

The Role of CSOs

in the

Myanmar Peace Process

Summary Report on the
17th May Follow-Up
Discussion and Workshop

Contents

Introduction	3
Discussion Agenda and Process	4
Key Findings of the discussions	5
Part-1: Discussion Points relating to the structure of the peace process	7
1.1. Discussion points relating to the UPC	7
1.2. Discussion points relating to the Technical Team of Track 1 Peace process	7
1.3. Discussion points relating to the JMC	8
1.4. Discussion points relating the need of the flow of information between Track 1,2 and 3	9
Part -2: Discussion points relating to CSOs	10
2.1. The roles of CSOs in the official or the mainstream peace process	10
2.2 Discussion points relating to UCCPF and CSFoP	10
2.3. Discussion points relating to collaboration and cohesion among CSOs	11
2.4. Discussion points relating to collaborations with militias	11
Part – 3: Discussion points relating to Donors	12
3.1. Discussion points relating to current situation of the donors in Myanmar	12
3.2. Discussion points relating to the impacts donors have on CSOs	12
Part 4: Conflict Drivers	13
Part 5: Recommendations	14
5.1. Recommendations by the CSOs on the structure of the peace process	14
5.2. Recommendations by the CSOs on the CSOs themselves	15
5.3. Recommendations by the CSOs for Donors	16
Conclusion	18
Annex 1	19
Annex 2	23

Introduction

On May 16-17, researchers from the Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation and the Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative held a workshop for 85 civil society and donor organizations engaged in peacebuilding from all over Myanmar, with 112 participants. Representatives of the media were also present, and some sessions were broadcast on DVB TV News.

On the first day, workshop participants discussed the findings of a year-long research project mapping and evaluating the peacebuilding activities of CSOs. This project drew on interviews with representatives of more than 120 civil society organizations, political parties, Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs), media organizations, and members of government and the bureaucracy. The research project aimed to identify:

- the drivers of conflict in Myanmar,
- the civil society actors involved in peacebuilding in Myanmar,
- the types of peacebuilding activities performed by these CSOs, and to classify these activities into types,
- the contributions of these activities to official and unofficial peacebuilding,
- as well as any factors enabling and constraining civil society peacebuilding.

On the second day, a workshop was held with only Myanmar CSOs. Sessions on the second day aimed at giving a space for CSOs to discuss the implications of the findings of the report on the future civil society peace agenda and the best way for civil society to contribute to the Myanmar Peace process.

This report summarizes the discussion of the second day (17th May) of the workshop, including civil society's own recommendations directed to the peace process stakeholders (EAOs, government, political parties, and the Tatmadaw), to civil society, and to the donor community.

Discussion Agenda and Process

The discussion points and recommendations rely on a division of the peace process into tracks 1, 1.5, 2 and 3 (see figure 1). Track 1 refers to the main negotiation table, where the Myanmar executive (including the Government, the Tatmadaw – which has a constitutionally guaranteed executive powers – and the parliament or Hluttaw) negotiates with the representatives of Myanmar’s EAOs and political parties. In the current Myanmar peace process, track 1.5 formats include civil society representatives acting as observers to the peace negotiations. Track 2 refers to dialogue, consultation and/or negotiation between citizens or civilian members of these adversarial groups, and is often associated with civil society initiatives. In the current Myanmar peace process, track 2 encompasses the broad program of National Dialogues and their attendant consultations. Track 3 encompasses the ongoing peacebuilding by civil society.

Civil society participants then divided into thematic groups based on their preference and interest. These groups were:

- Group 1. Structure of the peace process
- Group 2. Relevance of functions and activities to conflict needs
- Group 3. Cohesion and cooperation of civil society
- Group 4. Donor engagement

EMREF researchers acted as facilitators in each discussion group. To make the suggestions and discussions points more comprehensive and inclusive, each group had the opportunity to present their discussion points and recommendations to other 3 groups for feedback, and the groups tried to reach a consensus.

Key Findings of the discussions

Group 1: Structure of the peace process

- The role of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) has been extended beyond the supporting role provided for in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and the Framework for Political Dialogue; it is acting with decision-making authority.
- During UPC sessions, representatives that belong to the same sector lack the time to coordinate, negotiate and discuss with each other
- There technical team in the Track 1 peace process is not free and independent.
- The technical team of the UPC is under-resourced, and is not being given adequate time to discuss and coordinate.
- The structure of the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) does not reflect “joint leadership”: the Tatmadaw has the role of Chair.
- The civilian representatives of the JMC are not “true” civilian representatives, as they have been chosen for their closeness to the armed parties in the negotiations.
- There is an information gap between Track 1 and Track 3. Civil society actors are unaware of what is going on in the mainstream peace process.
- Topics delegated by the UPDJC for discussion in national dialogues are inappropriate and not coherent (issues are being split up among different forums).
- There is a breakdown of the relationship between track 1 and track 2. Track 2 is supposed to send recommendations to track 1, but they don't know who receives these recommendations and whether (and how) the recommendations are considered. There is no mechanism for those away from track 1 to be able to monitor the decision makers. There is also a breakdown in dissemination away from the table. The public is not informed.
- Participants noted that 91% of the public doesn't consider the peace process a high priority, according to a recent study highlighted on day 1 of the workshop . This is cause for concern.
- Participants stressed the importance of shared values among CSOs.
- Participants felt that conflict drivers were not the only problem we need to understand.

Group 3. Cohesion and cooperation of civil society

- There is a need for the Union Committee of the CSO Peace Forum (UCCPF) and Civil Society Forum for Peace (CSFoP) to recognize the each other's contributions.
- The lack of shared values among CSOs leads to weak cohesion and collaboration among CSOs.
- The role of donors' policies not only on weakens the cohesion among the Yangon-based CSOs and CSOs from other States and Regions but also among Yangon based CSOs.
- There are difficulties for CSOs in approaching militias for cooperative work. Militia are perceived to be subsidiary to the Tatmadaw (and in some cases EAOs), and hence not approachable directly.

Group 4. Donor engagement:

- There is an absence of CSO representatives on the boards of funding bodies (both national and international).
- Donors have limited knowledge about the states and regions outside of Yangon, and are not conducting adequate research projects to gain insights about the states and regions.
- Donors are focused on the official peace process and do not grant funds to peace related activities that are outside of tracks 1 and 2.
- Participants described several instances in which they felt donors had stolen ideas from their unsuccessful grant applications and fed them into other grants. Representatives from one CSO described an experience they had where they collaborated closely with a donor to develop a project proposal, but the donor cancelled the grant at the last minute and instead funded another CSO, incorporating some of the novel ideas from the earlier discussions.

Part-1

Discussion Points relating to the structure of the peace process

1.1. Discussion points relating to the UPC

According to one participant, the whole peace architecture is not on the right track, not just its compartments.

“There is no subsequent plan written after signing the NCA. So, it is like we all just tried to live together in a house that is still under construction. So, as times goes by, the roof starts to leak, and the floor starts to sink, but we still don’t have time to fix it.”

The UPDJC has the authority to decide the agenda of discussion topics for the UPC. UPDJC is comprised of representatives from the government (Tatmadaw, government and Hluttaw) political parties holding seats in the national parliament, and from EAOs. The role provided for the UPDJC in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and the Framework for Political Dialogue, according to the workshop participants, is limited to supporting the peace negotiations. In practice, the UPDJC has acquired decision making power. Participants objected to the peace secretariat acting with decision making power. In addition, Tatmadaw has an influence over other actors in the decision-making process. One participant said that “Tatmadaw being a part of UPDJC is indeed a form of monopolization.”

On the other hand, the unity among the other remaining actors is apparently weaker than that among Tatmadaw’s representatives. The EAOs are diverse (in a sense of representing different ethnic groups, as well as different political perspectives). Thus, the needs and wants of each EAO differ, as the hardships faced are different, making their cumulative opinions not as coherent as Tatmadaw’s.

According to one participant

“Tatmadaw comes as “one” but there are differences among ethnic people. So, their wants will be higher in number and will be different. There is a need for considering a way these different advocacies shall be negotiated.”

Another participant added that the representatives that belong to the same sector lack the time to negotiate and discuss with each other by saying that “During the UPC, if Tatmadaw says No, the EAOs do not have enough time to discuss among each other on what to say next.” Participants noted that because of the factors stated above, the peace process is stagnant or sluggish.

1.2. Discussion points relating to the Technical Team of Track 1 Peace process

The structure of the technical team members of the Track 1 peace process does not reflect this technical role. According to the participants, the technical persons who are already part of the Track 1 peace process are chosen by the UPC stakeholders –Government actors (Tatmadaw, Government, Hluttaw), Political parties and EAOs – from among their delegations. This kind of representation acts as a weakness in the structure as the suggestions these people give might be suggestions that are beneficial only to the stakeholders who selected them.

The other weakness is the capacity of these technical persons. In addition to being the representative technical persons of the stakeholders, some of these people also lack technical capacity appropriate to the needs of the peace process. This might lead to the UPC suffering from the consequence of ineffective suggestions; diverting the UPC from its ultimate goals by excessively politicizing the

dialogues. According to one participant,

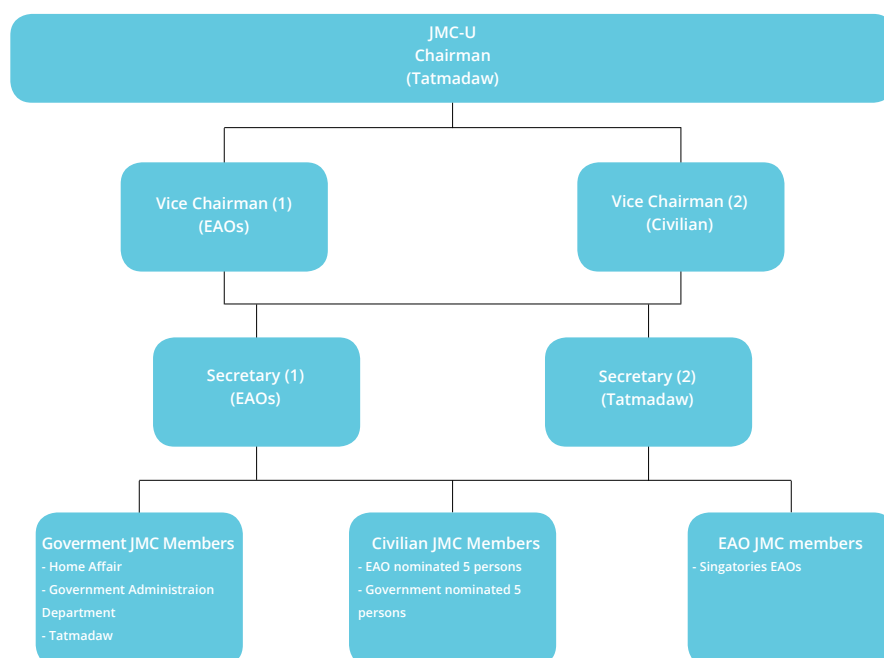
“The technical persons from respective stakeholders should consider mediating the debate from the technical person point of view. In reality, these technical persons are trying to just amend the phrases or vocabulary usages of the vocabularies, used in discussion points, at hand rather than critically and professionally giving suggestions from the technical persons’ point of view.”

In addition to this, these technical representatives do not have separate space for having discussions among each other privately. Finally, there is an absence of free and independent technical team in the Track1- official or mainstream peace process.

1.3. Discussion points relating to the JMC

In addition to the negotiation bodies, the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) established the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) to monitor the ceasefire component of the agreement. The JMC operates at three levels: Union, State and Local.

Figure 2 JMC Union level organizational structure:



The first structural flaw that the participants of the workshop highlighted is the form of leadership of the JMC. Essentially, the JMC's leadership structure is not a joint leadership, insofar as Tatmadaw alone has final decision-making power. Unlike at the Union level, State-level JMC committees have no parallel civilian secretaries. Additionally, state level JMC Committees have no representation of the Government, only the Tatmadaw. According to one of the participants,

“When the JMC was created, a representative from Tatmadaw became the chairman, when in fact people from the respective states and regions should be eligible for the role. If there is a JMC in the regional level, the regional prime minister should be the chairman. Instead, Tatmadaw has assumed the presidential role. Thus, the role of the regional government vanished under this JMC structure. This is the main weakness of it.”

In addition, the JMC does not exist in all states and regions of the country. The offices of the JMC can be found only in Shan State, Bago Region, Karen State, Tanintharyi Region and Mon region. Participants also objected that “civilian” members/representatives of both union and state level JMC structures are elected by Tatmadaw and EAOs. Thus, the participants feel that the civilian members of the JMC are not true civilians. According to one participant,

“They say there are EAO, Government and the civilian representatives in the [JMC] structure. If we just superficially look at it, this is true. But when we look at the civilian representatives, they were not elected by the CSOs. Instead, they were elected by the other two... There is a problem with choosing only the people that they trust when it comes to advocacy... We can’t call them civilians as their opinions become biased towards the stakeholders that elected them.”

1.4. Discussion points relating the need of the flow of information between Track 1,2 and 3

Currently, Track 3 actors are not aware of the content of discussions at Track 1 level. In addition, Track 3 actors do not know what proposals and/or suggestions are being advocated from Track 2 to Track 1. Essentially, there is an information gap between Track 1 and Track 3. Track 3 actors are closest to the civilians of the country and the breakdown in the flow of information from Track 1 to Track 3 distances civilians from the official/mainstream peace process. Mon State is an exception to this scenario. One of the participants of Mon State reported that there is close cooperation between the Track 1 and Track 3 actors in the Mon State. The EAOs and the political parties that are part of the Track 1 peace process have a culture of sharing information with Mon state CSOs, through public consultations, which also allow Mon State CSOs to express their views to the Track 1 actors.

Participants also felt that CSOs enjoyed a very limited role in the mainstream peace process, including the absence of an opportunity for the UCCPF to present their proposals directly to the UPDJC. Participants also felt that the discussions in the National Dialogues are not always coherent, as issue areas are being split among different consultation forums (the forums are explained immediately below in section 2.1). Participants observed that the UPDJC has delegated discussion of development issues to the (union and state/region-level) ethnic dialogues, and delegated discussion of financial planning to the CSO peace forum (UCCPF and state/region-level). Participants felt these issues should properly be discussed in the same forum.

Part -2

Discussion points relating to CSOs

2.1. The roles of CSOs in the official or the mainstream peace process

The primary mechanisms for the inclusion of public opinion in the peace process are a range of official consultation forums, known as National Dialogues: these are Regional Dialogues, Ethnic-Based Dialogues, and Issue-Based Dialogues. CSOs can participate in the three types of National Dialogues: Regional Dialogues, Ethnic-Based Dialogues, and Issue-Based Dialogues. The Issue-Based National Dialogues are also known as Civil Society Peace Forums. The Issue-Based National Dialogues are projected to take place across Myanmar's states and regions, as well as at the Union level. The Union level issue-based/CSO forum is known as the Union-level Committee for the CSO Peace Forum (UCCPF).

The National Dialogues are tightly controlled by the UPDJC, which has the power to authorize them and is charged with integrating the results of these dialogues into the track 1 peace process, and by the Tatmadaw.

Participants reported they still want be part of this flawed peace process structure. One participant said, "This is one of the ways out for the country, by means of collaboration." The good thing among the bad things is that as the UCCPF is an official platform all the advocacy done through this platform will inevitably become official. According to one participant,

"We will have to continue using the space that we are given. UCCPF has to continue its role in Track 2. While staying inside this official platform, we have to push for the framework changes and we will also give pressure from the outside."

2.2 Discussion points relating to UCCPF and CSFoP

In addition to the UCCPF, the major forum through which civil society has been able to influence the track 1 peace process has been the Civil Society Forum for Peace (CSFoP). CSFoP was founded by the Nyein (Shalom) Foundation in 2012, to act as a forum for civil society organizations to coordinate their activities in relation to the peace process, as well as to advocate for certain issues of importance to civil society.

The main outputs of CSFoP meeting are open letters invariably addressed to the following stakeholders: Government-State Counsellor's Office: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; B) Military- the Commander in Chief: General Min Aung Hlaing; C) Signatory EAOs, specifically the Peace Process Steering Committee (PPSC) Chairman, General Mu Htu Say Paw; and D) Non-signatories- Team leader of the Delegation for Political Negotiation (DPN). Open letters may also have other recipients, depending on the content of the letter. Workshop participants noted that CSFoP is better regarded and trusted by CSOs working in the ethnic areas and on ethnic issues than UCCPF.

Table 1. Differences between UCCPF and CSFoP

	UCCPF	CSFoP
Relation to track 1 process	Formal consultation/dialogue forum. UPDJC committees are tasked with receiving results of UCCPF forums.	Informal forum; results are communicated through open letters and other forms of advocacy.
Agenda	<p>Officially set by UPDJC (although UCCPF members have tried to contest the limitations of this agenda).</p> <p>So far, agenda is limited to contributing opinions on three subtopics: (1) resettlement, rehabilitation and social development; (2) the federal economy; and (3) the natural environment and disaster prevention.</p>	Flexible agenda.

2.3. Discussion points relating to collaboration and cohesion among CSOs

Participants observed CSOs themselves have conflicting views and participants acknowledge that they are not cohesive. They also observed that the inclusion of CSOs in track 1 did not reflect the divisions in civil society, as CSOs are expected to act as one unit. Workshop participants also emphasized the role of donors in exacerbating tensions and divisions, not only between Yangon and ethnic CSOs, but also among Yangon-based CSOs.

2.4. Discussion points relating to collaborations with militias

Militias have been a feature of Myanmar’s conflict landscape since the origins of the conflict in 1948. Militia groups are armed groups that are subordinate to the Tatmadaw or EAOs (usually the Tatmadaw). Participants reported their difficulties approaching the militia groups affiliated with the Tatmadaw, as these militia groups are not perceived as independent actors. Participants also reported the difficulty with working with militia groups affiliated to non-signatory EAOs, because this exposes civil society to the risk of prosecution under the Unlawful Association Act, which criminalizes interaction with proscribed groups.

Part – 3

Discussion points relating to Donors

3.1. Discussion points relating to current situation of the donors in Myanmar

According to the workshop participants, donors do not have CSO representatives on their board or sitting as part of committees apportioning grants. Relatedly, CSO participants pointed out that donors also have a limited understanding of the conflict situation in the states and regions. The impact of this lack of staff capacity is that donor programming is not sufficiently conflict sensitive. Participants also reported that donors are excessively focused on the official (track 1) peace process.

Participants also noted that registered CSOs are better favoured by donors as they have an official record of their activities. Unregistered CSOs are more likely to be found in the ethnic areas, as working with EAOs that have not signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) is only possible for unregistered CSOs.

One important source of grievance was the experience reported by some CSOs whereby they felt donors had stolen ideas from their unsuccessful grant applications and fed them into other projects (for which grants were received by other CSOs). Representatives from one CSO described an experience where they collaborated closely with a donor to develop a project proposal, but the donor cancelled the grant at the last minute and instead funded another CSO, incorporating some of the novel ideas from the earlier discussions.

3.2. Discussion points relating to the impacts donors have on CSOs

CSO participants reported that donor project requirements are unnecessarily strict, and change too often for CSOs to become familiar with them. As donor priorities (and grant requirements) change too often, CSOs are not able to properly develop theories of change-based programming that has time to take effect. Participants reported their perception that proposals that were submitted based on old donor requirement policies are rejected as new policies have been enacted by the time the proposal is reviewed.

According to the one participant:

“There is a need for a change of methodology in undertaking the activities of non-local based CSOs. There is need for a change in the funding approval change as well. Donors should please do a survey on the current issues of the area they plan to do their peace related activities. Local researchers should undertake these surveys.”

Part 4

Conflict Drivers

The research project identified five main drivers of the conflict in Myanmar, based on interviews with civil society, media, political parties, and EAOs. These conflict drivers are given in Table 2.

Table 2 Key identified conflict drivers, associated issues and civil society contributions

Conflict drivers	Major issues
Political system (including peace process and constitution)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of a peace agreement. - Lack of consensus on governance issues such as: federalism, resource ownership, and whether these will be expressed in a constitutional revision. - Intransigence of existing powerholders to change to the political status quo.
Economic incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource ownership. - Land grabbing as part of the conflict. - Implications of peace agreement for illegal economies (including resource exploitation and the drug trade).
Ethnic/religious exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of consensus on: national identity and national symbolism, and self-determination. - Exclusive governance. - Unequal provision of public services. - Weakness in the justice system.
Legacies of conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proliferation of armed groups. - Need for reconciliation
Lack of freedom, accountability, rule of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of accountability for ceasefire violations, - Attacks on civilians, - Land grabbing. - The need for transitional justice.
Other conflict drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media illiteracy and the spread of fake news, - Gender and age-based discrimination and inequality. - Drug abuse.

Workshop participants agreed with these conflict drivers but also thought several drivers were not captured in the typology. Participants thought that ignorance of the root causes of the conflict was a driver of continued conflict, as was the lack of shared national values (as opposed to the emphasis on lack of inclusive national identity and symbolism in the conflict drivers typology of the report – see Table 2). Participants also thought the typology underemphasized the lack of media literacy, which sits in the “other” category in the conflict drivers typology. In addition, the participants felt that there is a need to separate the conflict driver “Ethnic/religious exclusion and the lack of an inclusive national identity” into ethnic exclusion and religious exclusion.

Part 5

Recommendations

5.1. Recommendations by the CSOs on the structure of the peace process.

- **To establish a team of independent technicians in the Track 1 peace process.**

As stated in the Section 1 of this report, there is a limited/ inadequate space for these technical persons in the UPC. The idea is to form an independent technical team for navigating the UPC and its UPDJC while in the meantime, give a separate space for discussion for the invited technical representatives of the stakeholders (Tatmadaw, EAO, political parties, etc.)

- **To make amendments to the ToR of UPDJC relating to the representation of the CSOs in the working committee of UPDJC**

The recommended amendments are to give CSOs a path to representation in the working committee of UPDJC. In order to make this happen, the participants feel that they should first try to make the relevant government officials understand the importance of the role of CSOs in the official peace process.

In the 2nd session of the 21st Century Panglong Conference, some 6 members of UCCPF were able to do a presentation to the UPDJC (just as invitees, not as members). This was supported by National League for Democracy Member of Parliament and the Minister for Ministry of Social Affairs U Naing Ngan Lin, who made a request to the UPDJC working committee. Thus, in the case of advocating for CSOs to have official seats in the UPDJC working committee, CSOs would recommend approaching U Naing Ngan Lin first.

- **To make sure that JMC elects “true civilians” for their civilian representation**

Currently, the civilian representatives in the Union and State structures are elected equally by EAOs and the Tatmadaw. The participants feel that electing “true” civilians would reduce or eliminate the risk of biased reports and decisions.

- **To change the dialogue structure of the national dialogues.**

There is a need for a transparency initiative for the Track 1 peace process of Myanmar. Moreover, the civilians of the country need more exposure to the ongoing peace process. In order to put that into action, more national dialogues should be held before holding the 21st Century Panglong Conferences, so that both the stakeholders of the formal peace process and civilians get to digest components of it. Most important will be to understand the root causes of conflicts relevant to the upcoming sessions of the 21st Century Panglong Conferences.

- **To improve the flow of information with the tracks of the peace architecture**

Improved flow of information could be achieved by obliging the UPDJC to formally respond to the recommendations sent from the various National Dialogues (including the UCCPF).

- **To include the policies regarding militias in the national SSR, DDR agenda.**

According to findings of some recent research projects, militias get privileges from their respective armed organizations (either Tatmadaw or EAO) such as illegal business deals, so that they can operate independently. Thus, if CSOs are to collaborate with militia, they bear the risk of getting sued for having an affiliation with these groups. In order to prevent these consequences, it is an inevitable requirement that policies relating to militias should be part of the national Security

Sector Reform (SSR)/Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) agenda.

5.2. Recommendations by the CSOs on the CSOs themselves.

- To establish a set of shared values that should be practiced among all the CSOs.

CSOs suggested that the underlying reason for the lack of collaboration among CSOs might be that they lack shared values (such as humanity, being human, valuing human rights, democracy). On the other hand, some participants noted that there is a need to check and balance those CSOs who are demanding to have shared values on whether they themselves are practicing such values and principles. According to one participant,

“We need to reconsider about CSOs saying that we need to be humane and stuff because, in our region, there are more NGOs than ever, and they would just sit on our necks and exploit our ideas”

- To identify the root causes of conflict drivers

Participants feel that there are root causes for all these conflicts, and they should be identifying those root causes in order to reduce further division and misunderstandings.¹ According to one participant:

“For example, the type of conflict that is happening in Shan would be different from that of Kachin. But, if we all understand the root cause of the conflict, there is no chance for differences in understanding of it.”

- To upgrade the house policies and procedures of CSOs

This is related to the donor requirements. Although some parts of the donor requirements are not feasible for the CSOs (because they are unsuited to the local context), there is a need to improve/upgrade baseline policies, especially financial management. Only then, they (CSOs) can gain trust from donors.

- To devote some time in self-reflection; about their perceptions and final goals.

Especially in the sense that the CSOs who are pushing towards the country to practice federal democracy should keep in mind that they need to first build a strong democracy system for a more long-lasting federal government system.

- To improve collaboration, the two main CSO forums in and adjacent to the peace process, the UCCPF and CSFoP should acknowledge each other's strengths and weaknesses.

UCCPF and CSFoP could also coordinate by incorporating each other's proposals in their respective agenda. UCCPF could also invite CSFoP members to participate in technical roles.

- To place greater emphasis on activities such as;
 - Peacebuilding activities working with families of Tatmadaw soldiers.
 - Communal peacebuilding in the religious and racial conflict-prone areas of the country.
 - To provide sense of ownership for ethnic people by means of promotion and inclusion of ethnic history (e.g. of ethnic martyrs) in the national education curriculum.

¹ Workshop participants did not have time to develop a recommendation for how this could be achieved, but one option might be to include a Commission for Historical Clarification along the lines of those seen in the peace processes in Guatemala and Colombia, with expert representatives chosen by all stakeholders, whose task is to give a consensus narrative of the causes and trajectory of the conflict.

- Social cohesion activities between Bamar and other ethnic people in areas where the Bamar population is dominant (areas that have not directly suffered the effects of civil wars).

5.3. Recommendations by the CSOs for Donors

- **To make application procedures more accessible. This could be achieved by**
 - Reducing the stringency of grant application requirements. Donors should collaborate with CSOs based in the states and regions to draft new guidelines/requirements or amend the existing ones.
 - Donors should reduce processing times for grant applications, and should give feedback on failed applications.
 - Donors should place greater emphasis on continuity of priorities and guidelines for funding. Where these are changed, an effort should be made to keep civil society informed. Donors should hold information sessions for CSOs in each state and region prior to opening new grant application rounds.
- **To support activities related to the track 1 peace process but not only mainstream peace activities.**

According to one participant:

“There are a few CSOs working as a group in Mon State. They include a CSO doing peace activities and those CSOs who are engaged in youth, food support, health, and education-related activities. There are 6 CSOs in total. The impact of this group is still unknown. There is still no donor support for this group yet. All of them are using the fund they got from peace related activities. Actually, it’s better if donors grant money to the group as a whole.”

- **To support programs that help CSOs running monitoring and social cohesion projects to make these more conflict sensitive.**
- **To consider ways of supporting activists.**

Some donors have the reputation of not giving out grants to activists for the other activities such as organizational development, and some participants reported their perception that the label “activist” is toxic, and therefore activists cannot receive adequate funding for their other projects as well (not their activism). Activists’ theory of change is that more moderate advocacy is not listened to, but donors are hewing to the government line that activism is disruptive.

One participant also felt that activists have special needs in terms of capacity building, and there are not programs available to meet this need.

- **To add CSO representatives to the boards or committees deciding on funding for CSOs.**

This includes the board of the Joint Coordinating Body for peace process funding, chaired by State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

- **To support activities described below to promote cohesion and collaboration among CSOs;**
 - Improving Network structures to reduce role conflicts; sharing the success and failure stories of CSOs networks of other countries, donors taking a “technical” rather than “leadership” role in forming networks.

- Organizing “sharing sessions” among CSOs in each state and region to help each other understand and be aware of their respective projects and future projects (to reduce duplication of activities and improve flow of information among each other).
- Creating a consortium fund (but the participants note that this structure would again most likely favour strong CSOs at the expense of the rest).
- Adding cooperation criteria to donor grant requirements. These could include an inter-CSO cooperative dimension to the project proposed, or a requirement that grant recipients have a history of cooperation with other CSOs.

Conclusion

The discussions among CSOs as part of this workshop provide a nuanced picture of the obstacles faced by peacebuilding civil society in Myanmar, as well as the changes these CSOs feel would help their work. For the better resourced and connected CSOs in Yangon, there will be opportunity to continue this conversation over the next months and years. However, support is needed for other CSOs, particularly youth CSOs and those in the states and regions, to continue to engage.

Annex 1

Facilitation questions, day 2.

Group (1): Structure of the peace process

Facilitator: Myat The Thitsar

Questions	Notes
1. What are the problems with the track 1 peace process?	- Do track 1 parties have a good conflict analysis? Do they understand the issues?
2. Does civil society even want to be included in a defective process?	- What are the compromises?
3. What can civil society do to address these defects?	- What are the first priorities? - What can be done using existing roles and structures?
4. Should CSFOP and UCCPF collaborate more?	- How can the collaboration between CSFOP and UCCPF be improved? - What might the results of this collaboration be?

Group (2): Relevance of functions and activities to conflict needs

Facilitator: Myat Thet Thitsar

Questions	Notes
1. Are there any conflict causes missing from the analysis?	Conflict causes identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The political system - Economic incentives to prolong conflict - Ethnic/religious exclusion and the lack of an inclusive national identity - Legacies of conflict, and - A lack of freedom, democracy and democratic accountability
2. Do we think any functions of Civil Societies are falling short of addressing conflict causes?	- What is the level of understanding of conflict causes among civil society?
3. Do civil society organizations effectively use theories of change to guide their work?	- Theories of change explain how a specific activity will result in achieving desired changes in a particular context.
4. What is civil society not addressing?	- None of the civil society organizations interviewed in the project reported working with militia groups. - What could be gained from working with militia groups? What are the obstacles?

Group (3): Cohesion and cooperation of CS

Facilitator: Cho Cho Win

Questions	Notes
1. What are the obstacles to civil society cooperation?	- How can civil society address divisions?
2. How can donors support civil society cooperation?	- What kinds of projects would support civil society cooperation?
3. How can CSOs avoid reproducing the hierarchy of Yangon CSOs over state- and region-based CSOs in their collaborative work?	

Group (4): Donor engagement

Facilitator: Su Htet

Questions	Notes
1. How can donors make funding more accessible to CSOs in the states and regions?	- What are the main issues in accessing donors' funding?
2. How can donors support civil society cooperation?	- Can donors help to make CSO cooperation more equitable?
3. What areas of civil society activity need greater donor support?	

Annex 2

1. Tracks of negotiation and peacebuilding in the Myanmar peace process

