selected as formal negotiators. Furthermore, key documents guiding formal peacebuilding efforts in Myanmar — such as the NCA and the Framework for Political Dialogue — do not contain provisions related to youth inclusion. These documents also do not consider youth as a cross-cutting issue across thematic discussions. In other words, speeches and statements articulating the importance of youth inclusion have yet to be matched by inclusion strategies and structures that secure the meaningful engagement of young people in the future of their country.

> *Empowering young peacebuilders has also been shown to create active citizens for peace, to reduce violence and to increase peaceful cohabitation.*

While low levels of youth inclusion in public decision-making persist, there is an opportunity to capitalise on nascent youth policy commitments and harness the contributions of youth leaders, innovators, facilitators, and policy-advocates to increase the likelihood of reaching sustainable peace in the country. Global evidence shows that broadening public participation – including to young people – in peace increases the prospects for it lasting.[9] Empowering young peacebuilders has also been shown to create active citizens for peace, to reduce violence and to increase peaceful cohabitation.[10] With the passing of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) in 2015, there is also potential for Myanmar to lead globally and set good practice for sustainably increasing the involvement of young people at all levels of decision-making, policy-making and peacebuilding.

Myanmar youth are contributing formally and informally to a host of peacebuilding initiatives; leveraging these contributions, often innovative and catalytic in their approaches, can support the multiple transitions the country is undergoing. Bringing the role of young people to the forefront of Myanmar's transition also builds on Myanmar's history where students and youth movements have influenced the trajectory of the country.

This *Discussion Paper* provides a starting point for understanding the status of youth inclusion in peacebuilding in Myanmar. In Section 1, this *Discussion Paper* assesses the involvement of youth and inclusion of youth perspectives in peace at both national and sub-national levels since 2011. *Section 2* analyses the challenges young women and men face to their substantive involvement in peacebuilding. *Section 3* draws upon national and international good practice, articulating a strategic framework for action to overcome obstacles discussed in *Section 2*. (*For a detailed overview of the methodology used to inform this Paper, see Annex 2.*)

## Who are 'youth' in Myanmar?

*"We, youths, are the future of this country. The Government should create a pathway for young people in the political sector to have a role in forming a better country."*

—Kyaw Min Htike, ethnic youth leader (male), Dawei[11]

Approximately 60% of Myanmar's total population is under the age of 35. The national median age is 27 years and approximately 33% of the population falls between the ages of 15-35 years.[12] No formal definition of youth currently exists in Myanmar: youth are generally perceived as being 18 to 35 years old, although this age range varies across ethnic, religious, and social contexts within the country.[13] Myanmar's understanding of youth differs from the age range set out by UNSCR 2250, which defines "young people" as those between the ages of 18-29 years. Importantly, UNSCR 2250 emphasises that social and cultural variations in the understanding of youth exist across the globe.[14] It is anticipated that Myanmar's forthcoming National Youth Policy will set a definition of youth for Myanmar to follow.

In Myanmar – as elsewhere in the world – youth are not a unified, homogenous constituency: they come from a host of diverse realities, needs, and experiences, meaning it is important to ensure that *all* young people are engaged in peacebuilding. For example, youth from rural areas are different from those in urban areas; young women face different

opportunities and challenges to young men. Other identity factors often supersede age-related identity. Thus, when discussing youth in Myanmar, it is critical to understand other elements of identity that intersect with age, such as: gender, ethnicity, religion, class, disability, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Questioning (LGBTIQ), migration, nationality, drug use, among others.

> ❝*Youth are not a unified, homogenous constituency: they come from a host of diverse realities, needs, and experiences.*❞

## Why do 'youth' matter?

Including youth substantively in all phases of peacebuilding brings significant dividends which can be leveraged to create the foundations for securing lasting peace. Global evidence indicates that recognising the needs of the younger generation is a critical component of sustaining peace and political stability.[15] Empowering young peacebuilders has been shown to create more active citizens for peace, reduce violence and increase peaceful cohabitation, according to a multi-country study on children and youth participation in peacebuilding conducted in 2015.[16] Evidence also demonstrates that empowering young people to take up constructive and exemplary roles in situations of conflict and violence can yield positive results for social cohesion.[17] The importance of engaging young people in political transitions also builds on the global evidence base that shows that the involvement of people and civil society – inclusive of youth – increases the durability of peace.[18] (*See YPS Essential 1: Global Perspectives on Youth Inclusion.*)

The passing of UNSCR 2250 on YPS in 2015 has shifted the normative framework on youth in peacebuilding, transforming a global discourse that previously constructed youth as threats to

## WHO ARE MYANMAR'S YOUTH?

**15-35 YEARS**

**33% of population** between ages of 15-35

**27**

National Median age is **27 years**
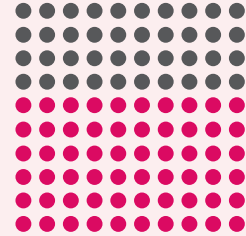
**60% of Myanmar's population** under the age of 35

achieving peace into a narrative that emphasises the positive contributions of young people (*See YPS Essential 2: UNSCR 2250 - YPS*).[19] UNSCR 2250 urges UN Member States to increase the number of youth involved in decision-making at all levels on prevention and resolution of conflict, and to treat them as equal partners. The Government of Myanmar currently does not have a policy to implement UNSCR 2250, although as a member of the UN, it agrees to carry out the decisions of the Security Council and has binding commitments to implement the resolution. The forthcoming National Youth Policy could potentially be a platform for

*Including youth substantively in all phases of peacebuilding brings significant dividends which can be leveraged to create the foundations for securing lasting peace.*

stakeholders in Myanmar to deepen commitment to youth inclusion in peacebuilding (*See Section 1 for an overview of the National Youth Policy development process to date*).[20]

## YPS ESSENTIAL 1:
## Global Perspectives on Youth Inclusion

Today's generation of youth is the largest ever to exist globally. Young people often form the largest demographic in countries affected by armed conflict.[21] In Myanmar, young people – particularly young men – are often seen as antagonists of violent conflict. This understanding of young people parallels decades of international discussion that characterised young people as either perpetrators or victims of conflict. Global policy discussion and policy frameworks have begun shifting to focus on the positive role that young people can play as agents of conflict transformation.[22] The 2015 UNSCR 2250 on YPS is illustrative of this shift to an increasingly positive perception of youth.

Concurrent to shifts in global discussions surrounding youth, there is also a growing body of evidence that shows that broadening participation in peace to include young people creates peace dividends and contributes to building the foundations for sustainable peace. Two key reports are essential to understanding *why* including youth in peacebuilding is strategic for lasting peace:

### 1. Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding: A Practice Note (2016)

The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding highlights evidence that when young men and women are not given a stake in the future of post-conflict societies there is a risk a country will relapse into violence. This makes a strong case for including youth in transitional processes to secure lasting peace and security.

Evidence highlighted in this UN report also shows that young women and men can, and do, play active and valuable roles as agents of positive and constructive change in communities across the world. The report also features examples from around the world of ways to engage young women and men in peacebuilding.[23]

> " *Today's generation of youth is the largest ever to exist globally.* "

### 2. The Global Partnership for Children and Youth in Peacebuilding 3M Evaluation (2015)

A multi-agency, multi-country, multi-donor (3M) evaluation in Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Nepal revealed that children and youth in peacebuilding play important roles in transitions. More specifically children and youth contribute in four key areas, they:

1.  Act as citizens for peace

2.  Increase peaceful cohabitation and reduce discrimination

3.  Contribute to a reduction in direct violence

4.  Increase support to vulnerable groups[24]

The key variables in the effectiveness of children and youth in peacebuilding include:

1.  Attitudes, motivation, and commitment of children and youth, and their organisations

2.  Capacity, knowledge, skills, and experience of children and youth

3.  Family attitudes and support

4.  Cultural attitudes, beliefs, and practices

5.  Key stakeholders' motivation, commitment, and support

6.  Awareness-raising, sensitisation, and campaigns among key stakeholders

7.  Culture, theatre, arts, and sports as a means of engaging children and youth

8.  Existence and implementation of government laws, policies, strategies, and provisions

9.  Financial and material support given to Children and Youth in Peacebuilding (CYP) efforts

10. Income generation support for marginalised groups

11. Conflict, political instability, and insecurity[25]

# Section 1. Youth Engagement in Peace: A Recent History

*"If youth are disregarded, the peace process would be like a tree without water source."*[26]

—Naing Hong Sar, United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC)

This section provides an overview of youth inclusion in peacebuilding in Myanmar since 2011, focusing first on the U Thein Sein Administration, and later on efforts made by the Government led by the National League for Democracy (NLD) following the 2015 General Elections. Through assessing youth inclusion of various peace-related stakeholders – including Government, Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs), and civil society – a clear trend emerges: youth play a host of instrumental supportive roles in formal and informal peacebuilding spaces, but have limited opportunities to directly influence formal peacebuilding processes or hold public decision-making roles. In other words, without youth contributions, peace structures would not be maintained or sustained.

Exploring the long historical engagement of youth in Myanmar is beyond the scope of this *Discussion Paper*; however, it is important to highlight that young people have played key roles in social and political movements throughout Myanmar's history. Youth movements gained particular prominence in the 1920s and 1930s when student and youth unions, such as the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), promoted independence, democracy, and internal harmony.[27] Student leaders later helped to catalyse the country's independence from British colonial rule in 1948.[28] Political upheaval during the State's formation following independence, including the outbreak of armed conflict, saw young people at the centre of peace and conflict in the country. Following General Ne Win's rise in 1962, the proliferation of conflict and the narrowing of political space resulted in many youth groups

going underground or moving their activities and operations abroad.[29] By 1988, young women and men once again mobilised: their demonstrations calling for democratic change brought civil unrest. The involvement of student and youth organisations in the 2007 Saffron Revolution, as both organisers and demonstrators, underscored young people's desire to transform the country.[30] Youth engagement and energy in the current Myanmar context builds on the prominent role young people have played throughout the country's history. However, despite these contributions, young people remain on the periphery of public decision-making, rarely holding senior decision-making roles.[31]

## 1.1 Youth and peacebuilding during the U Thein Sein Administration

*"Young people were limited to supporting role[s] in the margins of the meetings themselves and between the meetings themselves."*

—former international advisor (male) to the peace process

Since Myanmar's liberalisation started to gather pace in 2010-11 under former President U Thein Sein, the Government and EAOs have engaged in a complex nationwide peace process (*see Annex 1: Timeline of Youth Inclusion*).[32] The process began with the negotiation of bilateral ceasefire agreements between the Government and EAOs – either reaffirming agreements if they already existed or creating new ones.[33] Three out of the 14 Union-level bilateral ceasefires negotiated contained explicit references to "youth".[34] For example, the Union-level agreement with the Pa-O National Liberation Organisation (PNLO) committed to "*promote the participation of youth, women, and labourers at each level of the political process*."[35] The Chairperson of the Pa-O Youth Organisation (PYO), also a formal member

*"When young men and women are not given a stake in the future of post-conflict societies there is a risk a country will relapse into violence."*

of PNLO's Central Executive Committee, played a key role in advocating for the inclusion of youth, highlighting how direct and meaningful involvement of youth can secure commitments to youth inclusion in peace.[36]

Following bilateral ceasefire agreements, formal negotiations between Government and EAOs towards the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) were undertaken. From 2011-15, the Government organised its peace negotiations under the auspices of the Union Peacemaking Central Committee (UPCC) and Union Peacemaking Working Committee (UPWC).[37] The Myanmar Peace Center (MPC) provided technical support to both committees under the direction of U Aung Min, Chairperson of the UPWC. Youth were not included in these negotiation teams, although the MPC relied heavily on educated youth to meet its core functions: approximately 60% of its workforce was under the age of 35 (of this at least 40% were young women).[38] Youth filled largely administrative roles, mirroring hierarchical norms where it is acceptable for youth to hold supportive but not decision-making roles (*see Section 2*).

Attempts were undertaken by the Government to organise informal structures to include youth perspectives in the peace process during this time. From late 2014 until 2015 the MPC arranged a series of "Youth Forums" in most States and Regions in Myanmar.[39] Several hundred youth from various ethnic, political, and educational backgrounds were invited to attend. The aim of the Youth Forums was to encourage youth participation in the peace process, raise awareness of the process, and enable youth to share their views. While moderated by the MPC's special advisors and senior directors, the forums lacked

sustainability strategies to maintain engagement. These informal attempts to reach out to youth did not manifest in greater inclusion of youth in the peace process nor did they lead to the establishment of a formalised mechanism to solicit ongoing youth input into the process.

Of the EAO negotiating teams at this time, neither the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) nor the Senior Delegation Team (SD), included youth leaders.[40] EAO technical teams who supported negotiating bodies administratively throughout the process were largely comprised of young women and men. The Pyidaungsu Institute for Peace and Dialogue (PI), the Ethnic Nationalities Affairs Centre (ENAC), the Centre for Development and Ethnic Studies (CDES), and the technical teams of negotiating parties have all been predominately comprised of individuals under the age of 35 (with at least 60-70% being young men). However, the influence of young people, as with technical supporting teams working with the Government, was limited to facilitative and supportive roles.[41] A clear pattern emerges during this period: young women and men were the invisible and largely untapped workforce behind the Government's peace architecture and EAOs' technical support structures.

Several trends related to youth-led organising and youth-led policy-advocacy during this period can be observed. Concurrent to the peace process and Myanmar's transition more broadly, opening political space in the country led several key border-based ethnic youth organisations to return to Myanmar. For example, groups such as the Tavoyan Youth Organisation (TYO), Ta'ang Students and Youths Union (TSYU), and Union of Karenni Student Youth (UKSY), previously based along the Myanmar-Thailand border have moved back into the country. Opening space also led to a proliferation of new youth-led organisations and networks. Today, several dozen such organisations and networks exist across the 14 States and Regions of the country.[42]

Another key observation during this period is the sporadic use of use mass public demonstrations led

by young people to put key peacebuilding issues in the spotlight – building on the historical use of mass mobilisation led by young people in Myanmar. For example, to mark the 2012 International Day of Peace, youth groups coordinated one of the largest public demonstrations since the 2007 Saffron Revolution.[43] In 2013, young people also mobilised around the Yangon to Laiza Peace March, which garnered a certain degree of national attention. Both of these public demonstrations attracted nationwide attention and media coverage, showcsaing the responsive and mobilisation capacity of young people across Myanmar.[44] Alongside public demonstrations, young people during this period also started harnessing Myanmar's rapidly expanding mobile and internet connectivity to use online platforms in their awareness raising campaigns.

Beyond holding public campaigns – online and offline – another noticeable trend during this period is the convening role of youth organisations and leaders, particularly at the sub-national level. In Mon State, young people from different youth groups came together to call for unity among political parties – particularly the Mon National Party (MNP) and All Mon Region Democracy Party (AMDP), boycotting participation in politics until the parties united.[45] Similarly, the Union of Karenni State Youth (UKSY), an umbrella network of Kayah-based civil society organisations (CSOs), convened meetings and consultative processes – both formal and informal – between seven EAOs and three political parties active in Kayah State with a view of forging a common Kayah agenda. UKSY was also a key driver and organiser of the Karenni State Conference held in December 2015.[46] These two examples are emblematic of the ways that youth organisations can strategically bring actors together in an effort to build common understanding around peacebuilding and community issues more broadly.

Another pattern observed during this period was increased efforts to bring young people together from across the country with the view to creating a common youth platform. For example, the Myanmar Youth Forum (MYF), held in 2012,

was a youth-led nationwide gathering. It brought together over 150 young female and male participants from 13 States and Regions.[47] The following year the MYF established a network called the National Youth Congress (NYC). The NYC is a dedicated and permanent network representing youth voices and represents a key milestone in advancing the youth agenda in Myanmar. The NYC went on to coordinate the second MYF, which took place in 2014. A third MYF was convened in 2016 and supported the development of the National Youth Policy by identifying existing State and Region youth networks that would lead local-level consultations as part of the policy development process (*See Section 1.2 for more on the National Youth Policy*). NYC is mainly comprised of young people from urban and semi-urban areas – meaning strategies need to be taken by NYC to broaden inclusion and geographic reach. To date, there has been no dedicated funding to support NYC's affiliates and members, which has impacted the ability of the network to sustain itself and consider expansion.[48] Limited resources and access to external investment has also limited NYC's capacity to focus action on peacebuilding.

> *Youth play a host of instrumental supportive roles in formal and informal peacebuilding spaces, but have limited opportunities to directly influence formal peacebuilding processes.*

Youth have also tried other strategies, such as seeking to directly influence key decision-makers, in an effort to secure their inclusion in public processes. For example, a small group of young people, some of whom were involved with NYC, engaged in direct negotiations with the MPC and held discussions with EAO technical teams on the creation of a mechanism for youth inclusion in the peace process. From 2014-15, discussions to include youth observers at the NCA negotiations

> *Young people remain on the periphery of public decision-making, rarely holding senior decision-making roles.*

were held, but broader delays in the negotiations led peace process stakeholders to sideline discussions on youth inclusion. Essentially, youth inclusion was perceived to be an issue that could be left until later. Similar to the issue of gender inclusion, securing space for youth participation in negotiations was not prioritised. This experience of young leaders seeking to negotiate their inclusion in NCA negotiations as observers highlights the challenges youth face in an environment where socio-cultural norms condition decision-makers to overlook the potential benefits of youth engagement.

From 2012 onwards, youth leaders, mostly those affiliated with the NYC, also attempted to negotiate the establishment of a youth centre and a youth policy as part of engagement and advocacy with the MPC.[49] While the concept of a youth centre initially had some buy-in among decision-makers, it ultimately did not come to pass. The final NCA text contains no specific provisions related to youth inclusion or the integration of youth perspectives.[50] Youth had a nominal, symbolic presence at the NCA signing ceremony, held in November 2015, where five youth were invited to attend as observers.[51]

Following the partial signing of the NCA, joint peace process structures were created: the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) to take ceasefire monitoring forward, and the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UDPJC) to oversee the political dialogue process.[52] There are no specific provisions for youth inclusion within the JMC structure, UPDJC or Terms of Reference (ToR) established for both entities. In January 2016, the first Union Peace Conference (UPC) was convened in Nay Pyi Taw – six (male) youth observers were present.[53]

Alongside efforts to reach a nationwide peace agreement, religious tensions, particularly manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiments, flared in May, June and October 2012, causing several hundred deaths and the displacement of approximately 145,000 people to internally displaced persons (IDP) camps around Sittwe and other locations.[54] Beyond Rakhine State, inter-communal tensions also occurred in places such as Yangon, Mandalay, Lashio, Meiktila and western Bago among others.[55] Government-led assessments of inter-communal violence from 2012-14 largely framed young people as victims or perpetrators of conflict and rarely as agents of positive change.[56]

Similar to the peace process, efforts to support formal inter-communal harmony processes during this period relied on the contributions of young people but offered little opportunity for young people to take on leadership or decision-making roles. For example, the 2013 Report of Inquiry Commission on Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State relied on young people to collect and analyse data, and engaged with youth as part of consultations. Despite this approach, the final public report did not adequately address conflict-drivers among youth antagonists.[57] This Report provides an example of how methodology can be inclusive of youth but can ultimately overlook youth-related analysis in the final public document.

During this time, youth organisations have also led efforts to use technology to respond to the proliferation of hate speech and inter-communal tensions online.[58] An estimated 9.7 million people in Myanmar are registered on Facebook, of which 54% are between 19-34 years old, and young people have effectively leveraged technology to respond to the propagation of hate speech online.[59] For example, young people started the "Flower Speech" (Panzagar) movement against hate speech in 2013. In less than a month, the movement had nearly 10,000 followers on Facebook. Young people also launched the "My Friend" campaign to promote tolerance and anti-violence between Muslims and Buddhists. The

campaign now has over 30,000 supporters on Facebook.[60] Community Tech hub Phandeeyar co-hosted a PeaceTech Exchange in 2015, bringing together 120 young entrepreneurs to develop tech-based innovations to address dangerous speech.[61] The event resulted in the establishment of innovative partnerships between the tech and peace community. To date, the most visible tolerance promotion and anti-violence campaigns in Myanmar have been initiated and led by young people.

Youth-led organisations initiated a host of activities during this period which demonstrate the responsiveness of youth leaders in addressing issues related to peacebuilding as and when they emerge. For example, Seagull, a Mandalay-based youth-led organisation, was established by youth leaders in response to conflict in Meiktila in 2013.[62] The organisation actively promotes inter-faith peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and human rights.[63] Through provision of training in community development, Seagull has engaged over 70 religious leaders who might otherwise never have interacted due to divisions between religious groups. Seagull also provides small grants to communities for programmes that foster inter-religious interaction and engagement. For example, in one community, Buddhist and Muslim leaders have started a library together and jointly led fundraising activities in support of flood victims.[64] The establishment of Seagull highlights the unique convening of power of youth organisations, showing the positive ways in which young people can contribute to reconciliation in their communities.

Beyond engaging religious leaders, youth organisations have initiated activities to build the leadership and conflict resolution capacity of youth. Youth organisations have also created new structures at the community level in attempt to reduce tensions and build harmony. The Thazin Community Development Initiative (TCDI), for example, created two township-level hubs to train young people in leadership largely in response to the outbreak of violence in Rakhine State in 2012. These two centres continue to act as focal

## PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG FACEBOOK USERS IN MYANMAR

**54%**
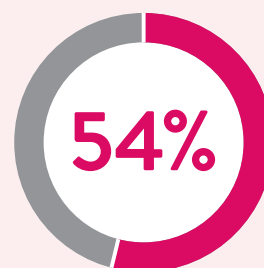
**54% of the 9.7 million people** registered on **Facebook** are **19-34 years old**

points for resources for conflict prevention at the community level.

## 1.2 Youth and peacebuilding during the NLD Government

The 2015 General Elections led to a landslide victory for the NLD, initiating a transitional period with formal handover from U Thein Sein's Administration to the NLD commencing on 1 April 2016. During the transitional period youth continued to press for their inclusion in the peace process. Youth-led policy-advocacy resulted in a meeting in December 2015 between State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the NLD party, and 13 youth leaders from different ethnicities and organisations. During this meeting, youth leaders discussed youth inclusion in the peace process.[65] While the meeting raised the profile of youth inclusion, issues brought forward by youth regarding the peace process have yet to be taken forward comprehensively.

As the NLD-led Government came into power, they committed to developing the country's first-ever National Youth Policy, as part of their 100-day plan, after several years of youth-led policy-advocacy, mainly through the NYC.[66] The National Youth Policy will set strategic national commitments across a host of sectors,

including areas such as peace and conflict, politics, education, health, gender equality, and employment, among others. Strategic plans will be developed for each component to implement the policies, although coordination approaches are still being negotiated.[67] The Department of Social Welfare (DSW), under the Ministry of Social Welfare Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR), has been coordinating the policy development process since 2016. Collaboration and consultation with youth leaders has been prioritised in designing the process: its structure is composed of three committees – Drafting, Working, and Central – with youth representatives elected by youth networks and groups from across the country within each committee. Technical and financial support has been provided by the UN's Population Fund (UNFPA) alongside UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and UN Volunteers (UNV).

The NYC has been leading the coordination of youth consultations across the country to support the policy development process. Youth networks, primarily those associated with MYF/NYC, were funded to conduct consultations in each State and Region in late 2016 and early 2017. These consultations led to the identification of representatives for the drafting of the policy. The consultation process proved challenging for stakeholders: funding shortfalls and time pressures limited opportunities for a comprehensive, inclusive process and sustained partnerships between youth and decision-makers.[68] Funding challenges, in particular, are a barrier that can be transformed going forward into an opportunity by ensuring strategic, long-term investment in policy development processes that include *all* of Myanmar's diverse youth constituencies.

Despite process concerns or recommendations raised by some youth representatives, the Central Drafting Committee has continued working on the policy since February 2017. The youth policy is due for completion by the end of 2017 and will be a key document to guide youth inclusion across peacebuilding and a range of other sectors. The

> ❝*Most visible tolerance promotion and anti-violence campaigns in Myanmar have been initiated and led by young people.*❞

youth policy will also set the age parameters for a Myanmar-specific definition of youth which stakeholders can use to inform their youth-related programming and priorities.

In parallel to the development of Myanmar's youth policy, the peace process has continued to evolve under the NLD. Negotiations with non-NCA-Signatories (non-NCA-S) continue through the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC), created in April 2016 to replace the MPC.[69] For NCA-Signatories (NCA-S) EAOs, the Peace Process Steering Team (PPST) is composed of eight EAO Chairpersons and 14 EAO senior leaders from the Peace Process Working Team (PPWT). None of the leaders of either entities is under the age of 35. For non-signatories, the Delegation for Political Negotiation (DPN) is comprised of existing UNFC members and 11 representatives of non-NCA-S. None of the EAO representatives in these bodies is youth. Military rank and experience remain the main criteria for accessing leadership positions. In order for youth to access senior leadership roles, inclusive criteria would need to be crafted. To date no formal youth inclusion strategies have been articulated by Government, EAOs to include youth or their perspectives in policy positions related to the peace process. There is significant scope to utilise international good practice to create Myanmar-relevant inclusion mechanisms for a host of actors to foster youth inclusion with a view of securing sustainable peace (*see Section 3 for more information*).

Under the NLD-led Government, youth have continued to mobilise in and around the peace process seeking to secure commitment to their participation and policy inputs. With the NYC increasingly perceived by some members to have insufficiently represented ethnic youth interests,

divergence along identity-based allegiances has occurred between and within youth organisations. The most visible division has occurred through efforts undertaken by some youth leaders who created the Coordinating Committee for National Ethnic Youth Conference (CCNEYC) that led the organisation of the Ethnic Youth Conference (EYC). Divergence of youth along identity lines demonstrates that youth are not a homogenous, unified constituency and can be as prone as non-youth stakeholders to replicate broader societal hierarchies.

The EYC took place in July 2016 – the timing of the event was strategic as it immediately preceded the second UPC held in August. The EYC sought to promote ethnic youth voices and further advocate for youth inclusion within political and peace process structures. The Conference gathered together youth participants from all eight majority ethnic groups and 26 of the minority ethnic groups – totalling approximately 702 attendees (60% of which were young men). Critically, the conference sought to foster cross-ethnic unity in support of peacebuilding and national reconciliation.[70]

One key outcome of the EYC was the preparation of a Panglong Conference Paper that represented the culmination of youth-focused priorities and recommendations based on the five political dialogue themes (politics, security, economic, social, land and environment) agreed by the UPDJC. Young people formally submitted their Panglong Paper to the UPDJC for discussion at the second UPC. Ultimately, however, the EYC's Panglong Conference Paper was not considered by the committee.[71] The absence of a formal youth inclusion mechanism therefore meant that youth policy-advocacy efforts were unable to influence the formal process.

Another key outcome of the EYC was the creation of the National Ethnic Youth Alliance (NEYA). Its establishment was an attempt to create a more sustained and structured way to move youth inclusion forward in the public sphere. NEYA and NYC are key examples of national youth networks

operating in Myanmar.[72] The NYC remains effective in youth-led advocacy toward the Government and international community, while the NEYA has positioned itself more closely to communities in ethnic states and rural areas. While the focus and actions of Myanmar's national youth networks have evolved in response to member-driven concerns, increased coordination and complementary actions between the networks, along with external support, could strengthen future youth policy-advocacy efforts. There is also scope for large national networks to build approaches that engage *all* of Myanmar's youth – including Bamar youth, ethnic minority youth, youth from different religious groups – with a view of building a socially cohesive generation of young people. Lack of unity and effective coordination between and within youth organisations at the national and sub-national level is one of the many factors limiting the potential of strategic collaboration.

A few days before the 21st Century Panglong Conference in May 2016 – the second UPC—the UPDJC invited 30 youth to attend as official observers to the process: 15 youth from NEYA and 15 youth from the NYC. In one sense, receiving youth observer status was a boost for youth inclusion – observer status meant youth were recognised as a legitimate peace constituency at a nationwide gathering. However, with limited time to prepare and organise travel, observer status was viewed as tokenistic particularly as youth were not granted the opportunity to present their policy papers at the conference.[73] During the second UPC, the merits of youth inclusion were highlighted by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. During her opening speech she stated: "*I am always impressed by the energy*

"*Young women and men were the invisible and largely untapped workforce behind the Government's peace architecture and EAOs' technical support structures.*"

*and enthusiasm of our young people, many of whom have been showing their support for this Panglong Conference in events around the country in recent days.*" Highlighting youth in her opening speech marked an important endorsement for youth inclusion.

The issue of limited youth inclusion in the second UPC gained some international exposure. Following a meeting with youth representatives, Ms Yanghee Lee, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, wrote a public statement expressing her concerns: "*Youth, as the future of the country, must also play a role and I was disappointed to hear comments from senior individuals that the outcomes of the recent ethnic youth summit will not be considered in the process.*"[74]

Overall, EYC was an attempt to encourage the peace process to be more inclusive of the needs of young people; however, the lack of structured youth inclusion mechanisms in the peace process architecture ultimately led to a last-minute approach to garner youth inputs. In this sense, there is latitude for youth organisations to consider other policy-advocacy strategies and avenues in order to reach their policy objectives. (*See Section 3 for recommendations on options for youth organisations to consider.*)

Building on State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's verbal commitment to youth at the second UPC, on 1 January 2017 she hosted a "Peace Talk" with 18 youth representatives (10 male, seven female and one transgender). This discussion once again elevated the question of youth inclusion to the national policy level. While some youth were concerned by the lack of time allocated for the discussion, this peace talk opened an opportunity for youth to re-engage with the State Counsellor directly.[75] Holding youth peace talks, if strategically convened and structured, has the potential to act as a structured mechanism to channel youth policy recommendations into Myanmar's peace process. Such a mechanism would need to ensure policy recommendations inputted directly into the peace architecture otherwise such an inclusion modality

risks perpetuating a situation where youth mobilise around the peace process without having an avenue to influence it.

The peace process has continued to progress under the NLD-led Government with the establishment of National Dialogues (NDs) across the country centred along three types of dialogue: region-, ethnic- and issue-based.[76] The UPDJC established Working Committees for each of the five political dialogue sectors: politics, economics, security, social, and land and the environment. There is currently no language related to youth inclusion in the ToR established to set the parameters for each type of dialogue. Currently, youth are not formally included on the five committees established for each political dialogue theme; however, youth play a range of supporting roles to these committees.

To date, NDs have relied heavily on youth leaders and youth organisations to support and coordinate the logistics, documentation, and facilitation of the process.[77] In these forums, young people worked as dialogue facilitators and, at times, as active participants, particularly during the Pa-O ND and Karen ND. While NDs offer an avenue to expand participation in peace to broader communities, age hierarchies and gender perceptions continue to shape engagement, meaning that youth inclusion strategies such as quotas, youth delegations or youth forums are necessary to overcome pre-existing socio-cultural barriers to participation.[78] Good practice exists for peace stakeholders to consider to broaden participation in NDs to be more inclusive of young men and young women (*see Section 3*).

The UPDJC mandated the formation of a parallel Civil Society Forum (CSO Forum) to the 21st Century Panglong Conference in May 2016 to take the issue-based ND forward. A four-person committee was initially formed, but no youth leaders featured on this committee.[79] Civil society subsequently formed a Working Group of 43 members with a view to prepare a pre-CSO Forum. Young people are involved in the CSO Forum as members on Union and State/Region

organising committees – which is reflective of youth leadership and involvement in communities across Myanmar, particularly at the sub-national level.[80]

To date, State and Region forums were held in January and February 2017 with a nationwide pre-CSO Forum in Taunggyi that took place between 21-23 February 2017. A total of 713 participants attended the pre-CSO Forum, with 192 youth (76 female and 116 male) present – a youth inclusion rate of 27%.[81] At the Union-level Nay Pyi Taw CSO Forum, convened from 24-25 February 2017, 180 youth (75 female and 105 male) attended out of 716 participants, meaning youth comprised 25% of CSO Forum participants.[82] In both forums, young people played critical supportive roles through coordination, documentation, monitoring and evaluation, and volunteering for the event, as well as taking more active roles as facilitators and contributors. For example, Youth Circle – a youth-led and focused organisation – led the documentation process at the pre-CSO Forum.

Although youth inclusion through the CSO Forum is one channel for youth to input into the

> *Formal peacebuilding structures have yet to fully capitalise on the access, networks, constituencies, and skills that young people bring to peacebuilding.*

peace process, the parallel structure has fused youth voices with those of broader civil society interests, leaving minimal space for an independent youth voice to emerge and gain policy influence. Furthermore, providing space within the broader realm of civil society means that such space is prone to both age- and gender-related socio-cultural hierarchies and norms that inhibit the full, substantive participation of young men and women (*see Section 2 for more detail on socio-cultural norms*). Similar to the broader peace process, ample good practice exists for the CSO Forum to consider in order to substantively integrate the contributions of youth within the Forum structure and process (*see Section 3*).

Alongside the peace process, conflict dynamics relating to inter-communal tensions have continued across the country since the NLD

## CSO FORUM: YOUTH INCLUSION RATES

### Pre-CSO Forum



**27%**
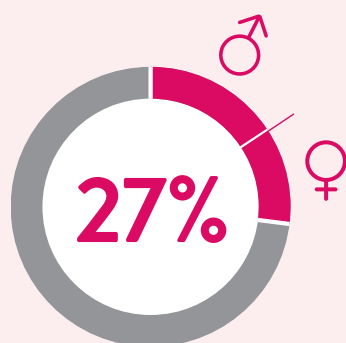
**192 of the 713 participants** at the Pre-CSO Forum were youth **(76 female and 116 male)** **– a youth inclusion rate of 27%**

### CSO Forum



**25%**
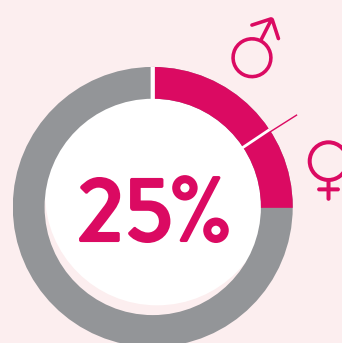
**180 of the 716 participants** at the CSO Forum were youth **(75 female and 105 male)** **– a youth inclusion rate of 25%**

assumed power. Youth organisations continue to respond to inter-communal issues by creating new structures and using innovative approaches to address and transform conflict. Youth Circle, for example, has implemented youth camps in Kayin, Kayah, Rakhine, Naga Self-Administered Zone (SAZ), Bago and Ayeyarwady. The objective of these camps is to build connections between young people with a view to overcome divides and stereotypes alongside building the capacity of youth in leadership, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. Youth Circle has also promoted cultural exchanges between youth from different backgrounds in an effort to build cohesion and promote inter-cultural understanding. The underlying goal of Youth Circle is to encourage and recognise youth as peacebuilders and community leaders in Myanmar.

Youth organisations have also pioneered the use of non-traditional programmatic approaches to bring young men and women together under a common platform. Turning Tables, a social enterprise with an outfit in Myanmar, is using music as a vehicle to bring diverse ethnic and religious identities together with a view to building social cohesion among diverse youth. Turning Tables is now in the process of coordinating their 2017 "Voice of the Youth" events, building on similar concerts and song competitions that took place in 2015 and 2016.[83] After launching a song writing competition, Turning Tables compiled an album of songs created by young people that explore issues of human rights, conflict, peace, and dialogue.[84] Led by prominent Myanmar musicians, Turning Tables offers an example of how young people are using creative programmatic approaches that resonate with youth to build a cohesive generation of youth.

As a tech-savvy generation, young men and women continue to innovate and lead creative technology-driven campaigns, capitalising on the rapid expansion of Myanmar's digital space where an estimated 33 million people (40% of the population) are active mobile phone users, with 80% using smartphones (noting that women are 30% less likely to own a mobile phone than

men).[85] It has also been observed that non-youth organisations implementing anti-hate speech initiatives online rely almost exclusively on the younger generation – often with more aptitude and comfort for using online platforms – to put conceptual campaigns into action.

Community Tech hub Phandeeyar co-hosted a PeaceTech Exchange in 2015, bringing together 120 young entrepreneurs to develop tech-based innovations with a view to addressing dangerous speech. [86] The event resulted in the establishment of innovative partnerships between the tech and peace community. Youth organisations have also been supported by Phandeeyar to run Facebook campaigns - learning how to create graphics, videos, memes, GIFs and much more to advance their effort to promote values of diversity and inter-communal harmony. Youth organisation have used Facebook to promote examples of peaceful co-existence, educate the public on the risks associated with hate speech and misinformation and create online spaces for exchange and discussion.

While online campaigns and technology are starting to play an important role in addressing critical issues in Myanmar, the development of the Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) sector has not yet fully reached rural and conflict-affected areas.[87] Poor communication and transportation infrastructures, in combination with limited strategic communication around Myanmar's transition, has resulted in a significant information gap for young people. Broadening the reach of online campaigns is critical to ensure that the increasing use of technology and social media does not exacerbate pre-existing divides between youth in central and peripheral areas.[88]

Beyond bottom-up, community initiatives to promote inter-communal harmony, under the NLD Government, the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, chaired by Koffi Annan, former UN Secretary General, was formed in September 2016 at the request of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The Advisory Commission was created before the attacks in northern Rakhine

*"I value peace", Thiri Oo, Andin Youth / Human Rights Foundation of Mon Land) and "Let youth participate in sustainable peace", Mi Rot Chan, Mon Youth Progressive Organisation*

flared in October 2016.[89]  The Commission undertook efforts to involve women and youth during consultative processes to inform the crafting of recommendations. In March 2017, the Advisory Commission released an Interim Report, which deferred suggestions regarding youth to the final report, which was released in August in 2017.[90]  The Final Report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State recommends inter-communal dialogue at all levels of society, from the township to Union level, as a medium to foster inter-communal cohesion, highlighting the importance of including youth in such dialogue processes. The establishment of joint youth centres accessible to both communities were also put forward by the Advisory Commission as a mechanism to build inter-communal cohesion. The final report was released immediately before a sharp deterioration of security where al-Yakin

or Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army launched a coordinated attack on 30 police outposts in northern Rakhine on 25 August.[91] The Myanmar Government responded to this attack with security operations in northern Rakhine. Intensified conflict has led to massive displacement of communities: as at mid September 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 370,000 people, predominately the Muslim population of northern Rakhine, have fled to Bangladesh since 25 August.[92]

Assessment of formal peacebuilding processes, and public decision-making more broadly, since 2011 reveals an underlying pattern of low levels of direct youth inclusion and high levels of reliance on the everyday contributions of young people to uphold peacebuilding processes. Another clear trend emerges in analysis: young people

are sustaining community-level contributions to peacebuilding and leading innovation technology and social media to disseminate their messages of peace and harmony to wide audiences. In this sense, formal peacebuilding structures have yet to fully capitalise on the access, networks, constituencies, and skills that young people bring to peacebuilding. Understanding the root causes of low levels of youth inclusion is therefore important to understand the status quo – Section 2 of this *Discussion Paper* analyses the host of barriers that youth face in contributing to peace in Myanmar.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS:

- Why is the participation and substantive inclusion of young women and men necessary for sustaining peace?

- What mechanisms currently exist for youth involvement in the peace process and peacebuilding?

- How can young people more effectively participate in the peace process and peacebuilding?

*Photo, below: "The peace process is extremely important for young people because it will be a long process. Youth are the ones who will be affected by the decisions made today", Lum Zawng, Kachin State*

## YPS ESSENTIAL 2:
## UN Security Council Resolution 2250 — Youth, Peace and Security

The crucial role of youth as agents of peace has been recognised globally, and the engagement of youth is increasingly a priority for national and international stakeholders. As the largest proportion of the world's population than ever before, youth have been recognised for their important role in securing peace, and preventing of violence in fragile and conflict-affected states. On 9 December 2015, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted its first ever resolution on Youth, Peace and Security (UNSCR 2250). A Global Progress Study on YPS has since been launched to produce an evidence-based, operational report for the international community. [93]

This Resolution has identified five key pillars of action:

### 1. Participation:

Member States should consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels for the prevention and resolution of conflict. All relevant actors should take into account, as appropriate, the participation and views of youth when negotiating and implementing peace agreements.

### 2. Protection:

All parties to armed conflict must take the necessary measures to protect civilians, including those who are youth, from all forms of gender-based violence. States must respect and ensure the human rights of all individuals, including youth, within their territory.

### 3. Prevention:

Member States should facilitate an enabling environment in which young people are recognised and provided adequate support to implement violence prevention activities and support social cohesion. All relevant actors should promote a culture of peace, tolerance, inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue that involve youth.

### 4. Partnership:

Member States should increase their political, financial, technical and logistical support, and take account of the needs and participation of youth in peace efforts. Member States should engage relevant local communities and non-governmental actors in developing strategies to counter the violent extremist narrative.

### 5. Disengagement and reintegration:

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration activities must consider the needs of youth affected by armed conflict, including through evidence-based and gender-sensitive youth employment opportunities and inclusive labour policies. All relevant actors should invest in building young persons' capabilities and skills through relevant education opportunities designed in a manner which promotes a culture of peace.

# Section 2. Factors Inhibiting the Participation of Youth

This section discusses the challenges that young people face in contributing to everyday peacebuilding in Myanmar. The factors outlined below contribute, in different and overlapping ways, to low levels of youth inclusion in peace and public decision-making more broadly in Myanmar. The challenges articulated below are based on primary data collected to inform this *Discussion Paper* and make use of secondary literature to explore their impact on youth participation in public decision-making. Understanding these factors is critical to transforming the status quo and leveraging the often-overlooked current and potential contributions of youth to peace in Myanmar.

## Factor 1: Socio-cultural norms and perceptions

*"Our community is hierarchical. We cannot just approach older people because many won't listen to us. Many think that because they are older, they know more."*[94]

—Shining Nang, founder, Mon Pan Youth Association, Shan State

Pervasive age-related socio-cultural norms perpetuate hierarchical views that youth do not have the capability, experience or ability to lead. These norms relegate youth to supportive roles in public decision-making and mean that the contributions of youth to everyday peace are often erased or overlooked. The majority of young people interviewed for this *Discussion Paper* – regardless of ethnic, gender, religious, or class identity – consistently felt undervalued and dominated by elders due to the existence of socio-cultural norms. As explored in *Section 1,*

> ❝*I am marginalised on three levels: youth, woman, and ethnic.*❞

these norms contribute to the status quo where youth undertake vital supportive roles to the peace process, but are rarely recognised and given the opportunity to lead. An example of this was seen during the Chin National Dialogue (ND) held in March 2016 where speaking positions were reserved for elders.[95]

These views raised by interviewees show that hierarchal norms shape Myanmar's diverse cultures.[96] For example, the bowing of younger people when walking past elders, and use of superior-inferior pronouns, such as *Sayar/Sayama* (teacher), *U/Daw* (uncle/aunt) and *Tha/Thami* (son/daughter) are all subtle hierarchical norms that are normalised and reinforced through day-to-day interactions.[97] While these gestures are the foundations of respect for elders, young people are often conditioned to be subordinate, which contributes to the view that youth lack capability and have insufficient experience and knowledge required for leadership roles.[98]

Age intersects with a host of other identity elements – such as gender, ethnicity, and religion – that create different barriers for young people engaging in peace. For example, a further set of gendered socio-cultural norms create unique challenges and experiences. Young men interviewed said that they see women as equals and that young women and men face the same challenges as youth.[99] This perception was not shared by young women interviewees who clearly articulated that their gender identity was an additional barrier to being taken seriously by non-youth. As one young woman from Myitkyina said, "*I am marginalised on three levels: youth, woman, and ethnic.*"[100] However, several young women also highlighted that gendered norms have not prevented them from seeking to challenge societal expectations facing women and rising to leadership positions.[101] Overall, by understanding

> ❝*Only those who were fighting are speaking.*❞

the complexity of socio-cultural norms facing young women and men, we can begin to see why youth are relegated to supportive roles. Therefore, an important component of securing greater youth inclusion in peace is to engage with views and behaviours of decision-makers who block or remain impervious to efforts seeking to advance youth inclusion in public decision-making (*see Section 3 for options on engaging decision-makers on youth issues*).

## Factor 2: Absence of youth inclusion mechanisms

*"There is much talk about 'youth, youth, youth'. But there is no space for youth, no positions for youth in both peace process and political parties. There is only talk about it, but there is no action and no structure for youth to participate."*[102]

—member (female) of Mon National Party (MNP)

Socio-cultural norms are entrenched in decision-making structures at all levels of governance in Myanmar. Interviewees repeatedly said that the lack of formalised inclusion mechanisms in the peace process – such as quotas, youth advisory bodies, channels for youth consultations, youth delegations etc. – is the most prominent barrier to youth inclusion.[103] A young female staff member in the Government's peace structure commented that, *"Only those who were fighting are speaking."*

The pattern of limited inclusion of youth in the peace process is a microcosm of broader trends of low inclusion rates of youth in the public sphere in Myanmar: only 8% (41) of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's 498 elected representatives are under the age of 35 (and only 1.8% of these are women). For the few young politicians who are elected, age is a limiting barrier to participating in decision-making. As expressed by one young political party member: "Even if you are representative in parliament, if you are under 35 years old, youth have no say on policy decision-making."[104]

Analysis of governance documents reveals a broader pattern of an absence of formalised youth inclusion structures in the political sphere. Myanmar's Constitution, for example, highlights the importance of youth in its basic principles while simultaneously outlining age restrictions for political positions.[105] The Constitution states that Pyithu Hluttaw representatives must be *at least* 25 years old, while Amyotha Hluttaw representatives must be *at least* 30 years old. These age restrictions are well beyond regional norms; for example, the minimum age threshold for political candidates in several ASEAN countries is 21, including Malaysia (Lower House), Indonesia (Representative), Vietnam (National Assembly and the People's Councils), Cambodia (National Assembly), Brunei (Lower House), Laos (Lower House).[106] As one young male politician said, "*I experienced age discrimination. Even with the same status and qualifications as my elder colleagues, I had less respect.*"[107]

Furthermore, most political parties lack formalised inclusion policies for young people.[108] While some political parties have youth wings, these are generally under-resourced and have limited input and influence on branch-level decisions.[109] The National League for Democracy (NLD) is one of the few parties that has a highly structured, albeit



## PYIDAUNGSU HLUTTAW YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES

**8%** ⚥ **1.8%**
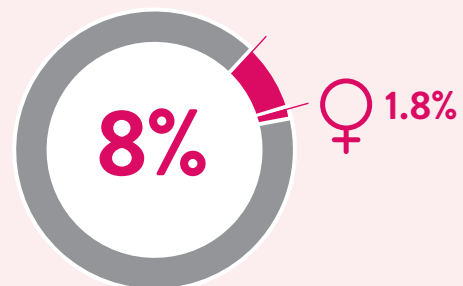
41 of the the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's 498 elected representatives are under the age of 35 – representing a youth inclusion rate of 8%

still under-resourced, youth wing.[110] The NLD youth wing includes executive youth committees coordinated from the village tract, township level, and national level.[111] Interviewees said that while some political parties may have youth wings, they are often nascent and are not supported with budgets and dedicated strategies, meaning they have minimal influence on decision-making.[112] Given the lower rates of inclusion of young women in politics in comparison to young men, there is scope for youth wings to develop gender-inclusive approaches to empower young female leaders, which would create entry points to secure greater inclusion of women in politics.

Despite the absence of formal mechanisms, some small spaces are opening. During their engagement with the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi through Peace Talks held in 2017, youth leaders highlighted the need for greater participation of young people – an issue that National Ethnic Youth Alliance (NEYA) and National Youth Congress (NYC) continue to promote in national-level policy-advocacy.[113] Good practice in other areas, such as Gender, Peace and Security (GPS), show that formalised inclusion structures – ones which have associated implementation strategies, budget, and accountability/monitoring mechanisms – are needed to redress historical inequalities.[114] There is scope for Myanmar to be innovative – and indeed act as a global example – with regard to youth inclusion strategies. Focus here is needed to ensure that inclusion mechanisms lead to qualitative influence rather than numeric inclusion (*see Section 3 for more on good practice related to inclusion strategies*).

## Factor 3: Legacy of fear and mistrust

*"There is no guarantee for safety and security for youth to involve in politics, no safety to speak out or speak freely."*[115]

—young male member of Kachin Democratic Party (KDP)

Several interviewees said that a major obstacle to their public engagement on peace issues is related to potential personal consequences of

> *I experienced age discrimination. Even with the same status and qualifications as my elder colleagues, I had less respect.*

raising political issues in public spaces. Fear of public engagement is coloured by the legacy of Government response to public demonstrations in 1988 and 2007. These memories continue to shape attitudes, trust, and perceptions on all sides. As a young international aid worker noted, "[Youth] was a group that needed to be silenced to prevent change."[116] While space for youth mobilising is shifting as Myanmar's transition evolves, memories and fears persist, which is affirmed in a study by the Center for Diversity and National Harmony (CDNH) which suggests that young people across Myanmar have the least confidence in the peace process being a success.[117]

Old and new legislation also impedes the ability and willingness of young people to publicly mobilise around political issues, creating structural barriers for youth to engage in public processes. The 1908 Unlawful Associations Act continues to be used to prosecute individuals perceived as working in support of Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs).[118] As one youth activist observed, "*When organising community awareness sessions, youth can be misunderstood and tied to EAOs, which can impact their ability to carry out their task.*"[119] Other pieces of legislation, such as Article 66(d) of the 2013 Telecommunications Act, has seen 45 cases proceed to court for allegations of "extorting, coercing, restraining wrongfully, defaming, disturbing, causing undue influence or threatening any person using any telecommunications network".[120] Myanmar's 2012 Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act, and related draft legislation currently under consideration, does not fully guarantee freedom of expression through peaceful protests. This is further complicated as protestors require Government consent prior to holding an assembly.[121] In February 2016,

166 people were facing trial under the Peaceful Assembly Law, many of these young women and men.[122] Furthermore, student unions ("student thamaga") lack protection under the 2014 National Education Law for political expression and association.[123] Despite potential risks associated with engaging on sensitive issues, young people continue to call for greater freedom. For example, in 2013, Generation Wave, Generation Youth, Democracy Force, and others marched in Yangon to protest the Peaceful Assembly Law, and six activists were arrested. Young artists and advocates continue to push for the repeal of Article 66(d).[124]

## Factor 4: Limited access to external funding

*"Sometimes we worry because we don't have financial sustainability, but we won't stop. Just because we don't have funds doesn't mean we stop working."*[125]

—Shining Nang, founder of Mong Pan Youth Association and Weaving Bonds Across Borders

Throughout Myanmar's history, youth organisations have demonstrated tremendous resilience in mobilising around and influencing a host of issues at the national and community levels. Most youth organisations rely heavily on voluntary spirit, which creates challenges related to sustaining youth organisations, initiatives and policy-advocacy efforts. Institutional capacity and consistency continues to inhibit the effectiveness of youth organisations in influencing the trajectory of peace and inter-communal harmony in Myanmar.

The majority of youth organisations are sustained by networks of dedicated volunteers often because these organisations lack sources of consistent external funding. Youth organisations use a mixture of fundraising approaches to ensure their operations and activities subsist. The Pa-O Youth Organisation (PYO), for example, sustains itself through a combination of membership fees, local partnerships, in addition to requiring staff members to invest a proportion of their earnings back into the organisation.[126] While this spirit of

volunteerism has enabled youth organisations to remain dynamic and responsive in a complex transitional environment, organisations also face external pressures that impact retention of human resources and knowledge, and in turn effectiveness. For instance, the increased number of international organisations in Myanmar has created competition for skilled staff, meaning that some young people are leaving their youth organisations to pursue better opportunities elsewhere.[127] Young people are also often drawn away from their core organisational activities to voluntarily support peace structures. For example, many youth organisations supported the roll-out of the first round of NDs.[128] (*See Section 1 for more information on youth inclusion in Myanmar's ND process to date.*) Developing a sound institutional basis remains a challenge for many youth organisations and can inhibit strategic thinking and positioning vis-à-vis public processes at the national, sub-national, and community levels.

> " *Young people across Myanmar have the least confidence in the peace process being a success.* "

Another constraint faced by youth organisations is limited access to external funding. An absence of core funding, for example, was cited by several interviewees as a key challenge to implementing their objectives.[129] Most donors require substantial technical understanding of the granting process as well as advanced English language proficiency, which youth organisations, particularly outside Yangon and Mandalay, often lack.[130] This means that youth organisations cannot fully take advantage of available funding opportunities. For instance, most donors do not accept applications in Myanmar language: this English language requirement privileges elite youth from urban centres. Furthermore, the majority of youth organisations do not meet the organisational and fiduciary thresholds required to access donor funding. This challenge is particularly acute given the number of emerging and unregistered youth

organisations found at the sub-national level in particular. Another funding challenge is the preference of donors to provide project-based funding over institutional funding. While access to project-based funding does provide some stability to youth organisations, it also creates a scenario where youth organisations shape their priorities to meet the needs of donors. There is scope for donors to consider innovative mechanisms to provide more accessible financial support to youth organisations (*see Section 3 for more information on options for investors*).

## Factor 5: Divisions within and between youth organisations and networks

*"In our heart, we accept each other. But in practice, we do not work together. We are all working for the same thing: peace. We need to come together."*

—youth movement leader (male), Bamar

Divisions between and within youth constituencies was cited by interviewees as one of the biggest obstacles to securing gains in youth inclusion in the peace process and political decision-making more broadly.[131] While Myanmar's various youth constituencies have age in common, they are also shaped by a range of other social, cultural, ethnic, gendered, and religious identities and experiences.[132] Lack of unity can act to weaken strategic coordination across national, sub-national and local youth organisations, which can contribute to inhibiting the emergence of coherent and coordinated policy advocacy efforts. Divisions between youth is therefore a factor contributing to limiting the impact of youth organisations on advocating for youth inclusion.

Some interviewees highlighted that the decentralised nature of nationwide and sub-national networks, particularly in the absence of

**" *70% of young people (aged 18-34) in Myanmar have not completed high school.* "**

robust coordination structures, can inadvertently contribute to reinforcing pre-existing identity-related divisions among youth. According to interviewees, divisions have been felt among youth along ethnic and religious lines in particular. Identity-related differences between Bamar youth from the central parts of Myanmar and those from more peripheral, ethnic areas manifest among youth. As one young Muslim from Kachin State explained, "*There is space for youth in the state conferences, but only for ethnic youth. Other youth are not recognised, like Muslim. Although we talk about peace, there's discrimination between ethnic and Bamar youth.*"[133] The existence of divisions between youth highlights that youth are not a homogenous cohort. Youth, like other identity groups, are prone to preconceived socio-cultural norms that shape engagement. Going forward there is need to build trust among youth from ethnic majority and minority groups, as well as across religious and gender lines.

Fragmentation between youth organisations can hinder the emergence of an independent youth movement and strategic networking between organisations. For example, at the national level, the fragmentation of groups has, on occasion, diluted the effectiveness of youth-led policy-advocacy. Networks such as NYC and NEYA often rely on individual, as opposed to strategic, organisational connections to move their priorities forward. Evidence shows that youth-led advocacy is more effective when it is inclusive, and uses coordinated approaches to lobbying, networking, and awareness-raising.[134] Therefore there is room for national and sub-national youth organisations to improve strategic coordination in order to reach their common objective of greater inclusion of youth in public decision-making.[135] Scope also exists to build inclusive approaches to coordination with the view of overcoming divisions that exist between young men and women across the country.

## Factor 6: Socio-economic barriers

*"The only way that young people can participate in the peace process is through being at the front*

*line, with guns. Youth fight for peace but are not given space to talk for peace."*

— Lum Zawng, All Kachin Students and Youth Union (AKSYU)

Complex socio-economic issues related to education, migration, displacement, and problematic drug usage, among others, present structural barriers that limit the ability of young people to meaningfully contribute to peace. Impacts of these socio-economic factors vary across the country: those exposed to Myanmar's protracted armed conflict face different challenges to those in urban centres. Understanding these structural barriers and how they limit the agency of young people is necessary in order to implement strategies to create an enabling environment for youth participation (*see Section 3*).

## 6.1. Education

*"The lack of quality education means youth have no expertise, which means they not invited to participate"*

— young (male) Kachin youth leader

Shortcomings in Myanmar's formal education system is a key barrier that contributes to inhibiting agency of youth and perceptions of youth capability. Nearly 70% of young people (aged 18-34) in Myanmar have not completed high school according to the 2014 Census.[136] Furthermore, several features of Myanmar's formal education system constrain creative problem-solving; this contributes to the creation of a disenabling environment for youth that renders it difficult for them to meaningfully engage in peacebuilding and develop skills necessary to access leadership positions.

The legacy of chronic underinvestment in education means that there is limited access to quality education services across the country. For example, teacher training, provided through education colleges (ECs) or one of two Universities of Education (in Yangon and Sagaing), remains under-resourced.[137] In-service training for teachers provided by the Ministry for Education is

limited, meaning teachers often defer to dominant rote-learning techniques and approaches even when evidence shows that these techniques do not foster the development of critical thinking skills.[138] At all levels of Myanmar's formal education system, the development of strong analytical, critical thinking and life-skills remains limited.[139]

A key issue raised by interviewees in conflict-affected areas, particularly Kayin, Rakhine, Shan and Kachin States, was the marginalisation of the education of thousands of Myanmar youth who reside in refugee and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.[140] For example, the lack of accreditation in Myanmar of education certificates obtained by refugees in camps was viewed as a barrier to youth from conflict-affected backgrounds accessing further education nationally and internationally.[141]

Young people have recognised and responded to shortcomings of Myanmar's education system. Youth-led organisations such as the Myanmar Youth Educator Organization (MYEO) and Scholar Institute (SI), among others, aim to supplement technical and English language skills to empower young people to contribute to the transformation of their communities.[142] Private institutes such as Myanmar Egress have become hubs for young change-makers and its graduates have filled many key technical roles across the peace process, particularly within the former government's MPC.[143] While private education institutes offer opportunities for young graduates, their tuition costs and locations render such education options inaccessible to many young people, particularly those in remote, conflict-affected areas. Transforming Myanmar's formal educational system is key to addressing the structural barriers that contribute to low levels of youth inclusion in public decision-making. Given that evidence shows that there is a link between a low risk of armed conflict and higher levels of education, transforming the education sector is a priority that needs to be addressed.[144]

## 6.2. Migration and displacement

Complex migratory and displacement patterns create both opportunities and constraints for youth inclusion in peacebuilding. Forced migration in Myanmar remains prevalent and a significant source of insecurity for tens of thousands of young people, limiting time, space, and agency to mobilise around political issues. Young women are particularly vulnerable in IDP and refugee camps, with gender-based violence, harassment, abuse, and human trafficking reported as serious ongoing concerns.[145] Young men also face unique challenges: for example, young men in IDP camps (especially in Kachin and Shan States) are particularly at risk of being recruited by armed groups, and are also more susceptible to problematic drug usage; this in turn increases the burden of responsibility for women.[146] For young people in Rakhine and Kachin States, a lack of freedom of movement is a key obstacle – as is limited access to education – to their involvement with peacebuilding issues. Overall, chronic human security issues limit the agency and empowerment of young people to overcome issues in their communities.

Economic-induced migration is common across Myanmar: according to the 2014 Census, around 4.25 million Myanmar migrants are estimated to be working abroad, with over 80% between the ages of 15-39.[147] Research also indicates that the age of potential migrants is generally between 18-24 (55%).[148] For internal migration, most young male migrants relocated for employment (approximately 45%), while young women were more likely to migrate to follow family (approximately 48%).[149] Migration can help young people to improve their livelihoods and those of their families, while high levels of internal migration can also promote interaction and engagement across social divides longer-term – although this relies on broader enabling conditions.[150]

## 6.3. Problematic drug usage

Problematic drug use was consistently cited by interviewees as a key factor impacting the ability of young people to contribute to their communities.

The number of people estimated to be injecting drugs is approximately 83,000, while the use of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) in poppy-growing regions tripled between 2012-14.[151] Based on anecdotal reports, it is thought that heroin and opium are used most, followed by synthetic drugs such as *yaba* (a mix of methamphetamine and caffeine).[152] Drug use is particularly prevalent among young men, with high concentrations seen in Shan and Kachin States.[153]

The high prevalence of problematic drug use among youth in several parts of Myanmar has affected social networks that are essential for supporting cohesive and peaceful communities.[154] Problematic drug use can limit the capacity of users and their families to contribute to income generation and productivity necessary to foster human security and development – critical enablers of durable peace. Overall, problematic drug use also reduces the capacity, time and interest of individuals and their carers to participate in peacebuilding and community development. Addressing problematic drug use is therefore integral to creating an environment that enables young people to contribute to Myanmar's transition.

# Section 3. Youth, Peace and Security: Framework for Action

*"A new narrative on how young people are regarded in peacebuilding is truly needed now. Youth have the full right to design the future they want and the peace they want to see."*

—Thinzar Shunlei Yi (female), President of Yangon Youth Network, Secretariat, National Youth Congress (NYC)

The inclusion of youth remains low across formal peacebuilding processes in Myanmar. Verbal commitments to youth inclusion are opening up a space to discuss formal, structured mechanisms to include young people in the trajectory of Myanmar's transition. To take advantage of this nascent youth policy hook, four main strategies are needed to transform low inclusion rates of young people and take hold of the opportunity to build inclusive, sustainable peace in Myanmar.

Section 3 provides a Framework for Action outlining three overarching strategic areas for action: (1) engaging with decision-makers who are thought to limit the prospects for youth inclusion; (2) building the capacity of the next generation of leaders and strengthening youth organisations; (3) transforming structural barriers that present obstacles to young people accessing public decision-making roles in Myanmar; and (4) addressing knowledge and analysis gaps. This Framework is intended to offer a starting point for discussion and action in order to deepen engagement of young people in Myanmar's transition.



*Esther Jeyang, Civil Society Network for Peace, Kachin State*

# YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY: FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

**Transform the views and behaviours of decision-makers on youth inclusion**

**1**

- Engage with the views and behaviours of decision-makers
- Identify 'champions for youth' and leverage role-modelling
- Increase channels for dialogue between decision-makers and youth leaders

**Strengthen the capacity of youth leaders and youth organisations**

**2**

- Invest in building soft and technical skills of young leaders
- Support the strengthening and sustainability of youth organisations
- Enhance strategic coordination between and within youth organisations
- Invest in core funding and earmark funding to support youth programming

**4**

**Address knowledge and analysis gaps**

- Youth power analysis
- Youth mapping and directory
- Transition of power
- Myanmar-specific Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) indicators
- Needs assessment of young combatants
- Constitutional reform and opportunities for young people
- Youth policy implementation
- Drivers of youth-initiated violence
- Understanding elders' perception of youth

**3**

**Transform structural barriers to youth inclusion into opportunities**

- Finalise and implement an inclusive and representative youth policy
- Adopt and implement structural youth inclusion mechanisms in public decision-making
- Protect the rights of young people to create an enabling environment for youth engagement
- Establish and invest in evidence-based drug policy and services
- Invest in quality and conflict-sensitive education reform
- Invest in economic opportunities and meaningful job creation

## Strategy 1: Transform the views and behaviours of decision-makers on youth inclusion

### 1.1 Engage with the views and behaviours of decision-makers

*"For peace, people need to change their attitude, their mindset, first."*[155]

—Aung Hlaing Win (male), Generation Wave

Interviews and analysis of socio-cultural norms reveal that the views and behaviours of non-youth decision-makers limit the acceptance and ascension of youth into leadership roles in the public sphere. Analysis of formal peacebuilding and public decision-making spheres since 2011 in this *Discussion Paper* reveal that young people participate in low numbers. Engaging and transforming the hierarchal views of non-youth is therefore key to transforming the status quo of low levels of youth inclusion. Engagement on the views, behaviours, and attitudes of decision-makers, both men and women, can be complemented by structural inclusion mechanisms or levers implemented to guarantee space for youth inclusion (see Strategy 3.2, for options for structured youth inclusion modalities).

As a starting point, stakeholders are encouraged to integrate youth analysis into conflict and programmatic assessments in order to understand leadership cultures and the socio-cultural and structural barriers facing young people – guidance is available in how to undertake youth analysis.[156] There is scope for youth to strengthen approaches to engagement with leaders as well as room for donors to consider supporting programmatic interventions that target the demand-side of youth engagement. Youth networks could also enhance their use of technology and social media advocacy, drawing on strategies such as online campaigns, petitions, social media polling or more creative approaches using hashtags, memes, and photo-advocacy to reach a greater number of people – particularly those outside of Myanmar's urban hubs – to show the links between involvement of young people and dividends for sustainable peace.[157]

### 1.2 Identify 'champions for youth' and leverage role-modelling

One option for engaging decision-makers on issues of youth inclusion is through the identification of those who are supporters or advocates of youth engagement. In other words, the agency and legitimacy of young leaders in Myanmar can grow through the establishment of strategic coalitions with decision-makers who can act as "champions for youth" to advocate for the importance of youth inclusion and participation.[158] As a starting point, civil society oganisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) could undertake stakeholder mapping and subsequently approach influential leaders within Government, political parties, Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs), civil society and the international community to act as "youth champions". These champions could then take

> *Engaging and transforming the hierarchal views of non-youth is therefore key to transforming the status quo of low levels of youth inclusion.*

the lead in modelling positive approaches to collaboration with young people, and engaging youth in decision-making processes. Evidence from women's empowerment approaches have highlighted the value and effectiveness of engaging men as allies to advocate for gender equality – youth organisations can consider how to tailor similar approaches to fit their policy-advocacy objectives.[159] The Government may also consider increasing efforts to celebrate International Youth Day (12 August) to promote and acknowledge the critical role of young people in building sustainable peace in Myanmar.[160]

### 1.3 Increase channels for dialogue between decision-makers and youth leaders

Analysis in Section 1 of this *Discussion Paper* revealed that discussions between youth leaders and decision-makers remain *ad hoc*, particularly in Myanmar's ongoing peace process, and are rarely accompanied by more sustained, structured engagement that link to formal public decision-making or policy development processes. Formal and informal participatory forums and meetings have been found to encourage intergenerational interaction and to foster mutual respect – effectively acting as a mechanism to break down barriers and boundaries informed by socio-cultural norms.[161] Undertaking participatory decision-making is a core driver of conflict transformation, contributing to fairer, more just societies.[162]

While Peace Talks have brought together Government and youth leaders, there is space for leaders at *all levels* to create meaningful avenues for dialogue with young people. Community leaders, religious leaders, Government, EAOs, political parties and civil society can all consider increasing meaningful engagement through sustained dialogue with young people. Equally important is that youth from diverse backgrounds are engaged to ensure that the differing needs of young women and diverse ethnic and religious identities are considered and not overlooked. Ensuring that such dialogue channels have accountability and feedback mechanisms for young people is essential.[163] Government, political parties, EAOs, and civil society could also explore the use of mobile technology, social media and technology, such as Phandeeyar and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) U-Report, to connect decision-making to the priorities and concerns of young people through the use of online polling to garner inputs from young people.[164]

*Photo, below: Jue Jue Than, Center for Youth and Social Harmony*

## Leveraging technology for peacebuilding — emerging good practice

Myanmar's digital space is rapidly expanding: an estimated 33 million people (40% of the population) are active mobile phone users. Approximately 80% of mobile users have smartphones.[165] While young people in Myanmar are leading efforts to use technology to counter hate speech and launch online campaigns to promote peace (See Section 1), there is scope for Myanmar's youth to reflect on how other countries have used technology to strategically reach their peacebuilding aims.

Peacetech is a concept that emerged in 2015 and refers to when information communication technologies (ICTs) are used deliberately to achieve peace (as opposed to organisations that might make use of technology to support their general management).[166] Peacetech is often described as having three main parts: data, communication, and networking and mobilisation.[167]

**Data:** this function refers to when a group of people uses technology to aggregate information, collect data and undertake analysis. The main tools used are SMS-reporting systems, digital maps and online surveys. Examples of this function include an SMS-based reporting platform called Ushahidi, which means "witness" in Swahili.[168] Ushahidi was initially developed by young people as way to monitor elections in Kenya following the outbreak of violence in 2007-08, and has since developed an open-source platform that is now used across the globe for initiatives ranging from mapping natural disasters to relief and election monitoring.

**Communication:** this function describes how technology can be used to share information, collect voices and perspectives, and create alternative narratives. For example, Search for Common Ground ran a competition called "Shoot their identity" for young people in Lebanon to explore their identity through video submissions.[169] In Somalia, the Puntland Development Research

Centre's Mobile Audio Visual Unit started a mobile cinema to show how young people played a major role in the resolution of a conflict between two clans in one part of the country. The underlying objective of this initiative was to encourage civic participation and peacebuilding among youth.[170]

**Networking and mobilisation:** this is when technology is used to create alternative or online spaces with a view to collective action. For example, Peace Factory uses online space, such as social media, to connect young people from Iran, Palestine, Jordan and Israel by promoting friendships and creating joint peace marketing campaigns.[171] The goal of the Peace Factory is to build connections among youth from historically divided communities.

As peacetech gains prominence across the world, there is evidence of emerging good practice that Myanmar could consider using.[172] Participatory approaches are encouraged to ensure that initiatives are not extractive, and that they involve communities in all phases of the intervention – from data collection, analysis, and response, to monitoring and evaluation.[173] Sustainability of peacetech initiatives needs to be factored into programme design – particularly in data-driven initiatives where an increase in data does not equate to an increase in services or response.[174] Conflict-sensitivity considerations are also important as technology can both promote peace and perpetuate violence.[175] Myanmar stakeholders can reflect on the Principles for Digital Development, developed by the Global Development Lab, to inform design and to help them implement peacetech initiatives.[176] Guidance also exists on how to design peacebuilding programmes which utilise technology, which could enable Myanmar youth to boost their current interventions or innovate when creating new ones.[177]

## Strategy 2: Strengthen the capacity of youth leaders and youth organisations

### 2.1 Invest in building soft and technical skills of young leaders

*"If youth do not have expertise they will not be listened to. Youth had many ideas but no way to achieve them."*[178]

—Tluang Lian Hnin, young researcher (male)

Alongside strategies to engage with decision-makers who remain impervious to youth inclusion, interventions are needed to strengthen the capacity of young leaders, particularly their ability to effectively prosecute policy-advocacy agendas and programming across a host of sectors. Young people interviewed for this *Discussion Paper* consistently cited the need for more skills development and investment in their capacity as peacebuilders.[179] Evidence shows that empowering young people as peacebuilders creates more active citizens for peace, reduces violence, and increases peaceful cohabitation – thus investing in youth is strategic for building the foundations of sustainable peace in Myanmar. [180]

Ideally, investment in capacity development will be rooted in assessments of the skills and knowledge of young leaders to deepen the quality of skills training efforts. Efforts could also be made to ensure that a combination of technical peacebuilding and soft skills are included concurrent to training multiple layers of youth across the country. Training ought to include all young people and could be used as an avenue to bring together Bamar youth and ethnic minority youth, in addition to training youth from different religious groups together. Ensuring accessibility

> ❝ *Efforts could also be made to ensure that a combination of technical peacebuilding and soft skills are included concurrent to training multiple layers of youth across the country.* ❞

of training is key – meaning that training ought to be offered in Myanmar language at minimum and available to youth who reside outside of Yangon. Efforts to ensure young women do not face additional barriers in accessing capacity development can be considered as young women often face additional socio-cultural barriers and care-giving responsibilities.[181]

Guidance exists on capacity development options for young people.[182] For example, the Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding recommends that capacity development focuses on conflict transformation and conflict resolution awareness, negotiation, mediation, dialogue, facilitation, mediation, and communication skills.[183] As the global YPS policy-agenda gains greater traction and filters into donor funding priorities, coordination and collaboration among national CSOs, donors and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) on content of trainings could strengthen approaches to capacity development and generate good practice for training Myanmar's youth.

### 2.2 Support the strengthening and sustainability of youth organisations

*"It has always been that youth create change in Myanmar."*[184]

—national staff member (female), UN Agency, Myanmar

Beyond investing in young leaders, strengthening the institutional capacity of youth organisations is a strategic investment particularly as youth organisations continue to lead policy-advocacy efforts on advancing youth inclusion in peacebuilding. There is an opportunity to boost support to youth organisations so they can achieve institutional sustainability. This support could include – where relevant and rooted in organisational assessments – governance, financial management, strategic planning, project management, proposal development, monitoring and evaluation, record-keeping and communications (including use of traditional and social media). Lessons, particularly around

responsiveness, can be learned from previous approaches to funding civil society writ large.[185] Capacity development support ought to be geared at building and strengthening pre-existing organisations rather than backing organisations that emerge to respond to donor priorities.

Youth organisations are technology innovators in Myanmar, pioneering the use of technology and social media to expand the reach of positive messages in an effort to counter the proliferation of hate speech online. Despite rapid mobile phone use penetration in Myanmar, access to information and opportunities continue to be limited for the majority of young people, especially those in rural and conflict-affected areas. This can result in further marginalisation and disenfranchisement, which can contribute to the perpetuation of conflict drivers. Investment in strengthening youth organisations can focus on improving access to information and opportunities – including how to effectively make use of technology-based platforms and social media. Donors could also consider supporting information-sharing initiatives between young practitioners through community exchanges and the creation of accessible and dedicated online portals to connect young people across the country.[186]

## 2.3 Enhance strategic coordination between and within youth organisations

*"We cannot build trust only through mobile phones."*[187]

—young member (male), Myanmar Youth Forum

Interviewees suggested that divisions within and between youth organisations at the national and sub-national level are a key barrier to building a cohesive and influential national youth movement. These divisions include those between youth from central areas – including between the Bamar ethnic majority and ethnic minority groups, and between different religious groups. While youth are not a homogenous constituency, strengthening coordination and building cohesion among youth stakeholders could contribute to building policy relevance, making gains in youth

inclusion, and influencing decision-makers to be more responsive to the needs of young people. For example, Myanmar's larger national youth networks, National Ethnic Youth Alliance (NEYA) and National Youth Congress (NYC), could strive to improve coordination around thematic issues and form joint strategies around common action related to peacebuilding.

Global examples demonstrate how creative outlets for young people have supported conflict transformation and catalysed local peacebuilding.[188] Projects in Myanmar such as the Myanmar Art Social Project (MASC) and Thukhuma Khayeethe (TK Theatre) have demonstrated the transformative impact that forums, theatre, non-violent communication, psychological support and art therapy can bring for young people in conflict.[189] Such approaches connect with, and inspire, younger generations that enable *"different perspective [to be understood] through experiences and exchange."*[190] These innovative approaches are particular relevant to building inter-communal harmony and social cohesion in Myanmar. Non-traditional approaches such as sports, inter-ethnic concerts, inter-faith art exhibitions and reconciliation through performance, dance and theatre can be perceived as less politicised avenues to foster trust and mutual respect between youth. Inclusive and conflict-sensitive approaches to non-traditional relationship-building are fundamental to ensure that these activities do not reinforce or exacerbate cultural or discriminatory norms around gender, religion or ethnicity.[191]

Youth organisations could consider creating opportunities to unite around the positive role of youth inclusion in the peacebuilding through the development of policy-advocacy agendas, joint awareness-raising events, and media campaigns that tap into social media and technology.[192] Donors and other organisations can also support the strategic, effective, and sustainable coordination of youth-led advocacy through technical trainings and resources on strategic planning, coalition-building and policy-influence. Technical support can also be provided to bolster

the ability of youth to harness technology to leverage online platforms that resonate with young people.

Youth organisations can consider strengthening pre-existing local youth centres – or initiate new ones where they do not exist already – as hubs that encourage social, creative, and educational outlets for youth. Such space could allow young people to partly (or wholly) run the centres to provide greater sense of youth agency through responsibility.[193] Research shows that informal, youth-friendly spaces are key complements to development programmes, providing opportunities for greater interaction, exchanges, and trust building between young people – critical ingredients to building horizontal linkages between young people.[194]

## Using the arts to bring social cohesion and build peace

Young people from around the world have used the arts to bring about social cohesion and build peace. Art has the capacity to spark changes in individuals: it can transform relationships between communities and create space for critical reflection on dominant conflict narratives.[195] The arts can also be used to understand the emotional and relationship drivers of violent conflict.[196] Furthermore, the arts can support communities to identify sources of resilience and find solutions to threats of violence and insecurity.[197]

Young people frequently take the lead in art and peacebuilding initiatives and are often targets of peacebuilding programming that draws on arts, such as theatre, music, dance, poetry and photography, among others. Examples of art initiatives targeting youth include:

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Omladinska Organizacija Svitac is a multi-ethnic youth arts and education organisation based in Bosnia and Herzegovina which brings together youth of *all* ethnicities to undertake arts projects with a view to reducing inter-group tensions.[198] This organisation provides a neutral space for facilitating creativity between youth through arts, music, sports, and film.

**Lebanon:** An arts festival, "Shatila: The Meeting Point", was organised in a refugee camp with the support of UNDP. The festival sought to provide young people from different identity groups with an opportunity to come together in a safe space to express themselves through the arts.[199]

**Nicaragua:** A project led by Murales RAAS, with support from Eirene Suisse, brought together young people from different backgrounds and communities to learn artistic techniques to make murals with a view to promoting social cohesion. This initiative integrated arts with workshops related to social issues such as multiculturalism, drugs and the environment.[200]

Good practice in art and peacebuilding can be drawn from the broader literature base of using art as a method for social change.[201] Evidence from other contexts suggests that programming ought to integrate intentional behavior-based messages and skills development in arts programming.[202] Conducting conflict analysis and identifying issues and goals to be addressed via art is encouraged, particularly in designing programmes.[203] Conflict-sensitivity considerations are also required as the arts can equally be used to perpetuate divisions among communities, re-traumatising individuals or communities and spreading messages of hate.

## 2.4 Invest in core funding and earmark funding to support youth programming

Interviewees for this *Discussion Paper* repeatedly commented that the absence of core funding was a key barrier to sustaining and building youth organisations and programming. In other words, the prominence of project-based funding is inhibiting the ability of youth organisations to invest in institutional strengthening as time is consumed writing new proposals to fit donor priorities. Interviewees also said that many youth organisations face challenges meeting donor requirements. To overcome this challenge, investors can consider creating more accessible funding modalities alongside opening longer-term, flexible support. For example, English-language proficiency is often needed to understand donor guidelines and to interact with donor representatives in Yangon. The ability to submit proposals and communicate in Myanmar language would ease access to funding to youth organisations.

A dual strategy is encouraged for investors – earmarking funding specifically for youth organisations or programmes that have the principle objective of advancing youth inclusion in addition to establishing requirements to integrate youth analysis and perspectives into non-youth focused programming.[204] For example, the UN policy standard of disbursing 15% of peacebuilding allocations to initiatives with the principle objective of advancing gender equality could be adapted to set aside funds for youth-dedicated programming.[205] Organisations seeking funding could be required to integrate analysis of the roles and needs of young people in conflict analysis and assessments. Furthermore, donors could incorporate youth-specific indicators and age disaggregation into monitoring and evaluation frameworks for all peacebuilding projects (alongside gender disaggregation).

## Strategy 3: Transform structural barriers to youth inclusion into opportunities

### 3.1 Finalise and implement an inclusive and representative youth policy

Myanmar is one of only 31 countries globally without a formal youth policy. While such a policy is currently being developed with the support of the UN's Population Fund (UNFPA) and other UN agencies, finalising and passing this policy is a priority as it will significantly increase the visibility of youth in Myanmar (*see Section 1 for an overview of Myanmar's National Youth Policy Process*).[206] Many post-conflict countries such as Timor-Leste have effectively used youth policies to guide youth development, coordinating action to address root-causes of conflict, and other countries have successfully incorporated youth engagement in peacebuilding.[207]

Once Myanmar's National Youth Policy is finalised, strategies and activities for youth development will need to be introduced in relevant ministries. Ministries can then align their priorities with the National Youth Policy and develop an implementation plan with an allocated budget for youth-related activities – ideally in consultation with a diverse range of youth leaders and organisations. Sufficient funding and resources is required to ensure consultations are inclusive and representative. Furthermore, the implementation of the youth policy and related activities should be coordinated in partnership with young people nationwide, along with national standards and indicators. Targets should also be set and progress of implementation tracked. There is scope to use technology as an avenue to engage youth in the National Youth Policy implementation and solicit input from a diverse range of young people. Plenty of good practice and innovation exists for Myanmar to consider during the implementation, monitoring, and review of the forthcoming National Youth Policy.[208] Any efforts to craft national action plans or other implementation strategies related to UNSCR 2250 on YPS ought to build from the forthcoming National Youth

*"Any efforts to craft national action plans or other implementation strategies related to UNSCR 2250 on YPS ought to build from the forthcoming National Youth Policy."*

Policy – in other words: civil society engagement and donor investment in 2250 can ensure that 2250 activities are rooted in by Myanmar-relevant frameworks.

### 3.2 Adopt and implement structural youth inclusion mechanisms in public decision-making

*"Today's youth will inherit Myanmar. Only if youth participate now in the peace dialogue can they prepare to be future leaders of the country."* [209]
— young founder (male) of youth-led NGO

Low levels of youth inclusion in formal peacebuilding and public decision-making processes is the norm in Myanmar. The absence of agreed and formal structural inclusion mechanisms is one factor contributing to low youth inclusion rates. Adopting formal inclusion modalities is therefore one avenue to transform the status quo of low youth inclusion rates in formal public decision-making processes. Such mechanisms could include policies, strategies, quotas, youth caucuses, youth delegations, youth consultations and youth forums – among others. Myanmar stakeholders can draw upon good practice related to special temporary measures to create Myanmar-relevant youth inclusion modalities. [210] In other words, without structural levers to create space for youth in public decision-making processes, low rates of youth inclusion are likely to continue in Myanmar.

Formalising decision-making roles for young participants, as affiliates to their nominating group, not only empowers young people as constituents, but can have crucial benefits for negotiations more broadly (*see Text Box: Youth Inclusion in National Dialogues: Evidence from Yemen*). There are several elements of good practice for Myanmar stakeholders to reflect on when creating structural youth inclusion mechanisms. Mechanisms that secure the influence and participation of young people are more effective than options that only secure the quantitative or numeric inclusion. For example, observer status is an inclusion modality that offers little opportunity for youth to influence policy discussions. Measures such as quotas are more effective when accompanied by substantive strategies and ongoing mentorship so that youth can confidently contribute to policy discussions and navigate complex policy processes and institutional bureaucracies. Inclusive mechanisms are also needed otherwise mechanisms such as youth delegations may privilege the voices of urban, elite young men, overlooking the diversity of needs and perspectives of young people in Myanmar. Here it is important that inclusion mechanisms reach *all* young people, including those from conflict affected and non-conflict affected areas.

Inclusion mechanisms can reach beyond peacebuilding: for example, political parties and the Government can adopt and implement mechanisms and policies for youth inclusion within political parties. The use of youth quotas has especially been shown to increase the interest, active participation, and representation of young people in political parties and Parliament. [211] In support of this, citizenship training and education can be used to prepare young people for increased civil responsibilities. [212] Youth caucuses or youth committees are also options for Myanmar stakeholders to consider to enhance engagement of youth in politics. [213]

## Youth inclusion in National Dialogues: Evidence from Yemen

Yemen's youth were key drivers of the grassroots demonstrations that were part of the broader Arab Spring movement. These protests triggered the transfer of power to a transitional government and establishment of a national dialogue process in 2011. Despite ongoing delays and setbacks, the process set an example of how to use quotas to secure the inclusion of youth in dialogue processes.

Yemen's 2013 National Dialogue Conference (NDC) made use of two types of quotas. A youth quota was established to guarantee at least 20% of youth participated in the process. In addition, a women's quotas was established to ensure at least 30% of all participants were women (and 20% of the women's quota were required to be

youth).[214] Independent delegates were additionally chosen by the Technical Committee, which consisted of women, youth, and civil society following a call for applications for participation. However problems arose with defining who the "independent" youth are, and their degree of independence from other stakeholders.[215] In addition to the quota, 40 seats were reserved for independent youth representatives who were credited with actively lobbying and influencing throughout the conference.[216]Although youth were underrepresented in decision-making committees that led the NDC process, their participation resulted in increased political empowerment and secured national employment strategies, and investments in education for youth.[217]

### 3.3 Protect the rights of young people to create an enabling environment for youth engagement

Youth inclusion is only meaningful when the voices of young women and men are genuinely heard and have space to be included in decision-making.[218] Youth participation must be differentiated from tokenistic activities, which can be described as situations in which "*young people appear to have been given a voice, but really have little or no choice about how they participate. It is participation for participation's sake or for a photo opportunity.*"[219] Activities to foster meaningful and effective youth participation should be rights-based and crafted with principles of transparency, accountability, relevance, inclusiveness, and safety.[220]

> *Low levels of youth inclusion in formal peacebuilding and public decision-making processes is the norm in Myanmar.*

Many young peacebuilders interviewed for this research remain concerned about the personal consequences of engaging on sensitive issues, both online and offline.[221] Therefore, increasing protection of human rights and freedom of speech for young people is key to creating an enabling environment for youth to participate in public processes. Protecting the rights of young people can also act to respect and value the perspectives of young peacebuilders, which would contribute to building a positive narrative around the role of young people to society.

Protecting the rights of young people is embedded in protecting rights to freedom of expression and assembly. In Myanmar, there is latitude to review and, where appropriate, amend laws and policies that limit the basic principles of democracy and human rights of young people. Consideration should especially be given to amending Article 66(d) of the 2013 Telecommunications Act and 2011 Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act, and repealing the 1908 Unlawful Association Act, to bring them in

line with international standards on freedom of expression.[222]

### 3.4. Establish and invest in evidence-based drug policy and services

*"Due to lack of opportunities, there is a drug issue. Most young men are addicted to drugs in our community and not interested in other things."*

—young community member (female), Kayin State

Interviewees repeatedly said that problematic drug use is pervasive and a structural barrier, particularly for young men, which inhibits the agency of young people to contribute to their communities. Multi-layered approaches rooted in evidence, public health, human rights, and participatory development are necessary to reduce harm caused by problematic substance use. A range of analysis and good practice documents are available to guide approaches in Myanmar.[223]

The Government should continue to reform the drug law and to amend relevant legislation, particularly the 1993 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law which equates drug users with criminals.[224] Alternative sentences to imprisonment should also be considered: community service sentences have been shown to build a sense of civic engagement and offer positive local community development benefits.[225] An integrated approach to voluntary and evidence-based drug treatment should be taken to address broader psychological or social issues faced by people with a drug dependency problem.[226] The 2013 UN Guiding Principles on Alternative Development, affirmed in the General Assembly Resolution 68/196, provide a basis for all parties in Myanmar to adopt alternative income strategies for poppy-producing communities, particularly for those affected by conflict.[227]

> *Education is the single most empowering tool for young peacebuilders in Myanmar.*

The Government, EAOs, CSOs, and NGOs are also well-positioned to promote effective and evidence-based drug education in schools as important empowerment and prevention tools.[228] The Government and donors could also invest in campaigns that seek to reduce the negative social stigma associated with problematic drug use, including methods to encourage drug users to seek health services and participate in harm-reduction programmes.[229]

### 3.5. Invest in quality and conflict-sensitive education reform

Education is the single most empowering tool for young peacebuilders in Myanmar.[230] Significant scope exists to reform formal education in Myanmar with a view to increasing the capability, agency and knowledge of young people across the country. Consistent with the implementation of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2016-21, further efforts to strengthen and develop Myanmar's education system should continue to be prioritised.[231] The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer priorities in the area of education which Myanmar can utilise to ensure education reform follows global good practice, targets, and aligns with the core SDG principle of inclusivity.[232] There is also opportunity to incorporate curriculum content on peace education, including ethnic and religious differences, human rights, social cohesion, and civic education to empower young women and men to support a more peaceful and cohesive society.[233] Education reform also creates learning pathways for young people, particularly those displaced by conflict, and could enable IDP and refugee communities to have their education qualifications recognised so they can access further education opportunities.[234]

Deepening investment and the quality of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) so that it links to industry and is responsive to evolving labour needs can also create educational opportunities for young people.[235] Promisingly, TVET is one of the six focus areas of Myanmar's Comprehensive Education Sector Review

(CESR), while a comprehensive, accessible TVET database directory is being developed.[236] The State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has highlighted the important role of TVET for young people, emphasising that it should not be seen as second class compared with higher education.[237] To ensure that TVET programmes do not reinforce gender stereotypes, attention should be given to the specific and different needs of young women, including young mothers.[238] Integration of soft skills and essential skills is encouraged in TVET to ensure that students undergoing technical training have the acumen and confidence to adapt to rapidly changing labour market needs.[239]

There is also an opportunity to engage the private sector in TVET reform to ensure that vocational programmes reflect labour market needs and offer substantive employment pathways for young people – essentially to build demand-driven rather than supply-driven TVET systems.[240] Linking TVET to industry also means creating paid internships, job placements, and on-the-job skills training programmes to create better, more sustainable employment opportunities for Myanmar's youth.[241] Banks in particular may consider youth-friendly loan pilot programmes to promote and incentivise youth-led small business and entrepreneurship, building on good practice from initiatives in Colombia.[242]

### 3.6. Invest in economic opportunities and meaningful job creation

The 2015 Labour Force Survey found that 74.8% of young men and 55.3% of young women are employed, while an average of 17% are neither in employment nor education.[243] Many young people interviewed for this *Discussion Paper* felt they would be in a better position to contribute to peacebuilding in their communities if they had greater financial security.[244] Investment and creation of youth employment strategies are needed – including those being developed from the 2016 International Investment Law – to address stabilisation, reintegration, and sustainable employment creation.[245] There is scope for the Government of Myanmar to create meaningful job

> *A "youth" lens should be critically applied to policy, programming, and research in Myanmar to understand power relations and imbalances involving young people.*

creation programmes through inclusive, conflict-sensitive strategies that are linked to education reform and industry.[246] Greater cooperation on youth engagement is needed between the Government and private sector, particularly through initiatives that generate meaningful employment opportunities.[247]

Beyond helping to address a root cause of violent conflict, poverty reduction and equitable economic development are critical tools to transform communities, and young people in particular, as empowered peacebuilding agents.[248] Integrated economic development and peacebuilding programmes can also work to actively build peace by connecting communities and empowering individuals.[249] Young people are central to the economic development of their country.[250] Relevant, needs-based economic promotion is also critical to support the reintegration of young combattants.

## YOUTH EMPLOYMENT
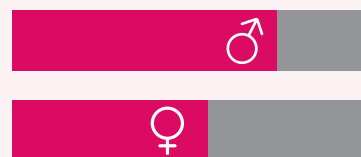


**74.8% of male youth** and
**55.3% of female youth** are employed

**17%**
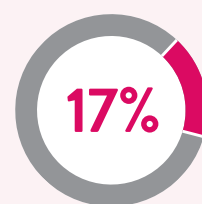
17% of young people are
neither in employment nor education

## Strategy 4: Address knowledge and analysis gaps

*"Within the priorities and programming of international actors, there is acknowledgement that Myanmar's youth has been neglected."*[251]

—The Role of Education in Peacebuilding, Country Report: Myanmar

Lack of data, research, and evidence on the situation of youth in Myanmar limits the ability of policy makers to implement policy and programming tailored to the needs of young people. Additional research is therefore essential to ensure that YPS policy and programming in Myanmar – and elsewhere – is driven by data, analysis and evidence to ensure that proposed interventions are context relevant. Research should be targeted in order to address gaps in knowledge for key stakeholders, providing practical insights to inform action.

Key gaps identified through this research include:

- **Youth power analysis:** Seeing age as a power variable is critical for understanding the challenges youth face in participating in peacebuilding. A "youth" lens should be critically applied to policy, programming, and research in Myanmar to understand power relations and imbalances involving young people.[252]

- **Youth mapping and directory:** Building on existing research, mapping youth-led initiatives and youth organisations across Myanmar would enable effective and targeted funding, and more programme development. It would furthermore facilitate national decision-makers and donors to understand which organisations are doing what type of activities and where – and how to more effectively support them. To promote youth empowerment and agency, such mapping could be led by youth organisations and supported by donor funding.[253]

- **Transition of power:** How does the transition of power occur between generations? Is it different for women and men? Are there variations across the States and Regions of Myanmar? There could be lessons and insights to better inform how young people can be supported as they move into leadership roles.

- **Myanmar-specific YPS indicators:** Various actors in Myanmar could lead the global agenda in the development of country-specific indicators for YPS, to track the progress and implementation of youth-related agendas. The 26 Women, Peace and Security (WPS) global indicators developed by the UN in 2010 could provide a useful starting point for considering youth-specific indicators.[254]

- **Needs assessment of young combatants:** Baseline assessments are required of the needs and expectations of young combatants who may, in time, be reintegrated into communities. Further research in this field should consider age and perceptions of "youth" within armed group stakeholders.

- **Constitutional reform and opportunities for young people:** Protection from age discrimination is not mandated in Myanmar's Constitution. Comparative research should be applied to identify additional protections or rights that could be afforded to the youth constituency under the Constitution.

- **Youth policy implementation:** Comparative research of youth policy implementation structures and mechanisms should be undertaken to inform Myanmar's approach, ensuring efficacy in approach in placing youth at the centre of the process. Key guidance, for example, can be found in lessons from Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Timor-Leste, particularly in coordination mechanisms, resourcing, and accountability.

- **Drivers of youth-initiated violence:** Critical analysis is required to understand the drivers of violent conflict among Myanmar's youth.

*Photo, right: "Myanmar youth are moving towards a peaceful society", Philip Soe Aung, Union of Karenni State Youth*

မြန်မာလူငယ်များ သည်

ငြိမ်းချမ်းသောလူမှုအဖွဲ့ အစည်း ဆီသို့ ချီတက်သော သူများဖြစ်သည်။
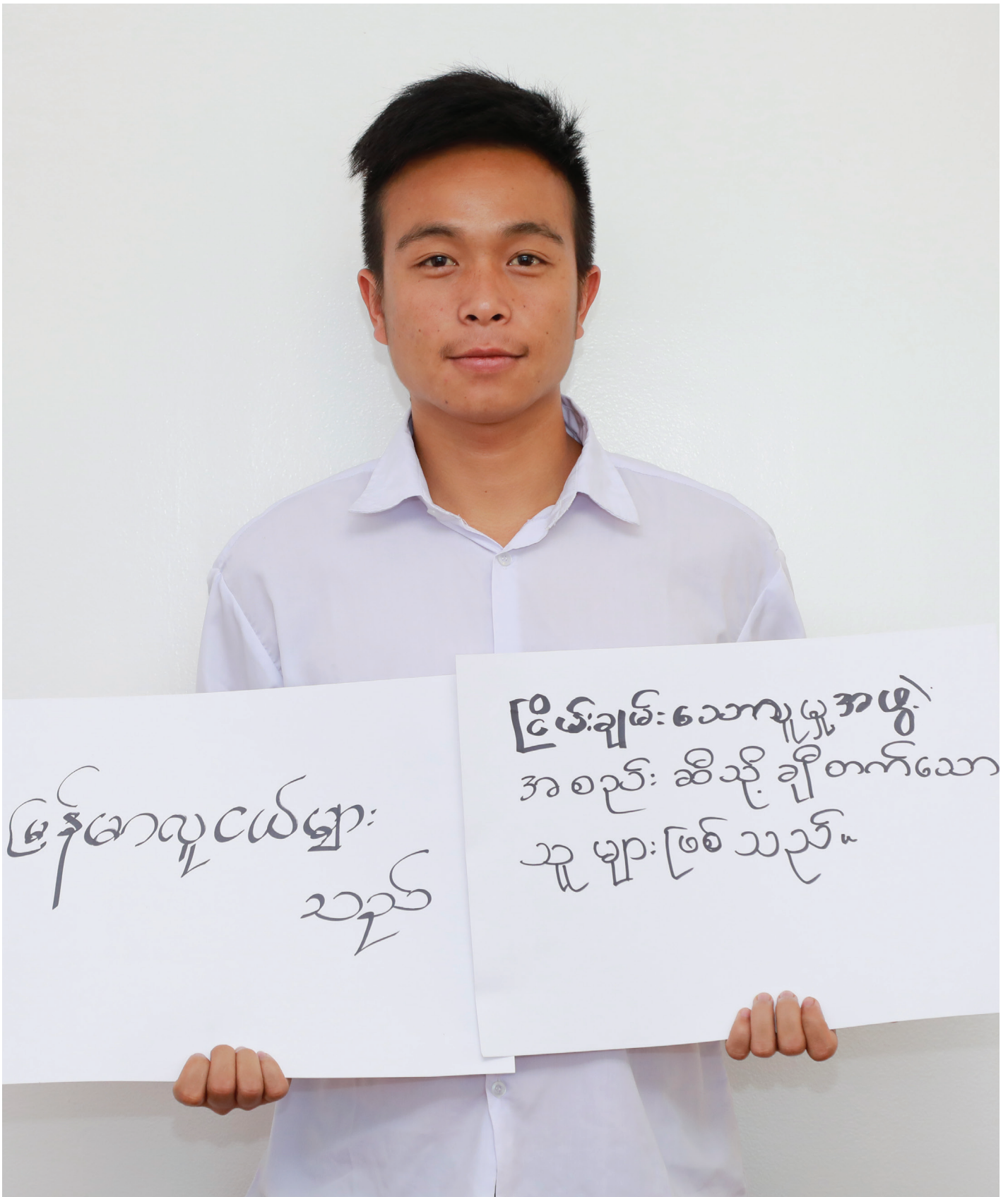
Significantly more research must be directed to understand drivers of localised communal conflict among youth across the different States and Regions of Myanmar.

- **Understanding elders' perception of youth:** Wide-ranging research is also required to understand the perceptions of young people at all levels, particularly among elders. Listening projects focused on youth identity as traced through the experiences of older generations may provide important insights in agency, power structures, and cultural norms. This could better support inter-generational relationship- and partnership-building.

**DISCUSSION STARTERS:**

- How can good global practice on youth inclusion be tailored to the Myanmar context?

- What new approaches can your organisation consider to better include young people and integrate youth perspectives into policy and programming?

## YPS Essential 3: Key International Guides, Frameworks, and Standards related to Youth, Peace and Security

### 1. Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action (2016)

The Compact provides a commitment by humanitarian partners to adopt mechanisms to guarantee that the priorities and participation of young people are addressed by the humanitarian system. Actions include: promoting inclusive programmes, supporting systemic engagement with youth, recognising and strengthening young people's capacity, supporting youth-led initiatives, increasing resources to address the needs and priorities of young people affected by crises, and ensuring age- and sex-disaggregation in all data.

### 2. Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding: A Practice Note (2016)

The United Nations United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding offers examples from around the world on how young women and men can better engage in peacebuilding.

### 3. Translating Youth, Peace & Security Policy into Practice: Guide to Kick-starting UNSCR 2250 Locally and Nationally (2016)

The United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY) and Search for Common Ground provide guidance for how young people can advocate for the launch and implementation of UNSCR 2250 in their country.

### 4. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/262, Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture

This Resolution reaffirmed *"the important role youth can play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and as a key aspect of the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts"*. It

called upon *"Member States and relevant United Nations organs and entities to consider ways to increase meaningful and inclusive participation of youth in peacebuilding efforts through creating policies, including in partnership with the private sector where relevant, that would enhance youth capacities and skills, and create youth employment to actively contribute to sustaining peace"*.

### 5. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, Youth Peace and Security (2015)

UNSCR 2250 is the first-ever UN resolution that deals specifically with the role of young people in issues of peace and security, calling on Member States to place youth at the centre of peacebuilding. It provides a set of guidelines upon which policies and programmes will be developed by Member States, the UN and civil society. The resolution contains five pillars: participation, protection, prevention, partnership, and disengagement and reintegration.

### 6. Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding (2014)

The IANYD Subgroup on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding, co-chaired by the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and Search for Common Ground, provides guiding recommendations on how both policy and practitioners from all sectors in society – including government, UN entities, donors and programmes, local and national NGOs, and civil society – can better engage with youth and peacebuilding, particularly relating to "Do No Harm".

### 7. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64/130, Policies and Programmes Involving Youth (2010)

This Resolution calls on Member States *"to recognise young women and men as important*

*actors in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and post-conflict processes"*. It also reaffirms the importance of UN World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY).

## 8. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 50/81, The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (1995)

Adopted on the 10th anniversary of International Youth Year, WPAY provides a policy framework and guidelines for action to support young people. Fifteen priority areas were identified (of which five were additional as a Supplement in 2007), including the protection, reintegration, and promotion of youth in armed conflict, "*including programmes for reconciliation, peace consolidation and peacebuilding*". The

first Guide to the Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth was published in 2006, providing a set of recommendations and ideas for concrete policies and programmes that address the everyday realities of youth.

## 9. Mapping a Sector: Bridging the Evidence Gap on Youth-Driven Peacebuilding (2017).

UNOY Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground conducted a survey of youth-led organisations across the world to understand their activities, achievements, strengths, and needs. One key finding of the report is that 49% of youth organisations surveyed operated an annual budget of approximately USD 5,000. The report also compiles recommendations for stakeholders to consider to improve support for youth peacebuilding organisations.

*Community youth members, Hpa'An, Kayin State, February 2017*

# Annex 1: Timeline of Youth Inclusion in Peace - A Recent History

| Year | Month | Event | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2015 | Oct | NCA Signing Ceremony | ◖◗ |
| | Nov | JMC Terms of Reference | ◇ ▤ |
| | Dec | Framework for Political Dialogue Finalised | ◇ ▤ |
| | | Informal meeting of NLD and Youth Leaders | ● |
| 2016 | Jan | 1st Union Peace Conference | ▭ ◖◗ ▤ |
| | Feb | Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting (JICM) | ▭ ▤ |
| | Mar | | |
| | Apr | | |
| | May | Joint Monitoring Committee-Union Level (JMC-U) Meetings | ▭ ▤ |
| | Jun | Myanmar Youth Forum (MYF) | ● |
| | Jul | | |
| | Aug | Ethnic Youth Conference (EYC) | ● |
| | Sep | 2nd Union Peace Conference / 1st 21st Century Panglong Conference | ▭ ◖◗ |
| | Oct | | |
| | Nov | Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) Meeting | ▭ ▤ |
| | Dec | | |
| 2017 | Jan | State Counsellor Peace Talk | ● |
| | | Region-based National Dialogue | ● ▤ |
| | Feb | State Counsellor Union Day Peace Talk | ● |
| | | Ethnic-based National Dialogue | ● ▭ ▤ |
| | Mar | CSOs Forum | ● ▭ ▤ |
| | Apr | State Counsellor Talk with rural youth | ● |
| | May | 3rd Union Peace Conference / 2nd 21st Century Panglong Conference | ▭ ▤ |
| | Jun | | |
| | Jul | | |
| | Aug | | |

**Legend:**

● Youth Attendance  ◖◗ Youth Obeservers  ◇ No Youth Inclusion

▤ No Youth Inclusion Mechanism (i.e. Quotas, Observer Status, etc)  ▭ Youth Facilitation and Technical Support

# Annex 2: Methodology

This *Discussion Paper* was developed between January and August 2017. A mix-methods approach was used to investigate the inclusion and participation of different youth constituencies in peacebuilding in Myanmar. An assessment of quantitative data provided an overview of youth inclusion in the roles of decision-making, negotiators, facilitators, mediators, technical advisors, observers, monitors in the peace process, and contributors to peacebuilding. Gender analysis has been applied to understand the differences and the unique needs of young men and women vis-à-vis peacebuilding. The unique needs and differences between young women and men need to be considered when reading this *Discussion Paper*, as well as in any strategies taken in response to the recommendations.[255]

A desk review of literature from February-April 2016 included the following search terms:

- 'youth', 'peace' and 'security'

- 'conflict resolution' and 'youth'

- 'violence prevention' and 'youth'

- 'peacebuilding' and 'youth'

- 'peace process' and 'youth'

- 'transformation' or 'change' and 'Myanmar' or 'Burma'

- 'youth' and 'peace' or 'security', or 'peacebuilding' or 'negotiations'

- 'youth' or 'young people' and 'Myanmar' or 'Burma'

- 'youth' and 'Myanmar' or 'Burma' and 'peace' or 'security' or 'peacebuilding' or 'negotiations' or 'reconciliation'

- 'youth' and 'Myanmar' or 'Burma' and 'policy' or 'politics' or 'decision-making' or 'democracy' or 'social movements'

- 'youth' and 'equality' and 'Myanmar' or 'Burma'

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with relevant stakeholders were undertaken and provided critical insights into the broader issues of participation of young men and women in the peace process and peacebuilding more broadly. A total of 158 individuals (60 women, 98 men) in Myanmar were engaged for interviews between January and March 2017; 73 through 70 different KIIs and a further 76 through 12 FGDs. Field research was conducted in Yangon, Kayin, Mon, Southern Shan, Kachin, and Chiang Mai. Further representatives from other States and Regions were consulted within these locations. Interviews were conducted by two pairs of interview teams over a span of three weeks in February to beginning of March 2017. Respondents were given the opportunity to remain anonymous, with interview reference numbers cited in place of names. The research is intended to provide an overview of key perspectives through targeted sampling.

Transcripts from all interviews and FGDs were transcribed, analysed, and categorised, with observations from each discussion coded into one of 197 sub-categories (totalling 745 references). Coding sub-categories were subsequently analysed, grouped, refined, and prioritised as key findings.

Key findings were reviewed during a one-day Validation Workshop held in Yangon on 17 March 2017. The Workshop was attended by 21 (11 male and 10 female) youth from Yangon, Kachin, Kayin, Kayah, Chin, Shan, Rakhine, Mon and Mandalay. Further validation of findings and recommendations was conducted through group discussions with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Search for Common Ground and UNV.

Peer review of the full draft *Paper* was conducted by Saji Prelis and Mieke Lopes Cardozo, while key findings were discussed locally with reviewers Amara Thiha and Sai Aung Myint Oo. The PSF provided ongoing feedback and comments through the life-cycle of the research. A final anonymous peer review process was coordinated to review later stages of the *Paper* before final publication.

# Annex 3: About the 'Contributions to Sustainable Peace Series'

This *Discussion Paper* is the second instalment of the PSF's *Contributions to Sustainable Peace Series*, which seeks to facilitate inclusive discussions on sustainable peace within the Myanmar context. The first paper, *The Women Are Ready: An Opportunity to Transform Peace in Myanmar*, focused on gender inclusion in the peace process and peacebuilding in Myanmar.[256]

There is a clear link between inclusive peacebuilding processes and sustainable peace – thus tapping into youth constituencies is critical in the Myanmar context particularly as 60% of Myanmar's population is under the age of 35. This *Discussion Paper* is not an exhaustive assessment of youth inclusion but offers analysis of the status of youth inclusion with a view to spark substantive discussion and debate on how to transform the status quo and harness a generation of tech-savvy and innovative leaders.

The PSF has supported a host of youth-led peacebuilding initiatives and acknowledges the ongoing contributions and potential of these agents of change in Myanmar. The PSF's current donors – the Governments of the United Kingdom (UK), Australia and Sweden – have each detailed commitments to supporting youth empowerment as a key pillar in their development programmes.[257]

# Annex 4: Endnotes

1   As defined in the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP). 2015. Women, Peace and Security Policymaking in Myanmar. Context Analysis and Recommendations. Edition 1. December.

2   Norman, Jane. 2001. Building Effective Youth-Adult Partnerships: The Rights. Respect. Responsibility Campaign.  Transitions, 14(1).

3   Richards-Schuster, Katie. 2012. Empowering the voice of youth: The role of youth advisory councils in grant making focused on youth. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 136, 87-100.

4   For a deeper understanding of empowerment, see Cattanco, Lauren Bennet, and Chapman, Aliya R. 2010. The Process of Empowerment: A model for use in research and practice. American Psychologist, 65(7): 646-659.

5   Odeendaal, Andries. 2010. An Architecture or Building Peace at the Local Level: A Comparative Study of Peace Committees. New York City: UNDP.

6   UN Women. 2013. Women, Peace and Security: An Introductory Manual. UN Women National Committee Australia. 28.

7   Aung Kyaw Min. 2016. Peace Process Requires Participation of Young People: State Counsellor. *The Myanmar Times*. 2 September.

8   For examples, see the opening speech at the second Union Peace Conference/21st Century Panglong held in August 2016 (official translation): "In particular, I am always impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of our young people, many of whom have been showing their support for this Panglong conference in events around the country in recent days.""See also Aung Kway Min. 2016. Peace Process Requires Participation of Young People: State Counsellor. The Myanmar Times. 2 September.

9   Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative. 2016. *Broadening Participation* and *Civil Society and Peacebuilding*. IPTI. For practitioners, see Paffenholz, Thania. 2015. *Broadening Participation in Political Negotiations and Implementation*. Geneva Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies' Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding; Hammargren, Henrik. 2015. *Inclusive Peacebuilding: Recognised but not realised*. Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. December. Lederach, J. P. 1997. Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace Press.

10   McGill, M et al. 2015. Evaluation of Child and Youth Participation in Peacebuilding: Nepal, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and Columbia: Global Partnership for Children & Youth in Peacebuilding. Global Partnership for Children and Youth in Peacebuilding.

11   McGill, M et al. 2015. Evaluation of Child and Youth Participation in Peacebuilding: Nepal, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and Columbia: Global Partnership for Children & Youth in Peacebuilding. Global Partnership for Children and Youth in Peacebuilding.

12   Baseline Census Union Level. Nay Pyi Taw: Government of the Union of Myanmar.

13   It is anticipated that the forthcoming Youth Policy will set out a definition and range for youth. For a discussion on Myanmar's National Youth Policy, see Section 1.6. The broadly accepted Myanmar age range for "youth" falls slightly beyond the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, which defines youth as 18-29 years old. The resolution, however, recognises that variations of the definition may exist in different national and international contexts.

14   UN Security Council. 2015. Security Council Resolution S/RES/2250. UN. 09 December.

15   The current discourse used in the UN, and also seen as a strategic language by the UNSCR 2250 Global Study secretariat, is "sustaining peace". See for instance: The Global Observatory. 2016. Sustaining Peace. The Global Observatory.

16   McGill, M et al. 2015. Evaluation of Child and Youth Participation in Peacebuilding: Nepal, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and Columbia: Global Partnership for Children & Youth in Peacebuilding. Global Partnership for Children and Youth in Peacebuilding.

17   Hammargren, Henrik. 2015. Inclusive Peacebuilding: Recognised but not realised. Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. December. See also Clark, Christina R. 2006. Beyond Borders: Political Marginalisation and Lived Experiences of Congolese Young People in Uganda. Oxford: Oxford University. 20-37; 262-267.

18   Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative. 2016. *Broadening Participation* and *Civil Society and Peacebuilding*. IPTI. For practitioners, see Paffenholz, Thania. 2015. *Broadening Participation in Political Negotiations and Implementation*. Geneva Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies' Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding. Note also Nilsson's 2012 statistical

analysis of peace agreements reached between 1989 and 2004 showed that the involvement of civil society actors reduced the risk of a peace agreement failure by 64%. See Nilsson, Desiree. 2012. Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace. *Empirical and Theoretical Research in International Relations,* 38 (2), 243-266. Wanis St-John, Anthony and Kew, Darren. 2008. Civil society and peace negotiations: Confronting exclusion. *Negotiation Journal*, 13, 1-36.

[19] UN Security Council. 2015. Security Council Resolution S/ RES/2250. UN. 09 December.

[20] The title of UNSCR 2250 is "Maintenance of International Peace and Security", which is a reference to Chapter 7, Article 39 in the Charter of the United Nations. Security Council Resolutions under Chapter 7 are binding. For further guidance on UNSCR 2250, see also United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY). 2015. *A Guide to UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace & Security*. The Hague: UNOY.

[21] For additional information see: United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA). 2014. State of World Population 2014. New York: UNFPA.

[22] See for example, Sommers, March. 2006. Youth and Conflict: A Brief Review of Available Literature. Washington: USAID. The framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) was additionally created in 2006, and published literature has continued to increase since, particularly focused on challenging the negative perceptions towards youth. The year 2010 was celebrated as the International Year of Youth by the United Nations, and the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) – a youth-focused network consisting of UN entities represented at the headquarters level – was formalised in the same year.

[23] Rogan, James. 2016. Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding: A practice note. The Hague: UNOY.

[24] McGill, M et al. 2015. Evaluation of Child and Youth Participation in Peacebuilding: Nepal, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and Columbia: Global Partnership for Children & Youth in Peacebuilding. Global Partnership for Children and Youth in Peacebuilding.

[25] McGill, M et al. 2015. Evaluation of Child and Youth Participation in Peacebuilding: Nepal, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and Columbia: Global Partnership for Children & Youth in Peacebuilding. Global Partnership for Children and Youth in Peacebuilding.

[26] Interview A057. Naing Hong Sar. Chiang Mai. March 2017.

[27] All Burma Students Democratic Front, for more information see the Student and Youth Congress of Burma (SYCB) website.

[28] See U Maung Maung. 1976. Nationalist movements in Burma, 1920-1940: changing patterns of leadership, from Sangha to Laity. Canberra: Australian National University.

[29] Saw Oo, Aung. 1993. Burma's Student Movement: A Concise History. Hmaing Centenary. Third Edition.

[30] While the Saffron Revolution is characterised by the hundreds of monks who marched peacefully, the initiative came from student pro-democracy movements, who began demonstrations and were soon thereafter joined by monks, many of whom were also young. As described on the Burma Center Prague's website: History, Land and People.

[31] For further reading and an introduction to youth movements in Myanmar, see Taylor, Robert. 2009. The State in Myanmar. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

[32] Min Zaw Oo. 2014. Understanding Myanmar's Peace Process: Ceasefire Agreements. Catalyzing Reflections. Yangon: Swisspeace. International Crisis Group. 2016. Myanmar's Peace Process: Getting to a Political Dialogue. Briefing 149. Brussels: International Crisis Group. Sai Wansai. 2017. Jump-starting the Stalled Peace Process. Transnational Institute. May.

[33] International Crisis Group. 2015. Myanmar's Peace Process: A Nationwide Ceasefire Remains Elusive. Brussels: International Crisis Group.

[34] Bilateral ceasefires that included references to "youth" are included in Union-level agreements with National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), United Wa State Army (UWSA) and Pa-O National Liberation Organisation (PNLO).

[35] The PNLO agreement also noted the need "to permit the Pa-O national conference, youth conference, women conference and labour conference in accordance with the law." For more information, see: Burma News International. 2013. Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide. Yangon: Burma News International.

[36] Interview A073. Male youth organisation member. Yangon, March 2017.

[37] Burma News International. 2016. Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide. Yangon: Burma News International.

[38] Aggregated estimates from interviews with five former MPC staff (three male, two female). Interviews A007, A011, A012, A013, A078. Yangon, February-March 2017.

[39] Interview A007. Former MPC staff member. Yangon, February 2017. See also, for example, Myanmar News Agency. 2015. MPC organizes "Youth and Peace" forum. Myanmar News Agency. 28 March. And the Ministry of Information. 2015. Youth and Peace Forum – More

Participation in the peace process. The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

40 Burma News International. 2016. Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide. Yangon: Burma News International.

41 Interviews A011, A012. Former MPC staff. Yangon, February 2017.

42 Odendaal, Andries. 2010. An Architecture for Building Peace at the Local Level: A Comparative Study of Peace Committees. New York: UNDP.

43 Ko Taik, Kaung Htet and Nyein Maung. 2012. Yangon Marks International Day of Peace. The Myanmar Times. 21 September.

44 Lawi Weng and Zen Myat Lahpai. 2013. Laiza Peace Marchers Greeted by Kachins. The Irrawaddy. 20 March.

45 Lawi Weng. 2017. 'Youth Protest Calls for Mon Political Parties to Unite'. The Irrawaddy. 27 January.

46 Personal correspondence with UKSY September 2016. See also Baudey, Matthieu and Oudot. 2015. 'KNPP-backed Conference Hits the Road in Kayah'. The Myanmar Times. 26 November.

47 The thematic focus areas of the MYF include Human Rights and Democracy; Youth and Peace; Youth Policy; Drugs; and Environment, and including the future of youth under the new government.

48 Interview A014. Secretariat Member of National Youth Congress. Yangon, 16 February 2017. Further raised in discussions with other committee members of NYC, January 2017.

49 Aung Kyaw Min. 2015. Youth Centre on Track for Union Day Launch. The Myanmar Times. 30 January. Former chief government negotiator, U Aung Min, was quoted as stating he looked forward to the opening of the youth centre, which would serve as the forum for discussions between young people and the Government about youth-related policy.

50 The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and The Ethnic Armed Organizations. 2015. Chapter 5: Guarantees for Political Dialogue, Section 23: Holding of inclusive political dialogue, "We shall include a reasonable number/ratio of women representatives in the political dialogue process." For a gendered assessment of the NCA's inclusion provisions, see Silbert, Carla and D'Cunha, Jean. 2016. The Nationwide Ceasefire from a Gender Equality and Women's Rights Perspective. The Myanmar Times. June. See also: UN Women Myanmar. 2017. The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in Myanmar: A Gender Equality and Women's Rights Analysis. Yangon: Myanmar.

51 Email correspondence with research team, April 2017.

52 There shall be (700) total participants in the Union Peace Conference comprising: (75) representatives of the government, (75) representatives of Parliament, (150) representatives of the Tatmadaw, (150) representatives of the ethnic armed organisations, (150) representatives of registered political parties, (50) ethnic representatives, and (50) relevant stakeholders. See: *The Framework for Political Dialogue*. 2015. Myanmar.

53 Personal correspondence with youth representative and participant in UPC, 2016.

54 Myanmar Humanitarian Country Team. 2017. Myanmar: Humanitarian Needs and Key Figures. Yangon: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2017. IDP Sites in Rakhine. February. Yangon United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

55 For background on the connotations of this conflicted term, compare for example historian Jacques Leider in an interview with The Irrawaddy in 2012. For more background on inter-communal tensions, see International Crisis Group. 2013. The Dark Side of Transition: Violence Against Muslims in Myanmar. Brussels: International Crisis Group. For southern Rakhine, compare Center for Diversity and National Harmony. 2015. The Report On The Outbreak of Sectarian Violence During September and October 2013 In Thandwe. Center for Diversity and National Harmony. 26 June. For western Bago see Communal Tensions in West Bago Township. Center for Diversity and National Harmony. January 2016.

56 Rakhine Inquiry Commission. 2013. *Final Report of Inquiry Commission on Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State*. Nay Pyi Taw: Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

57 Rakhine Inquiry Commission. 2013. Final Report of Inquiry Commission on Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State. Nay Pyi Taw: Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

58 See the Facebook page of Panzagar. Accessed March 2017.

59 Trautwein, Catherine. 2016. Facebook Racks up 10m Myanmar Users. The Myanmar Times. 13 June. See also Amara Digital Marketing Agency. 2016. Digital Landscape in Myanmar. Yangon: Amara Digital Marketing Agency.

60 With over 30,000 likes, the MyFriend campaign developed #myfriendcampaign and #friendshiphasnoboundaries. See also Vatican Radio. 2015. My Friend Campaign to Counter Myanmar's anti-Rohingya Violence. Vatican Radio. 15 July.

61  For more information on the PeaceTech exchange, visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evVD3Tv1MbA.

62  For more information on Seagull, visit its Facebook page.

63  Myo Lin, Harry. 2014. Fostering Interfaith Trust and 'Right Speech' in Myanmar. The Elders. 18 November.

64  Interview A078. Young male activist and inter-faith youth leader. Yangon, March, 2017.

65  Grizelj, Irena. (Forthcoming). Engaging the Next Generation: Preliminary Study of Youth Inclusion in Myanmar's Peace Negotiations. International Negotiations: A Journal of Theory and Practice (Brill). As stated in personal correspondence with three of the young leaders who attended the meeting. See also Swan Ye Htut. 2015. NLD Chief Meets Youth Leaders. The Myanmar Times. 22 December.

66  Aung Kyaw Min. 2016. Youth Voice Incorporated into 100-day Plan. The Myanmar Times. 24 May. Additional references and insights provided by peer reviewers. For a good summary of NYC's establishment and their role in advocating for a youth policy, see Sone, Thawtar Win Pyae. 2016. Shaping the Nation's Development Through the Power of Youth: Youth at the Heart of the Agenda 2030. The Case for Space. 13 December.

67  Interview A064. Male advisor to youth policy development. Yangon, March 2017.

68  RFA Burmese. 2017. Kayah Youth Boycotts State's Draft Youth Policy. RFA Burmese. 6 January. See also Aung Kyaw Min Swan Ye Htut. 2016. Youth Policy Moves Ahead with Kayah Delegates Absent. The Myanmar Times. 23 December.

69  Burma News International. 2016. Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide. Yangon: Burma News International.

70  The CCNEYC discussed and created committees for the following topics: Nationalities Equality (constitutional amendment); Peace and Reconciliation; Rule of Law and Human Rights; Drug Elimination; Resettlement of IDPs and Refugees; Environment and Natural Resources Protection; and Ethnic Youth Policy. See also Thu Thu Aung and MacGregor, Fiona. 2016. Youth Ethnic Alliance Emerges after Summit. The Myanmar Times. 03 August.

71  Hein, Hwan. 2016. 'Ethnic Youths Not Given Active Role at Conference'. Burma News International. 31 August.

72  Thu Thu Aung and MacGregor, Fiona. 2016. Youth Ethnic Alliance Emerges after Summit. The Myanmar Times. 03 August.

73  Hein, Hwan. 2016. 'Ethnic Youths Not Given Active Role at Conference'. Burma News International. 31 August.

74  Lee, Yanghee. 2016. Peace Talks Must Focus on Rights. The Irrawaddy. 29 August

75  Tin Htet Paing. 2017. Youth Representatives Dissatisfied with Peace Talk with State Counsellor. The Irrawaddy. 2 January.

76  International Crisis Group. 2016. Myanmar's Peace Process: Getting to a Political Dialogue. Briefing 149. Brussels: International Crisis Group

77  Interview A022. National male observer of National Dialogues. Yangon, February 2017.

78  Three Karen armed groups: Karen National Union (KNU), Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), KNU/Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) – Peace Council; Pa-O National Liberation Organisation (PNLO) and Chin National Front (CNF) – prepared and organised a round of National Dialogues respectively from January to March 2017. Interview A067. Yangon, March 2017.

79  The four-person committee was comprised of: U Naing Ngan Lin, Daw Nang Raw, Daw Doi Bu, and U Ye Baw Myo Win.

80  As observed from press releases, which include youth speaking on behalf of the CSO Forum. See Ye Khaung Nyunt. 2016. CSOs Make Their Case: CSOs Come up with Terms of Reference for its Forum. Global New Light of Myanmar. 9 July. And Lun Min Mang. 2016. Committee Formed to Prepare for CSO Peace Forum. The Myanmar Times. 8 November.

81  This is according to a statement released by the Forum as well as data collected by a member of the PSF team, 2017.

82  This is according to a statement released by the Forum as well as data collected by a member of the PSF team, 2017.

83  Aung, Nandar. 2016. Voice of the Youth. Myanmar Times. 18 November.

84  To listen to the album, visit: Youtube page.

85  Digital in Asia. 2017. Myanmar 33 Million Mobile Users, Smartphone Usage 80%. Digital in Asia. 9 January. For a report on gender and mobile phone use, GSMA, Connected Women and LIRNEasia. 2015. Mobile phones, internet, and gender in Myanmar. GSMA, Connected Women and LIRNEasia.

86  For more information on Phandeeyar, visit http://www.phandeeyar.org and for more on the 2015 PeaceTech, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evVD3Tv1MbA

87  Nam, Kee-Yung et al. 2015. Developing Myanmar's Information and Communication Technology Sector toward Inclusive Growth. Manila: Asian Development Bank.

88   Interviews A060, A061, A072, A033. Yangon, Hpa'an and Mytikyina, February-March 2017.

89   Aron, Gabrielle and Gilmore, David. 2017. _Navigating Change: Crisis and Crossroads in the Rakhine State Context_. Yangon: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects. International Crisis Group. 2017. _Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar_. Brussels: International Crisis Group.

90   Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. 2017. _Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine_. Yangon: Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. 2017. _Interim Report and Recommendations_. Yangon: Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

91   Moe Moe Myint. 2017. Muslim Militants Stage Major Attack in Rakhine. _The Irrawaddy_. 25 August.

92   UNHCR. 2017. Bangladesh: UNHCR emergency airlift lands in Dhaka as Rakhine crisis deepens. _UNHCR_. 12 September.

93   For more information, see Youth4Peace. Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security.

94   Zomia. 2017. Post-Graduation Update: Shining Nang, Zomia's First Graduate. _Zomia_. 21 March.

95   Interview A072. Youth political activist. Yangon, March 2017.

96   For regional perspectives on hierarchies, see United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and United Nations Programme on Youth. 2011. Regional Overview: The state of youth in Asia and the Pacific. New York: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and United Nations Programme on Youth.

97   Wells, Tamas. 2016. Myanmar's Other Struggles for Democracy: Narratives and conceptual contest in the Burmese democracy movement. Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 161-162.

98   Interview A043. Female youth activist. Taunggyi, February 2017.

99   Interview A033. Focus Group Discussion, Hpa'an, February 2017.

100  Interview A048. Female youth activist and member of Civil Society Forum for Peace. Myitkyina, February 2017.

101  For example, the US Embassy's Women of Change award was granted to young female leader, Mai Mai, in March 2017.

102  Interview A025. Female political party member. Mawlamyine, February, 2017.

103  The structure of the peace process was cited on 41 occasions as a key barrier across 66 key informant interviews and 14 focus group discussions (the highest citation rate of any barrier from qualitative interviews).

104  Interview A069. NLD member, Youth Executive Committee, Kachin. Myitkyina, March 2017.

105  Under Chapter 1, Basic Principles of the Union. Article 33: "The Union shall strive for youth to have strong and dynamic patriotic spirit, the correct way of thinking and to develop the five noble strengths".

106  Myanmar Article 348. "The Union shall not discriminate any citizen of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, based on race, birth, religion, official position, status, culture, sex and wealth." Constitutional constraints based on age include: Article 59(c). President and Vice Presidents must be at least 45 years old. Article 120(a). Pyithu Hluttaw representatives must be a least 25 years old. Article 152(a) Amyotha Hluttaw representatives must be at least 30 years old. Article 232(a)(i). Union Ministers must be at least 40 years old. Article 234(a)(i). Deputy Union Ministers must be at least 35 years old. See: Government of the Republic of the`Union of Myanmar. 2008. Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Nay Pyi Taw: Ministry of Information. Minimum age thresholds for political candidates in ASEAN include: Malaysia – Lower House: 21 years old, Upper House: 30 years old. Indonesia – President: 35 years old, Representative: 21 years old. Vietnam – National Assembly and the People's Councils: 21 years old. Cambodia – National Assembly: 21 years old. Brunei – Lower House: 21 years old. Philippines – Lower House: 25 years old, Upper House: 35 years old. Laos – Lower House: 21 years old. Singapore – President: 45 years old, Representative: 21 years old.

107  Interview A072. Youth male political activist. Yangon, March 2017.

108  Interview A025. Young female political party member. Mawlamyine, February, 2017.

109  Interview A027. Focus group discussion with MYPO. Mawlamyine, February, 2017.

110  Saw Yan Naing. 2008. Former Youth Members Urge NLD to Prepare for 2010. The Irrawaddy. 17 October.

111  Interview A069. Male political party member. Myitkyina, February 2017.

112  Interview A027. Focus group discussion with MYPO. Mawlamyine, February, 2017.

113  See, for example, Grizelj, Irena. 2017. Youth Must Have a Space in Myanmar's Peace Process. Frontier. 3 March.

114 Haider, Huma. 2011. <u>Help Desk Report: Effects of Political Quotas for Women</u>. London: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre.

115 Interview A063. Young male independent politician. Yangon, March 2017.

116 Interview A009. International advisors on youth participation. Yangon, February 2017.

117 Center for Diversity and National Harmony. 2016. <u>Citizen Voices in Myanmar's Transition</u>. Yangon: Center for Diversity and National Harmony. Quantitative data obtained by request. For more information, see CDNH's <u>research webpage</u> for more information.

118 Human Rights Watch. 2016. <u>Burma: Growing political prisoner population</u>. New York: Human Rights Watch. See also Aung, Thu Thu. <u>49 Kachin Youths Detained After Attending Agriculture Training</u>. The Myanmar Times. 21 October.

119 Personal correspondence with Union of Karenni State Youth. September, 2016.

120 Hein, Ko Soe and Kean, Thomas. 2017. <u>66(d): The Defamation Menace</u>. *Frontier*. 13 January.

121 Article 19. 2016. <u>Myanmar: Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Bill: Legal analysis</u>. London: Article 19.

122 Human Rights Watch. 2016. <u>They Can Arrest You at Any Time: The criminalization of peaceful expression in Burma</u>. New York: Human Rights Watch.

123 Turner, Charlie Michio. 2017. <u>Depoliticizing Student Unions in Myanmar</u>. Mizzima News. 6 February.

124 See Human Rights Watch. 2017. <u>Don't Prosecute Peaceful Speech</u>. Human Rights Watch. 24 January. See also Thu, Khaw and Oo, Yadanar. 2013. <u>Myanmar Activists Held for Marching Against Protest Law</u>. Radio Free Asia. 8 August.

125 Zomia. 2017. <u>Post-Graduation Update: Shining Nang, Zomia's First Graduate</u>. Zomia. 21 March.

126 Interview A075. Pa'O youth organiser. Yangon, March 2017.

127 "There were many young women involved in NYC, but many quit because they can go to NGO/INGO with better salary and better opportunity." Interview A014. Yangon, February 2017.

128 Interview A034. Karen Youth Organisation (KYO) township representative. Hpa'an, February, 2017.

129 Interviews A002, A008, A025, A026, A036, A046, A063. Yangon, Hpa'an, Myitkyina, February–March 2017.

130 Interview A059. International advisor on youth participation. Yangon, February 2017.

131 The issue was cited on 27 occasions as a key barrier across 66 key informant interviews and 14 focus group discussions (the third highest citation rate of barriers in qualitative interviews).

132 For more background on competing identities in Myanmar see Sakhong, Lian H. 2012. *The Dynamics of Sixty Years of Ethnic Armed Conflict in Burma*. Yangon: Burma Centre for Ethnic Studies. See also, Taylor, Robert. 2015. *Refighting Old Battles, Compounding Misconceptions: The politics of ethnicity in Myanmar today.* Singapore: ISEAS.

133 Interview A070. Focus group with Kachin youth. Myitkyina, February 2017.

134 ECPAT International. 2013. <u>Youth Power: A manual on youth-led advocacy</u>. Bangkok: ECPAT International. ACT! 2015. <u>Keys to successful youth-led advocacy.</u> Bangkok: PACT.

135 United Network of Young Peacebuilders. 2008. <u>Youth Advocacy for a Culture of Peace: A reflective guide for action in Europe</u>. The Hague: United Network of Young Peacebuilders.

136 Around 68.6% of young men and 68.9% of young women in Myanmar reported either having no education, primary school or middle school as their highest level of education completed. 25.6% of young men reported completing high school as their highest level of education, compared to 20.8% of young women. Source: Ministry of Immigration and Population. 2015. <u>Myanmar Census: Baseline Census Union Level</u> (Table D-5a). Nay Pyi Taw: Ministry of Immigration and Population.

137 Interview A081. International education expert. Yangon, March 2017.

138 Interview A081. International education expert. Yangon, March 2017.

139 Lopes Cardozo, Mieke et al. 2016. <u>Youth Agency and Peacebuilding: An Analysis of the Role of Formal and Non-Formal Education.`Synthesis report on findings from Myanmar, Pakistan, South Africa and Uganda</u>. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam. See also: Win, Po Po Thaung. 2015. An Overview of Higher Education Reform in Myanmar. Chiang Mai: University Academic Service Centre. Asian Development Bank. 2017. Sector Assessment (Summary): Education. Country Operations Business Plan: Myanmar, 2015-2017. Manila: Asian Development Bank.

140 See Maber, Elizabeth. 2016. <u>Cross-border transitions: navigating conflict and political change through community education practices in Myanmar and the Thai border</u>, Globalisation, Societies and Education, 14(3), 374–389.

[141] Dare, Aoife. 2015. Beyond Access: Refugee students' experiences of Myanmar's state education. Bangkok: Save The Children. Soe, Yi Yi. 2016. Providing Legal Aid to Vulnerable Communities. Norwegian Refugee Council. 15 July. See also Zieger, Leena. 2017. Unrecognized and Forgotten: Refugee Youth in Burma's Transition. The Irrawaddy. 11 March.

[142] See Myanmar Youth Empowerment Opportunities' website for more information. See also the Scholar Institute's Facebook page.

[143]  Personal correspondence with former Myanmar Egress members. See also Cheeseman, Nick and Farrelly, Nicholas (Editors). 2016. Conflict in Myanmar: War, politics, religion. Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute. 117.

[144] Østby, Gudrun and Urdal, Henrik. 2011. Education and Conflict: What the evidence says. Oslo: Centre for the Study of Civil War.

[145] Myanmar Humanitarian Country Team. 2017. Myanmar: Humanitarian Needs and Key Figures. Yangon: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2017. IDP Sites in Rakhine. February. Yangon United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

[146] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2015. Kachin and Northern Shan Protection Concerns and Risk Analysis. Yangon: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

[147] Ministry of Immigration and Population. 2015. Census Report Volume Two (Union): Migration. Nay Pyi Taw: Ministry of Immigration and Population.

[148] International Labour Organisation. 2015. Safe migration knowledge, attitudes and practices in Myanmar. Bangkok: International Labour Organisation.

[149] International Labour Organisation. 2015. Safe migration knowledge, attitudes and practices in Myanmar. Bangkok: International Labour Organisation.

[150] Global Migration Group. 2014. Migration and Youth: Challenges and opportunities. Tokyo: Global Migration Group, 4-5.

[151] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2015. *The Challenge of Synthetic Drugs in East and South-East Asia and Oceania: Trends and Patterns of Amphetamine-type Stimulants and New Psychoactive Substances*. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. See also Ministry of Health. 2014. Myanmar Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Survey and Population Size Estimates among People Who Inject Drugs. 5.

[152] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2015. *The Challenge of Synthetic Drugs in East and South-East Asia and Oceania: Trends and Patterns of Amphetamine-type Stimulants and New Psychoactive Substances*. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

[153] Kramer, Tom et al. 2014. *Bouncing Back: Relapse in the Golden Triangle.* Amsterdam: Transnational Institute.

[154] Problematic drug use is defined by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction as "injecting drug use or long duration or regular use of opioids, cocaine and/or amphetamines".

[155] Interview A017. Young male youth leader. Yangon, February 2017.

[156] For practical guidance that can be tailored to the Myanmar context, see: Youth Power. 2017. Promising Practices in Engaging Youth in Peace and Security and PVE/CVE. ActionAid. 2015. ActionAid's approach to youth programming.

[157] Thackery, Rosemary and Hunter, MaryAnne. 2010. Empowering Youth: Use of Technology in Advocacy to Affect Social Change. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 15(4), 575-591. See also UN Women. 2013. UN Women Ad Reveals Widespread Sexism. UN Women. 21 October.

[158] See the 'Identifying Champions for Youth: A Checklist to Consider' in: Center for the Study of Social Policy. 2007. Engaging Youth in Community Decision Making. Washington: Centre for the Study of Social Policy.

[159] Women for Women International. 2017. Engaging Men as Allies and Partners. Women for Women International.

[160] See United Nations Population Fund Myanmar. 2015. International Youth Day. UNFPA. 12 August.

[161] For example, see the work of Myanmar Minerva Education Center and Institute for Security and Development Policy in Kayin State, where over 30 peace education sessions have been held. For more information, see the Institute for Security and Development Policy's website for its work on Peace Education Training Update – Kayin State, Myanmar.

[162] Participatory decision-making at all levels is identified as a target in Goal 16 'Promote Just, Peaceful and Inclusive Societies' of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

[163] See Clause 6.1 in Search for Common Ground. 2014. Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding. Washington: Search for Common Ground.

[164] See United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. 2017. U-Report Myanmar. Yangon: United Nations Children's Fund.

165 Digital in Asia. 2017. Myanmar 33 Million Mobile Users, Smartphone Usage 80%. Digital in Asia. 9 January. For a report on gender and mobile phone use, GSMA, Connected Women and LIRNEasia. 2015. Mobile phones, internet, and gender in Myanmar. GSMA, Connected Women and LIRNEasia.

166 UNDP. 2013. Issue Brief: Using Technologies for Conflict Prevention. New York City: UNDP. Cottray, Olivier and Larrauri, Helena Puig. 2017. Technology at the service of peace. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 26 April. British Council. 2016. Innovative Peacebuilding in Syria: A scoping study of the strategic use of technology to build peace in the Syrian context. The Build Peace Database gathers information on peacebuilding projects that utilise technology and has compiled a database of these kinds of projects across the world. The database captures four broad types of functions of technology: data, communication, networking and mobilisation. For more information, visit: http://www.buildpeacedatabase.org

167 British Council. 2016. Innovative Peacebuilding in Syria: A scoping study of the strategic use of technology to build peace in the Syrian context. For an example of digital innovations started by the Asia Foundation, see: Acceleration Asian Development: Technology and Innovation at the Asia Foundation.

168 To learn more, visit: https://www.ushahidi.com

169 To see the videos created by Lebanese youth, visit Youtube.

170 To learn more about the initiative, see: Interpeace. 2015. Reopening the Gaale-Maale road: Youths take the lead in resolving a five-year conflict in Puntland. Interpeace. 2016. Five cities in 16 days: Using mobile cinema to nurture youth peacebuilders in Puntland.

171 For more information on the Peace Factory, visit: http://thepeacefactory.org or https://www.facebook.com/the.Peace.Factory/

172 For insights on how other countries have used technology in peacebuilding, see: Larrauri, Helena Puig. 2014. How technology can shape the future of peacebuilding at the local level. Insight on Conflict. 6 June. Firchow et al. 2017. PeaceTech: The Liminal Spaces of Digital Technology in Peacebuilding. International Studies Perspectives, 18(1), 4-42.

173 Gaskell. 2016. ICTs & EU Civilian Peacebuilding: Reflections on Good Practices, Opportunities, and Challenges. London School of Economics and Build Up

174 British Council. 2016. Innovative Peacebuilding in Syria: A scoping study of the strategic use of technology to build peace in the Syrian context.

175 Gaskell. 2016. ICTs & EU Civilian Peacebuilding: Reflections on Good Practices, Opportunities, and Challenges. London School of Economics and Build Up

176 For more information on the Digital Principles for Development, see: http://digitalprinciples.org. These principles were designed to inform rather than prescribe approaches to good practice in technology-enabled progammes. Guidance is also available on the application of the Digital Principles for Development – see: http://digitalprinciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/mSTAR-Principles_Report-v6.pdf

177 Laurrauri, Puig H. and Kahl, Anne. 2013. Technology for Peacebuilding. Stability International Journal of Security and Development, 2(3), 1-15.

178 Interview A063. Young male youth leader. Yangon, February 2017.

179 Comments from YPS Discussion Paper Validation Workshop held in Yangon, March 2017

180 McGill, M et al. 2015. Evaluation of Child and Youth Participation in Peacebuilding: Nepal, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and Columbia: Global Partnership for Children & Youth in Peacebuilding. Global Partnership for Children and Youth in Peacebuilding.

181 Paung Sie Facility. 2016. The Women are Ready: an opportunity to transform peace in Myanmar. Yangon: Paung Sie Facility.

182 See Promising Practices in Engaging Youth in Peace and Security and PVE/CVE.

183 See Principle 7.1 in Search for Common Ground. 2014. Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding. Washington: Search for Common Ground.

184 Interview A009. Yangon. 8 February 2017.

185 Trainings and institutional development should be assessed and developed in line with the type, mission, vision and needs of specific youth initiatives or organisations.

186 For more information on the Common Space Initiative in Myanmar, see Euro-Burma Office. 2015 Annual Report. Belgium: Euro-Burma Office, 10.

187 Personal correspondence with young male member and supporting organiser of MYF, September 2016.

188 For international examples see Salam Shabab (Peace Youth), an Iraqi reality TV series that showcased examples of youth in peacebuilding roles on television and on social media, informing and inspiring other youth to take up similar roles in their communities. See further examples in Rogan, James. 2016. Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding: A Practice Note. The Hague: UNOY, 52.

[189] See the work of Myanmar Art Social Project via its webpage.

[190] Interview with Dr Ney Win. Yangon, March 2017.

[191] Pruitt, Lesley. 2013. Youth Peacebuilding: Music, Gender, and Change. New York: State University of New York Press.

[192] Prelis, Saji. 2016. Youth Engagement in Peacebuilding. In, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The World Youth Report on Civic Engagement. New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 129-137. "One related theory of change holds that at the community level, the presence of media programming and social media will create a peacebuilding constituency that extends beyond the confines of a viewer-listener relationship. As the user base increases, conversation and dialogue can also grow at the societal level."

[193] In Nepal, youth engagement within communities was supported through establishing the non-political "Association of Youth Organisations" in 2005; which brought together youth organisations to provide a common platform for collaboration, cooperation and joint actions. These clubs, networks, and associations have a mixed focus but all provide a space for youth participation and an outlet for expression and activity.

[194] World Vision. 2013. A Framework for Youth Engagement in Urban Contexts. Cyprus: World Vision.

[195] KOFF. 2016. Art Initiatives in Fragile and Conflict Affected Regions.

[196] USIP. 2015. State of the art: the arts and peacebuilding – an emerging approach. USIP Insights.

[197] Shank, Michael and Schirch, Lisa. 2008. Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding. *Peace and Change: A Journal of Peace Research*, 33 (2). USIP. 2015. State of the art: the arts and peacebuilding – an emerging approach. *USIP Insights.*

[198] To learn about Omladinska Organizacija Svitac, see: Reeves, Monica. 2017. Peacebuilding Takes Many Shapes: Using the Arts to Foster Intercultural Dialogue in Brčko District. Balkan Diskurs. 26 July.

[199] Office of Secretary General's Envoy on Youth. 2017. Art serves as a meeting point for youth affected by conflict.

[200] Swisspeace. 2015. Art and Peacebuilding. Koff Newsletter.

[201] Boal, Augusto.1979. Theater of the Oppressed. New York: Theater Communications Group. Dolan, J. 2005. Utopia in performance: finding hope at the theater. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. Watkins, Mary and Schulman, Helene. 2008. Toward Psychologies of Liberation. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

[202] Youth Power. 2017. Promising Practices in Engaging Youth in Peace and Security and PVE/CVE.

[203] USIP. 2015. State of the art: the arts and peacebuilding – an emerging approach. USIP Insights.

[204] For a range of ideas related to youth programing and global good practice from other countries, see Promising Practices in Engaging Youth in Peace and Security and PVE/CVE.

[205] United Nations. 2010. Report of the Secretary General on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding. A/65/354–S/2010/466. Tracking Progress: 7 Point Action Plan. To learn about the UN Peacebuilding Fund's earmarking approach, visit: http://www.unpbf.org/news/pbf-gender-promotion-initiative/

[206] Interview A006. Senior advisor on youth participation. Yangon, February 2017.

[207] See Secretary of State for Youth and Peace. 2007. National Youth Policy of Timor-Leste. Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

[208] For ideas and guidance on youth policy implementation, see: Holtom et a. 2016. Key Issues in Developing and Implementing Youth Policy Strategic Documents. http://www.youthpower.org/resources/youth-political-participation-programming-guide-ndi

[209] Personal correspondence with young leader, founder of Myanmar Youth Capacity Building Network (MYCBN), October 2015.

[210] Haider, Huma. 2011. Help Desk Report: Effects of Political Quotas for Women. London: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre. Paung Sie Facility. 2016. The Women are Ready: an opportunity to transform peace in Myanmar. Yangon: Paung Sie Facility.

[211] This is particularly true in the case of reserved seats which guarantee a minimum level of youth representation in Parliament, and legislated quotas that require that all parties field a certain percentage of young candidates. See Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2016. Youth Participation in National Parliaments. Brussels: Inter-Parliamentary Union. For an introductory summary of global examples on how youth participation in political decision-making can be supported, refer to United Nations Development Programme. 2015. Youth Political Participation and Decision-making. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

[212] See, for example, Mote Oo Education resources on Active Citizenship and Democracy.

[213] Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2014. Youth Participation in National Parliaments. Geneva: IPU. Lessons can also be drawn from the evidence based on women's caucuses, see: Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2013. Guidelines for Women's

Caucuses. Geneva: IPU. IDEA. 2010.One size does not fit all: Lessons Learned from Legisaltive Gender Commissions and Caucuses. Stockholm: IDEA.

[214] Berghof Foundation. 2017. National Dialogue Handbook: A Guide for Practitioners. Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 91.

[215] Berghof Foundation. 2017. National Dialogue Handbook: A Guide for Practitioners. Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 91. See also Alwazir, Atiaf Zaid. 2013. Yemen's Independent Youth and Their Role in the National Dialogue Conference. Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 1-10.

[216] Alwazir, Atiaf Zaid. 2013. Yemen's Independent Youth and Their Role in the National Dialogue Conference. Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

[217] Al-Akhali, Rafat. 2014. What Yemen's Youth Got Out of the National Dialogue Conference. Atlantic Council. 7 April.

[218] Norman, Jane. 2001. Building Effective Youth-Adult Partnerships. Transitions: The Rights. Respect. Responsibility Campaign. 14(1).

[219] Hart, Roger. 1992. *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre. See also Roger Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation tool, from his book: Hart, Roger. 1997. *Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens In Community Development And Environmental Care.* Michigan: The University of Michigan. The ladder shows young people-initiated, shared decision-making with adults as the top form of young people's participation, to young people's manipulation and tokenism at the bottom. The ladder is somewhat controversial for many people working with and around young people: many believe shared decision-making is most beneficial to both young people and adults, while others believe that young people are most empowered when they are making decisions without the influence of adults. The idea is to understand which level of participation is the most meaningful for different contexts.

[220] As described: United Nations Development Programme. 2013. Enhancing Youth Political Participation throughout the Electoral Cycle: A Good Practice Guide. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

[221] Interviews A015, A038, A043, A055, A057. Yangon, Hpa'an and Myitkyina, February-March 2017. See also Human Rights Watch. 2016. *They Can Arrest You at Any Time: The Criminalization of Peaceful Expression in Burma*. New York: Human Rights Watch. Hein, Ko Soe and Kean, Thomas. 2017. '66(d): The Defamation Menace'. *Frontier*. 13 January.

[222] Ministry of Transport and Communication. 2013. The Telecommunications Law (The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No. 31, 2013). Ministry of Transport and Communication, Government of the Union of Myanmar. 1908. The Unlawful Associations Act (India Act XIV). Government of the Union of Myanmar. 2011. The Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No. 15/2011). Government of the Union of Myanmar.

International Standards and Laws related to freedom of opinion and expression can be found on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) website. It would also fulfil the commitment made by Myanmar during its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) before the UN Human Rights Council on November 6, 2015, to work to ensure that freedom of opinion and expression are protected and that those who exercise these basic rights not be subject to reprisals. See also the Burma-Myanmar UPR Forum report on the 2nd Cycle Universal Periodic Review Myanmar UPR 2015 for further recommendations and information.

[223] See, for example, the work of the Drug Policy Advocacy Group – Myanmar. The Transnational Institute has published several key documents on Drug Policy in Myanmar, of which a useful starting point is: Transnational Institute. 2017. Addressing drug problems in Myanmar: 5 key interventions that can make a difference. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute. This policy document is also available in Myanmar.

[224] The State Law and Order Restoration Council. 1993. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law No 1/93. Myanmar: The State Law and Order Restoration Council.

[225] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2007. Handbook of basic principles and promising practices on Alternatives to Imprisonment. Vienna: United Nations, 25-41. See these sites for more information: http://preventionhub.org/en/resource-finder and http://idpc.net/

[226] Gooch, Liz. 2016. Poppylands: Understanding Myanmar's Addiction to Drug Heroin. Al Jazeera. 20 June.

[227] United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/196, United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development, A/RES/68/196 (11 February 2014). According to the Southeast Asia Opium Survey (2015), non-opium producing households earned an average yearly income of USD 1,990, while opium-producing households earned on average USD 520 more per year. See: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2015. Southeast Asia Opium Survey: Lao PDR, Myanmar. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. See also Gooch, Liz. 2016. Poppylands: Understanding Myanmar's Addiction to Drug Heroin. Al Jazeera. 20 June.Economist. 2014. Myanmar and Drugs: Getting Higher. The Economist. 12

April. One of the main criticisms addressed to the KIO and other stakeholders in Kachin, including the Pat Ja San, is the action to eradicate poppy fields without the provision of alternative livelihoods strategy for farmers. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Mae Fah Luang Foundation have, however, supported alternative development projects in Shan State. Myanmar was one of the first countries in the Southeast Asian Region to sign the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, and has signed onto the Mekong Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Drug Control. For a brief overview, see the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's history in Myanmar on its website.

228  See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2015. International Standards on Drug Use Prevention. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. See also a webpage which compiles over 100 resources from across the world on substance use and young people called Prevention Hub, which is managed by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in collaboration with the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. Another helpful resource guide is put together by the International Drug Policy Consortium, see: International Drug Policy Consortium. 2017. Policy Guide (3rd Edition). London: International Drug Policy Consortium.

229  Gooch, Liz. 2016. Poppylands: Understanding Myanmar's Addiction to Drug Heroin. Al Jazeera. 20 June.

230  See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. 2016. Youth and Education. Paris: UNESCO. See also United Nations Children's Fund. 2011. The Role of Education in Peacebuilding: Literature review. New York: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

231  The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. 2016. National Education Strategic Plan 2016-2021. Nay Pyi Taw: Ministry of Education. See also Japan International Cooperation Agency. 2014. Signing Record of Discussions (RD) on the Project for Curriculum Reform at Primary Level of Basic Education in Myanmar. Japan International Cooperation Agency. January 31. See also Asian Development Bank. 2013. Republic of the Union of Myanmar: Support for Education Sector Planning. Manila: Asian Development Bank.

232  To learn more about SDG 4, Quality Education, read "Why It Matters".

233  See United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. 2013. Evaluation of UNICEF's Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme (PBEA). New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

234  The Burma Link, in collaboration with the Karen Student and Youth Union recently made a documentary – available in English and Burmese – on the importance of opportunities to continue higher education among Myanmar's refugee and IDP youth.

235  For an overview of the Equipping Youth for Employment Project in Myanmar, see the Asian Development Bank website. For a comprehensive analysis of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector in Myanmar, see: Milio, Simona et al. 2014. Assessment study of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Myanmar. Bangkok: International Labour Organisation.

236  See the TVET Myanmar Directory compiled by TVET Myanmar. The development of this database is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and German Development Cooperation.

237  As stated in the Ministry of Information. 2016. Promotion of Technical and Vocational Education and Training. Ministry of Information. 2 August. "At the opening ceremony of the TVET Forum held in the Myanmar Convention Centre (2), Nay Pyi Taw, from 15 to 16 July 2016, the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, in her opening speech said that the role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training should not be looked upon as being lesser than that of the Higher Education."

238  Synergos. 2009. Microfinance and Peacebuilding: Exploring New Approaches in`Colombia. New York: Synergos.

239  UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. (2013). Youth Matters: Equipping vulnerable young people with literacy and life skills.

240  UNEVOC. 2009. Linking Vocational Training with the Enterprises - Asian Perspectives. Bonn: UNEVOC. UNESCO's International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC) has several resources to draw on to consider how promising practices can be tailored to the Myanmar context: http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php

241  Myanmar Association of Public Policy. 2014. Youth Employment in Yangon. Yangon: Myanmar Association of Public Policy.

242  Synergos. 2009. Microfinance and Peacebuilding: Exploring New Approaches in`Colombia. New York: Synergos.

243  Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, Central Statistical Organisation, in collaboration with International Labour Organisation. 2015. Myanmar labor force, child labor and school to work transition survey. Nay Pyi Taw: Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population.

244  For example, Interview A033. Young male civil society member. Hpa'an, February 2017.

245 Government of the Union of Myanmar. 2016. Myanmar Investment Law, The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No. 40/2016. Nay Pyi Taw: Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.

246 For more on youth and jobs, see: Gough, Katherine. 2016. Reading Pack: Youth and Jobs. London: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre. Idris, Iffat. (2016). Youth unemployment and violence: Rapid literature review. London: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre.

247 Bourhrous, Amal and Smith, Sarah. 2017. *Strengthening Youth Engagement in Post-Jasmine Revolution Tunisia*. Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjold Foundation.

248 See Collier, Paul. 2004. Development and Conflict. Oxford: Oxford University Press. See also the UN: Sustainable Development Goals website.

249 See MercyCorps. 2011. Peacebuilding Through Economic Development. Portland: MercyCorps.

250 Search for Common Ground. 2014. Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding. Washington: Search for Common Ground.

251 Higgins, Sean et al. 2016. The Role of Education in Peacebuilding. Country Report: Myanmar. Amsterdam: The Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding/ University of Amsterdam.

252 For practical guidance on how to integrate youth analysis into programme design, see: Youth Power. 2017. Promising Practices in Engaging Youth in Peace and Security and PVE/CVE. ActionAid. 2015. ActionAid's approach to youth programming.

253 The inter-agency Working Group on Youth and Peacebuilding recently completed a global mapping of youth organisations and youth initiatives. The survey framework can be tailored and adapted to the Myanmar context.

254 United Nations. 2000. Annex 2 to track implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. New York: United Nations.

255 Myrttinen, Henri et al. 2014. Rethinking Gender in Peacebuilding. London: International Alert. See also Farr, Vanessa. 2003. Gender Awareness in Research and Policy Making. African Security Review, 12(1), 116-119.

256 Paung Sie Facility. 2016. The Women are Ready: an opportunity to transform peace in Myanmar. Yangon: Paung Sie Facility.

257 For more information on Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's strategic priorities, including a focus on youth engagement, see: Strategy for Australia's Aid Investments in Education 2015-2020. For information on the UK Government's approach to young people, see: DFID's Youth Agenda: putting young people at the heart of development.

UKaid
from the British people

SWEDEN

Australian Aid