

**IS PEACE POSSIBLE IN BURMA/MYANMAR?  
A STUDY OF COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATIONS ON  
THE THAI-BURMA BORDER AND THE CHALLENGES OF  
BUILDING POSITIVE PEACE**

**A thesis submitted to fulfil requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Social Sciences**

**By  
Zoë Bedford  
Department of Peace and Conflict Studies  
School of Social and Political Sciences  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
University of Sydney**

**2019**

## Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

.....

Zoë Bedford

## **Abstract**

Burma/Myanmar's pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history has been one of division and conflict, including between the central government and ethnic minority groups living in the borderlands of the country. This research is concerned with the role of community-based organisations (CBOs) on the Thai/Burma border who have been providing support to refugees from these conflicts as well as those still inside Burma/Myanmar in need of emergency aid and development assistance in such areas as food and shelter, health, education and women's rights. The thesis argues that these CBOs have been leading the way in providing aid and development that contributes to building a culture of peace in Burma/Myanmar.

Since the democratic elections of 2010, the transition to peace in Burma/Myanmar has emphasised unity and 'disciplined democracy' along with the pursuit of security and national stability. The formal peace process has been focused on securing ceasefire agreements with ethnic armed groups; however, the underlying root causes of the conflict are yet to be addressed and as such the process is at a crossroads where 'negative peace', in terms of the ending of armed violence, is a possibility. According to CBO representatives interviewed for this research, a peace deal that does not offer a resolution to the causal issues of federalism, resource management and justice, is at risk of becoming a failed peace process and has little hope of achieving positive peace.

The thesis concludes that a positive peace is still a possibility if there is a change in approach away from top-down liberal peacebuilding and towards a more bottom-up and holistic emancipatory peace process that focuses on equality, decolonisation, transparency, inclusion, the decentralisation of power and a recognition of the role CBOs have played in building grassroots resilience and empowerment, and could play in building a positive peace.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to Dr Wendy Lambourne — thank you for your support and guidance. I would also like to thank Dr Lydia Gitau for her encouragement, timely advice and feedback. I appreciate you both. To Dr Susan Banki I also say thank you.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the Centre for Peace and Conflict studies, without which I would never have embarked on this journey. Special thanks to Associate Professor Jake Lynch for your teaching and support. Thank you also to others at the Centre — now Department of Peace and Conflict Studies — including Eyal Mayroz for his assistance, and Patricia Garcia for her wisdom. To the other research students who have encouraged me and this work, I thank you also and I hope you were, or may be, likewise supported and encouraged by me at some stage.

Thank you to my former workplace APHEDA for being the genesis of this project by allowing me to work on the Thai-Burma Border and introducing me to APHEDA's wonderful project partners. I enjoyed my years working in this environment and under Peter Jennings and Ken Davis received encouragement and support for this research.

Thank you to all the contributors to this project from community-based organisations on the Thai-Burma border. Of course this research could not have been done without your support and contribution. I understand the responsibility of using your stories and words to construct this research and I hope that the results will be in some way worthwhile, and I truly hope that a positive peace is possible in Burma. Thanks also to those working on the Thai Burma-border from groups not included in this research. You have also taught me so much. There are teachers and friends all around, if one stops to listen.

Most especially, I would like to thank my family. Firstly, to my parents who reminded me to finish at every opportunity they had. Thank you to my husband for being supportive throughout my Doctorate — thank you for listening, offering advice, questioning and challenging me. Thank you for being willing to turn our lives upside down and move to Thailand to give our family the space and environment needed to finish this research.

Lastly, to my son, thank you for the constant interruptions and never understanding the time and importance Mummy was giving to this work — it is truly lovely that he has no understanding of the importance of peace and the devastation of war. I am filled with sorrow for the children who have been forced to understand these things.

## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BPHWT	Back Pack Health Worker Team
BSPP	The Burma Socialist Programme Party, Burma's military regime from 1962 to 1988
CIDKP	Committee of Internally Displaced Karen People
CBO	Community-based organisation
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organisation
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
KWAT	Kachin Women's Association of Thailand
KESAN	Karen Environmental and Social Action Network
KHRG	Karen Human Rights Group
KNU	Karen National Union
KORD	Karen Office for Relief and Development
KTWG	Karen Teacher Working Group
KWO	Karen Women Organisation
MTC	Mae Tao Clinic
NLD	National League of Democracy, Political party currently in government in Burma/Myanmar
SSSNY	School for Shan State Nationalities Youth
SHRF	Shan Human Rights Foundation
SWAN	Shan Women's Action Network
SYP	Shan Youth Power
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), 1988 to 1997 the name of the Burma's military junta
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council, the name of the military junta that governed Burma/Myanmar from 1988 to 2011 (also formally known as the SLORC)
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party, the nominal civilian government in effect from 2010 to 2015
WLB	Women's League of Burma

## Glossary

Burma	Country also known as Myanmar, name changed in 1988
Daw	The title for a woman from Kachin State or a Burman woman
Kyat	The currency of Burma/Myanmar
Myanmar	Also known as, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, formally known as Burma
Naing	The title for a woman from Shan State
Sai	The title of a man from Shan State
Sangha	Buddhist monastic community
Saw	The title of a man from Karen State
Tatmadaw	The armed forces of Myanmar
Theramu	The title of a woman from Karen State, who is also a leader or teacher

# List of Figures, Tables and Photos

## List of Figures

Map: General reference map of Burma/Myanmar, relevant ethnic state areas and important towns on the Thai-Burma border .....	vii
Figure 1.1: Thesis logic and flow .....	11
Figure 2.1: Intersection of Post-Positivist Methodology .....	13
Figure 3.1: Illustration of nested violence .....	36
Figure 7.1: Positive Peace Pathways vs. Negative Peace Pathways .....	180
Figure 7.2: Lederach's peacebuilding pyramid .....	182

## List of Tables

Table 2.1: Table of contributors .....	21
--	----

## List of Photos

*Note: Photos are for illustrative purposes only. All photos were taken by Zoë Bedford.*

Mae La camp life, 2012 .....	1
Mae Tao Clinic Eye Department and Prosthetics Department, 2012 .....	12
KWO Camp office and distribution of emergency supplies, 2008 .....	33
Land mine victim Loi Kaw Wan IDP camp, 2008 .....	54
Migrant Children Learning Centre Mae Sot, 2010 .....	97
Children in Mae La refugee camp, Thailand, 2012 .....	142
Koung Jor refugee camp, 2012 .....	175

## Map



**Map:** General reference map of Burma/Myanmar, relevant ethnic state areas and important towns on the Thai-Burma border (C Teasdale, Map creator).

# Table of Contents

Statement of Originality .....	i
Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms .....	iv
Glossary .....	v
List of Figures, Tables and Photos.....	vi
Map .....	vii
Table of Contents .....	viii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Understanding the research context .....	1
1.2 Forming the research question .....	4
1.3 Clarifying the research scope .....	5
1.4 Research significance and purpose .....	7
1.5 Situating myself in the research .....	8
1.6 Thesis logic and flow .....	10
<b>CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN .....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 Feminist methodology .....	14
2.2 Case study .....	17
2.3 Setting .....	19
2.4 Contributors .....	20
2.5 Data collection .....	23
2.6 Data analysis: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis .....	24
2.7 Reflexivity .....	27
2.8 Limitations and rigour .....	30
2.9 Conclusion .....	31
<b>CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>33</b>
3.1 Nested violence and positive peace .....	34
3.2 Liberal peace: Why democracy is not enough for Burma/Myanmar .....	40
3.3 Aid and conflict-sensitive development .....	41
3.4 The Power of the local, emancipatory and resilient peace .....	43
3.5 Feminism, peace and women’s participation .....	49

3.6	Conclusion .....	52
<b>CHAPTER 4: HISTORICAL CONTEXT .....</b>		<b>54</b>
4.1	Pre-colonial rule .....	56
4.2	Colonial rule: Divisive pattern .....	57
4.3	Independence movement: Uniting or dividing a country? .....	59
4.4	Panglong Agreement and 1947 Constitution .....	60
4.5	The outbreak of civil war: How did it happen? .....	63
4.6	Militarization, authoritarian rule and repression of independent civil society .....	65
4.7	Democracy movement unites and the world takes notice .....	67
4.8	Asset rich but poverty stricken .....	68
4.9	Resource cursed? .....	71
4.10	Drugs and the Borderlands – Who is in control? .....	72
4.11	Refugees, internally displaced people and migrant workers .....	75
4.12	The emergence and growth of cross border civil society organisations .....	77
4.13	Modern women’s organisations .....	80
4.14	The Saffron Revolution, the 2008 Constitution and Cyclone Nargis .....	82
4.15	The 2010 elections and post-2010 ‘new democratic’ environment .....	86
4.16	Rohingya and sectarian violence .....	88
4.17	Formal peace negotiations .....	90
4.18	Conclusion .....	94
<b>CHAPTER 5: CHALLENGES OF BUILDING POSITIVE PEACE .....</b>		<b>97</b>
5.1	Seeing the bigger picture – How violence impacts communities .....	100
5.2	Negative peace is a risk .....	111
5.3	Peace is not development and development is not peace .....	128
5.4	Conclusion .....	140
<b>CHAPTER 6: BUILDING ON WHAT IS ALREADY THERE .....</b>		<b>142</b>
6.1	Community praxis and peace .....	143
6.2	Could a paradigm shift make a positive peace possible? .....	157
6.3	Peace visioning: The peace that we want to see .....	166
6.4	Conclusion .....	174
<b>CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION .....</b>		<b>175</b>
7.1	Methodology affects our understanding .....	175
7.2	Reflexivity .....	177
7.3	The peace that is envisioned .....	178

<b>7.4</b>	<b>What next? .....</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>7.5</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>183</b>
	<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>188</b>
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>207</b>



Mae La camp life, 2012. Photo credit: Zoe Bedford

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*'To be rendered powerless does not destroy your humanity. Your resilience is your humanity. The only people who lose their humanity are those who believe they have the right to render another human being powerless. They are the weak. To yield and not break, that is incredible strength.'* – Hannah Gadsby.

### 1.1 Understanding the research context

When I began this research in 2008, there was no peace or democracy in Burma/Myanmar.<sup>1</sup> The country was still in an Orwellian dystopia.<sup>2</sup> I was an aid worker and, while based in Australia, was travelling on monitoring visits to the Thai-Burma border four times per year. I was seeing firsthand the effects of the brutal policy of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) — otherwise

---

<sup>1</sup> For this thesis Burma is used with Myanmar as 'Burma/Myanmar' by the researcher. However, although Myanmar is more appropriate when discussing the current day Government and offices, historically Burma is often times more appropriate. Burma is used exclusively by the contributors to this project as it has long been the convention to use Burma to show support for Burma's opposition democracy movement, as it was the military regime who changed the name to Myanmar without a process of consultation or referendum, thus no endorsement by the people. Myanmar, though indeed pre-colonial, is also problematic as it is seen as Burman and implies the continuing political dominance of the majority peoples over the minority ethnic groups. Therefore, it is not comfortably accepted by the country's ethnic minorities. As this thesis is interviewing subjects from Burma's ethnic minorities the name Burma, for the country is more comfortable and will be used throughout by the contributors. Or in conjunction with Myanmar as Burma/Myanmar unless referring the name of an organisation or Government body, or to the country's name in a specific historical time.

<sup>2</sup> George Orwell, author of '1984' and 'Animal Farm', served in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma for five years from 1922 to 1927. His works about Burma include 'Burmese Days' and 'Shooting an Elephant (an essay)'. His famous works that detail dystopian societies mired by oppressive governance, surveillance, and population control are eerily similar to life under the military junta regime in Burma.

known as the military junta of Burma — and their army, the Tatmadaw, via my work with Burmese refugees and migrant workers who had settled in camps in Thailand. Working with community groups on projects relating to health, human rights, education, women’s rights and migrant worker rights opened my eyes to the terrible effects of the civil war; forced relocation and widespread human rights abuses, including forced labour, crop and livestock destruction, torture, rape and extrajudicial execution, were commonly reported to me by the community-based organisations (CBOs) I worked with.

Although the military junta announced its roadmap to ‘disciplined democracy’ (Myoe 2017) in September 2003 — which promised to transfer power to an elected government again — there were few signs of this ‘disciplined democracy’ in 2008 when this research began. There were still clashes between the Tatmadaw and the ethnic armed organisations, with new human rights violations occurring and new refugees arriving in Thailand, and little confidence the promised transition would occur.

However, the transition to the military junta’s ‘controlled’ or ‘disciplined’ democracy<sup>3</sup> has indeed occurred. What has been remarkable to me is both how much has changed and how little has changed in the years since the first ‘historic’ democratic elections of 2010. I will never forget the day of the 2010 elections. I was in Thailand monitoring projects when the election occurred and villages in Karen state on the border with Thailand were attacked by the Tatmadaw, forcing 20,000 new refugees to walk across the border to Mae Sot Thailand in a single day (Associated Press 2010). It was Burma/Myanmar’s first election in two decades, yet Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) party abstained from the elections because of concerns around the 2008 Constitution and because Aung San Suu Kyi remained a political prisoner.

For ethnic minority peoples, the lead up to the 2010 election was similarly fraught with difficult decisions around whether ethnic parties should compete in the elections or abstain. Even though the SPDC, the political wing of the Tatmadaw, was appearing to de-militarise and running its members in the elections as civilians under the banner of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), there was still no formal peace process between the Tatmadaw and ethnic minority organisations - be they ethnic military groups or ethnic political groups. There was little evidence that the reformists in Burma/Myanmar were interested in being inclusive of the ethnic minority

---

<sup>3</sup> This concept of disciplined democracy is explained further in Chapter 4.

peoples —those living in the borderlands —in this transition process to a ‘disciplined democracy’. It seemed that the army’s attacks on ethnic minority civilian populations on this day, which was heralded as a historic day for the future of Burma/Myanmar, was an extremely worrying sign for the future. If the reformists of the USDP could not control the Tatmadaw and dissuade them from attacking civilians in the ethnic states on such a historic day — with the world’s political and media attention focused on Burma/Myanmar and its hopeful transition — then what would the future hold?

Unfortunately, my feelings were justified, for although there has been some reform in Burma/Myanmar in terms of transitioning to a democracy, the Tatmadaw has continued its attacks on Burma/Myanmar’s own people. Almost an entire ethnic group, the Rohingya, has been systematically driven out of Burma/Myanmar in what the UN calls a ‘textbook example of ethnic cleansing’ (‘UN human rights chief points to ‘textbook example of ethnic cleansing’ in Myanmar’ 2017). The civil wars and attacks on communities in Kachin state, Shan State and Karen State have also gone on unceasingly.

These conflicts continue despite the transition to democracy occurring in central Burma/Myanmar, where indeed there have been elections and political prisoner amnesties and releases. In 2015, when Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her NLD party swept into power with a resounding victory over the USDP, there was finally an air of optimism and hope. Aung San Suu Kyi stated that she wished to lead the peace process claiming that it was the ‘first priority’ of the newly elected NLD government (Tun, Zaw Ko and Mar Tun 2016). The formal peace process was begun by USDP<sup>4</sup> members of government in 2010. In 2015, this process was taken over by Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD government and has resulted in three 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong meetings thus far (Aung 2018; Nyein 2017). As a result of these meetings, ten Ethnic National Organisations have signed the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). However, the conditions of the meetings have meant that issues beyond the cessation of direct violence are not open for negotiation — and thus has meant that federation, the ownership and use of land and natural resources, have remained inaccessible to CBO groups and ethnic peoples (Karen Peace Support Network 2019, p. 5). Their plan for a more inclusive peace process and the ‘21st Century Panglong Agreement’ (Mang 2016) is yet to bear significant fruit (Dolan 2016) in forging peace.

---

<sup>4</sup> Union Solidarity and Development Party – the nominal civilian government in effect from 2010 to 2015.

Significant hurdles include the constraints of the 2008 Constitution, and the chasm that exists between the necessary social gains that the NLD government wishes to make and the recalcitrance of the Tatmadaw who can neither be constrained by the government nor the peace process. Political will, or a lack thereof, for both peace and structural reform is a major impediment for the new government. Importantly, and dangerously for a civilian government, under the 2008 Constitution control of the military does not sit with the parliament or President. The military is independent (Emont 2015). With the continued Tatmadaw incursions into Shan State, Karen State, and Kachin State, it is clear that the democratic reform process undertaken thus far is not enough to ensure the military will curtail its violence. The NLD also must have the political will to transform the laws and practices in Burma/Myanmar that continue to protect the state over the people. Currently, there are poor levels of transparency, accountability and institutional integrity which offer the vulnerable in Burma/Myanmar little protection.

## **1.2 Forming the research question**

When I first started forming the question for this thesis in 2008 – *Does aid to Burma's conflict zones bring communities closer towards peace?* – Burma/Myanmar was a country under severe repression, rather than the transitional country it is today. In formulating the research question, I was only concerned with examining the phenomenon of cross-border aid in Burma's conflict zones when performed by CBOs. I was interested in the role that these aid programs were playing in modeling a peaceful or possible 'future Burma' through undermining the structural violence (violence that uses state structures or social institutions to prevent people from meeting their basic needs) imposed by the state, by mobilising communities delivering healthcare, education and rights-based aid programs. During the time it has taken me to complete this research, from its beginning in 2008, Burma/Myanmar has undergone two historic democratic elections and transformed itself from a junta-led militarised state to one that is transitioning towards democracy with a formal peace process, or more accurately a ceasefire process, being negotiated.

Because of these changes I have had to spend much time questioning if the initial question I had in 2008 was still appropriate. Was this still the right question to examine? Was my question too narrow? Was my research going to be meaningful if I ignored the momentous change occurring in Burma/Myanmar? Ultimately, upon reviewing the responses I received from my field research interviews, I decided that I did need to change the focus of the research question to one that discusses

equally the peace process and aid work, and includes the role of the government, international actors and the community, and the transitioning times of Burma/Myanmar.

While this is not an examination of the mechanics of the peace process, the thesis is concerned with understanding the impediments to peace from the perspective of CBOs, and how these might be overcome. My revised research thus retained its focus on the role of CBOs in building peace in Burma/Myanmar, but took on a different emphasis: *Is Peace Possible in Burma/Myanmar? A study of Community-based Organisations on the Thai Burma border and the challenges of building positive peace*. This question needed to be contextualised within contemporary events and an enquiry added about the effect of transitioning on the participants themselves, their communities and their aid work. In this way, the peace process and contemporary situation is still examined but via the experience of the CBOs on the Thai-Burma Border.

A further two research sub-questions help this examination: 1. In what ways might the peace process limit the prospects of a positive peace outcome? And 2. What is the potential for community-based organisations to contribute to positive peace? The first sub-question, 'In what way might the peace process limit the prospects of a positive peace outcome?' is explored in Chapters 5 and 6 by my teacher and friend contributors who outlined their frustrations at the limitations of the peace process and some of the problematic ways they have been imposed upon in this process. In essence, they have used the opportunity of this research to express the obstacles that this process is creating that limit the prospects of a positive peace.

In Chapter 6 there is a more reflexive and optimistic discussion about the work of CBOs with their communities and 'What is the potential for community-based organisations to contribute to positive peace?'. Here my teacher and friend contributors outline the ways their work has been based in strengthening communities and collaboration, building leadership, and dismantling oppressive practices and combating structural violence. This examination is justified by recognising that the views of those who represent the marginalised ethnic minority peoples of Burma/Myanmar are critical to understanding the likely success of the transition.

### **1.3 Clarifying the research scope**

The genesis of this thesis is the mass movement of ethnic minorities and activists from Burma/Myanmar to seek refuge on the Thai-Burma border and the subsequent accumulation of

experiences as refugees and interactions with the phenomenon of cross-border aid. I first encountered this phenomenon in 2006 when I began working on the Thai-Burma border, however, the phenomenon began long before that. The thesis concludes with the third 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Peace Conference held between 11-16 July 2018. Although this conference does not mean an end to the civil war in Burma/Myanmar, it is still a natural end point for this thesis as the drawn out conference process mirrors the feelings expressed by the contributors in my field research interviews who are acutely aware that this will be a long transition to peace.

The past few years have been a time of significant transition and flux for communities on the Thai-Burma border, both inside Burma/Myanmar as well as those living in Thailand. Their social and political universe, which long looked to have stagnated during Asia's longest civil war (South 2011), is facing transition as donorship and funding for refugee camps is dwindling and refugees are being faced with the prospect of remaining in Thailand with little support in terms of aid and rights or returning to Burma/Myanmar before the peace process has settled and violence has ended (Lynch 2017).

CBOs who were once blacklisted in Burma/Myanmar, are now transitioning to a space where they can exist 'above ground' rather than having to operate underground and covertly. They are facing the dilemma of how to change their programs inside Burma/Myanmar and are being asked to open those projects up to their national and international counterparts. All of this change is significant to capture, as this is an important time for the peoples who have been marginalised, made vulnerable and lived on the fringe. Will they — or *how* will they — manage this transitional period?

Scholarly inquiry into the civil war conflicts have regularly focused on the combatants: the ethnic guerilla armies or the military junta and Tatmadaw (for example: Smith 2007; South 2008). The open development of civil society structures inside Burma/Myanmar, once considered impossible, is also routinely studied (for example: Asian Development Bank 2015) but primarily from an internal perspective of if civil society is growing inside Burma/Myanmar (Jaquet 2014) or how its civil society is restrained inside Burma/Myanmar (Bächtold 2017). The civil society structures that have developed on the Thai-Burma border, which have longevity and a high level of capacity, are largely left out of these inquiries. However, this overlooks the fact that in this conflict civil society groups have never actually been totally detached from their communities inside Burma/Myanmar and continued to work with them across the border. The geography of the Thai-Burma border allowed this, as it was porous and people could move around the area relatively frequently, even if at great

personal risk because of the civil war violence, a high density of landmines, and also because of the risks of capture and imprisonment due to the military junta policy of blacklisting civil society actors and aid workers (Decobert 2015). In seeking to understand the scope of border-based civil society work this thesis will try to capture the unique activity of these organisations at a momentous time.

#### **1.4 Research significance and purpose**

This thesis examines how, and through whom, genuine, sustainable peace<sup>5</sup> may occur in Burma/Myanmar and who can positively impact this transformation. The research has significant potential to enrich and expand the understanding of the relationship between peacebuilding and aid. It recognises that conflict-affected communities are made up of people with agency. On the Thai-Burma border, both on the Thai side and in the conflict zones inside Burma/Myanmar, communities have organised themselves into CBOs. These CBOs serve a variety of people's needs and interests — from the humanitarian needs of health provision and education, to the political empowerment needs of women's and environment organisations. This study looks at their experiences during the conflict and examines the root cause of the violence while seeking to hear what, in their own words, those impacted the most by violence and war suggest as a pathway forward. This thesis lays out the risks of adherence to certain oft-advanced peace methodologies, and identifies alternative peace methodologies which may be more likely to take the peoples of Burma/Myanmar from conflict to sustainable positive peace.

Peace work and aid/development work are separate fields that operate often in the same space and the same communities and there can, understandably, be instances of overlap. There are development actors that include peace training or peace work in their programs, and there are also peace programs that see development as a part of the 'peace dividend' of formal peace agreements. In this shared space with an assumed shared appreciation of peace, there is often a surprising lack of trust, communication and commonality in approach that can lead to competitiveness which can have a negative impact on the community in contradiction to the positive change that is sought.

---

<sup>5</sup> According to the United Nations, sustainable peace should be 'broadly understood as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development, and emphasizing that sustaining peace is a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by the Government and all other national stakeholders.' (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/262).

This study also looks at the experiences of CBO workers during this process of transition and the formal peace process. It looks at the programs of the communities and their own transitions. It also addresses the issues brought up by the transition to the formal peace process and the 'opening up' of formerly inaccessible conflict regions to non-government organisations (NGOs) and Burmese Government officials. Issues such as conflict sensitive development, the application of 'Do No Harm' principles, and the aid principles of transparency and neutrality have had an effect on communities and CBOs, who are used to working in highly militarised, politicised, polarised and untrusting areas of the conflict zone. As there has developed a high degree of trust between the communities and their CBOs, and there also is a high degree of unity and collaboration between CBOs, this thesis, therefore, looks at how this trust, unity and collaboration has been affected by the transition and by the introduction of other actors into this once limited space.

Importantly, this study seeks to better understand the agency that people on the Thai-Burma border have enacted in the face of direct conflict. Community organising, seeking to remedy their own issues, and undermining the structural violence around them by creating the services they need, are some of the remarkable ways in which communities have displayed agency and empowered themselves during this conflict. This thesis examines the peace process not by its mechanics and technicalities, but in a macro sense of if, and how, the current peace process has the intention or ability of transitioning Burma/Myanmar from conflict to peace.

## **1.5 Situating myself in the research**

This thesis takes a reflexive approach. As a researcher, I am aware that I have an 'insider-outsider' status on this subject in that I am an international aid worker who has worked for 8 years on the Thai-Burma border, and was involved in aid projects both cross-border in their nature, as well as aid projects for Burmese refugees living in Thailand, Burmese migrant workers in Thailand and Burmese labour union development inside Burma/Myanmar. I have also worked in the Philippines, Pacific (mainly Solomon Islands) and East Timor, but it is my specific experience working with CBOs on the Thai-Burma border that is most relevant to this research.

Taking a feminist methodology approach, it is important to note that this research question did indeed spring from my work and experience as an insider-outsider aid worker on the Thai-Burma

border. Seeing the political climate change greatly as Burma/Myanmar 'opened up' to foreigners for the first time in decades, I was surprised when I saw a shift in attitude towards border communities.

Classically, it was the refugee diaspora community who was trusted and listened to, and it was the junta and others inside Burma/Myanmar who were deemed untrustworthy and suspicious and viewed as the 'hawks', the aggressors, the ones violating human rights and attacking the vulnerable. However, as the junta suddenly declared themselves 'changed', and their 'roadmap to democracy' was welcomed by the international political community, there seemed to be a parallel shift of suspicion onto those on the Thai-Burma border. Those who had been acknowledged and championed as democracy fighters, community leaders, refugees and/or vulnerable people were now largely viewed by the international community as the 'outsiders' or 'other'. Now who were the 'hawks' and who were the 'doves'? After decades of these designations being clear, the waters were suddenly muddied.

The speed of this change in attitudes towards the communities on the Thai-Burma border has stimulated the change in direction of this research as outlined earlier in this chapter. I had assumed that it would be expected that the peace process would take time to resolve considering negotiations with the minority ethnic communities — who have been under attack for decades — and that trust building, reconciliation and righting wrongs takes time. In addition, recognising that reassurance would need to be built to ensure ethnic minorities feel they do indeed have a place in modern Burma/Myanmar and that their future would be greatly different to the past.

I am no longer working in the field of aid work, but I am still in touch with many of the contributors to this thesis, some of whom I now consider to be teachers and friends. What were they telling me about this period following the democratic transition of Burma/Myanmar? Were the pressures that once surrounded them now eased? The answer was 'no', in many ways they had actually increased. Previously, these CBOs had the pressure of variously: representing their communities; trying to ensure that there was sufficient aid and support to the communities of refugees, internally displaced people and migrant workers (or working refugees); and documenting human rights abuses and the devastating effects that decades of sustained direct and structural violence have had on their communities.

With the onset of the democratisation process these CBOs were surprisingly faced with increasing rather than reduced pressures in the delivery of their aid and development assistance, as

international donors began to withdraw their support for the refugee and IDP camps on the Thai-Burma border (Bandow 2014; Corben 2017; Naing 2017) based on donor expectations that the democratic elections of 2010 and 2015 had opened up enough safe space for their return to Burma/Myanmar. There is no evidence for this assumption that the transition to a more democratic state has had any impact on people's safety, as the sectarian violence towards the Rohingya community has worsened and civil war has not been ended in Kachin, Shan and Karen states (Richards 2018; Zaw 2016).

Situating myself in this thesis as a participant-observer of this phenomenon, and as one who has witnessed this change from a time when aid on the Thai-Burma border was supported to now when it is challenged and being largely withdrawn, I make no claim to 'neutrality'. As a researcher employing feminist methodology it is clear that the question, the phenomenon being examined, has sprung from my years of work in the area and my interactions with both the phenomenon itself and the people on the Thai-Burma border. As a researcher and aid worker I am biased towards understanding and assisting the vulnerable, marginalised people and communities. As feminist scholarship argues, in situations of inequality there is no value in being 'neutral'; instead we are called on to listen and try to understand the voices of the marginalised and vulnerable (Liamputtong 2007, p. 12). The methodology I have used combines feminist research, case studies and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in attempting to understand, record, and explain the phenomenon and the changes experienced by those on the Thai-Burma border during this time of great change and upheaval. I am greatly influenced both in my work as an aid worker, and now as a researcher, by the work of Paulo Freire (1970), who insisted that 'education is a political act'. This statement could be adapted to 'research is a political act'.

The praxis-oriented nature of feminist methodology allows me to situate myself in this thesis as one who speaks with, rather than for, vulnerable groups, in this case civil society organisations on the Thai-Burma border, and I intend to allow their words to be heard in this thesis whilst engaging in the research in a reflexive and analytical way.

## **1.6 Thesis logic and flow**

The logic and flow of this thesis is outlined below. Figure 1.1 below is to show that the thesis has four sections and each section is not separate from the thesis as a whole, but integrates or builds on the thesis as a whole.

Section One is the introduction, and includes the methodology for the thesis, including case studies, feminist research methodology and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Section Two includes the theoretical framework for the thesis and Chapter Four which examines the historical background of Burma/Myanmar and the conflict context for the research, along with the democratisation and peace process. Section Three comprises two chapters in which the case study interviews are analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis methodology, and interrogating the research sub-questions: 1. In what ways might the peace process limit the prospects of a positive peace outcome? And 2. What is the potential for community-based organisations to contribute to positive peace? And finally, Section Four involves the conclusions and implications. As this research is in an area of great transition, it is important to note that the experiences and ideas being expressed and analysed are not only historical, but in many respects contemporary, and the conclusions are intended to suggest ways forward in building a positive peace in Burma/Myanmar.



**Figure 1.1:** Thesis logic and flow. Source: Zoë Bedford.



Mae Tao Clinic Eye Department and Prosthetics Department, 2012.  
Photo credit: Zoe Bedford

## Chapter 2: Methodology and research design

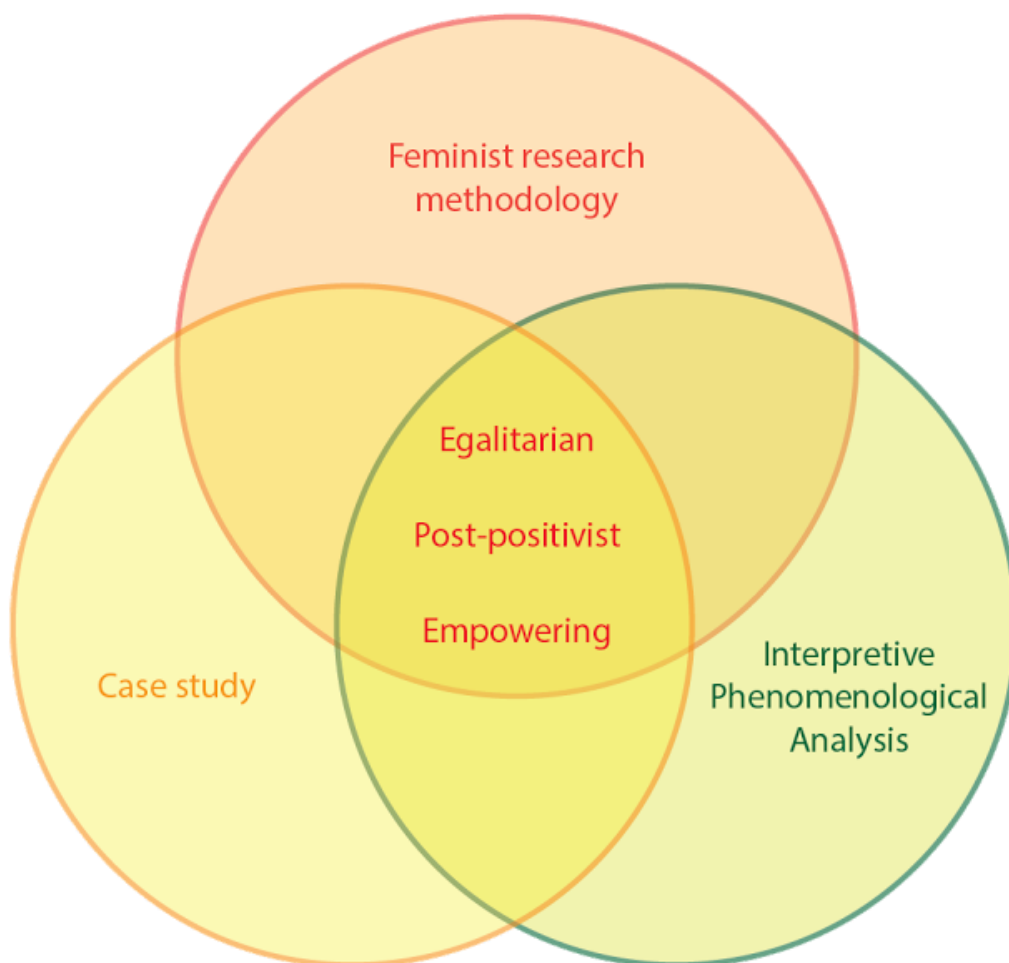
*'Our own life has to be our message' – Thich Nhat Hanh*

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology and methods applied in this research. The overall methodology is participatory in nature, taking a case study approach within a feminist research framework. A feminist research approach is appropriate because of both the setting and participants in this research: representatives from CBOs; based in refuge in Thailand; and connected to the entrenched conflict zone in Burma/Myanmar. The participatory nature of the research allows participants to be heard in their own voices. This is important given the refugees' experiences of both exile from their own country, Burma/Myanmar, and marginalisation from Thai society. An in-depth understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the CBOs operating on the Thai-Burma border is provided by the case study approach involving semi-structured interviews, and method of data analysis focusing on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

The three core approaches and methods that form the methodological basis for this research and analysis are complementary to each other: feminist research methodology, case study approach, and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (see Figure 2.1). The meeting of these methods can be seen as post-positivist — rejecting neutrality and objectivity, and accepting that world view, beliefs and theory are central in understanding the context of one's actions. Understanding bias is also key to reflective study and the idiographic nature of a hermeneutic method, with its focus on

interpretation and phenomenology. A non-hierarchical approach has been undertaken allowing for an egalitarian exchange, with the researcher seeing the participant as a teacher and friend. This is an empowering approach as it allows for the expertise to come from the participants and their contribution to the wider body of knowledge comes from the researcher's interpretation of their statements in relation to theory.

This research will be reflective and promote transparency and non-traditional 'researcher-researched' power relationships. Objectivity is not seen as obtainable or possible, instead I understand that data is a co-construction between the researcher and participant (Plummer and Young 2009), and is neither static nor beginning from a neutral position.



**Figure 2.1:** Intersection of Post-Positivist Methodology. Source: Zoë Bedford.

## 2.1 Feminist methodology

Feminist research methodology is appropriate for this research because it focuses on the contributions of women and women's organisations and marginalised/vulnerable communities to this subject, as refugees and communities in a conflict zone, the area of investigation is sensitive and the participants are themselves refugees and, therefore, marginalised and vulnerable people.

Although the participants in this research are community leaders, their autonomy is diminished by their position as refugees and they are marginalised (Liamputtong 2007) from both Thai society, where they are not accepted as citizens, and Burma/Myanmar, from where they have fled. Feminist research methodology is appropriate for researching the marginalised and vulnerable, because, as Liamputtong (2007, p. 12) states:

[R]esearch carried out from a feminist framework ... pays attention to issues of difference, questions social power, resists scientific oppression, and commits to political action and social reform. ... Essentially, feminist research aims to give voice to the marginalised.

Feminist research is post-positivist, and does not accept a single methodology or understanding of social science. Feminist methodology is praxis-oriented — it is critical and empowering and favours qualitative methodologies of enquiry (Webb 1992).

As Lather (2004, p. 209) states feminist research 'must connect meaning to broader structures of social power, control and history' by examining the power structure between the researcher and the researched to ensure that the researcher is not viewed as Foucault's 'Great Liberator' and to understand that they speak *to* rather than *for* marginalised groups. Feminist researchers need to take a non-hierarchical approach and ensure that their study is non-exploitative as the participants are vulnerable, whilst ensuring that their participants' voices are heard and their knowledge is respected. The method of analysis and publication of participants' contributions should be considered to ensure it does not disempower, and research findings should be made available to participants for their own use if so desired (Dankoski 2008; Webb 1992). For this research, contributors' statements are included in their own words.

Liamputtong (2007, p. 14) lays out five important elements for feminist methodology:

- Feminist research focuses on gender and gender inequality and this implies a strong moral and political commitment to decreasing inequality;

- It aims to give voice to personal and everyday experiences of women and other marginalised individuals and groups;
- It commits to social activism and aims to bring about social transformation which improves the situation and conditions under which women and the marginalised live;
- It promotes reflexivity which critically scrutinises how social structures like gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation as well as larger social economic and political conditions of the researchers may impact on the research process; and
- It rejects the traditional power relationships between the researcher and the researched and attempts to provide the research participants with more power in the research enterprise.

These five principals are paramount to understanding this research as I have endeavored to adhere to them and been conscious of their impact on the research.

The assertion that sciences can be completely free from bias and are unquestionably objective has been challenged by feminist research methodology practitioners who see this assertion as having a patriarchal agenda. As enunciated by Spender (in Reinharz 1992, p. 7), 'at the core of feminist ideas is the crucial insight that there is no one truth, no one authority, no one objective method which leads to the production of pure knowledge. .. this is why patriarchal knowledge and the methods of producing it are a fundamental part of women's oppression, and why patriarchal knowledge must be challenged – and overruled'.

Feminist researchers argue that *all* researchers have bias, it is just that society's dominant bias — that of privileged white males — is also dominant in research fields and is therefore claimed as the 'norm' or as being 'objective' (Reinharz 1992) when in reality it is simply unacknowledged bias. Accordingly, for feminist research there can be no assertion of 'objectivity', there can be only an understanding and inclusion of oneself as the researcher, and reflexivity on how one's epistemological grounding will contribute to the understanding of the subject (Lather 1992). This is a particularly powerful position for this research, for, just as Freire (1973) stated in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that there can be no neutral education, feminist research asserts that there can be no neutral research, and, as such, this research takes an explicitly non-neutral stance in its focus on the voices of the marginalised.

Feminist research is clearly oriented toward the interests of marginalised social groups as an emancipatory critical social science, developed from the research process itself and 'out of the

enactment of research praxis that uses intellectual effort to work toward a more just society' (Lather 2004, p. 208). That the participants are seen as 'friends and teachers' (Reinharz 1992, p. 263) is not problematic, but rather empowering to the participant, the researcher and the issue being researched, as the power imbalance between researcher and researched is broken down (Webb 1992) and the needs, experiences and interests of women and other marginalised groups are taken into account, indeed:

[p]art of the development of a critical social science that asks questions of power, economy, history, and exploitation, many feminists wish to maximize the research process as a change-enhancing, reciprocally educative encounter. Such work argues that overtly value-based, advocacy research openly opposed to the maldistribution of power is neither more nor less ideological than is mainstream research. Rather, those committed to research approaches that challenge the status quo and contribute to a more egalitarian social order have made an 'epistemological break' from the positivist insistence upon researcher neutrality and objectivity. (Lather 1992, p. 92)

Social investigation for the feminist researcher involves the participation of those who identify as oppressed and can be an education process for both the researcher and participant who analyse the structural causes of the issue through discussion and interaction (Maguire 1987), and the researcher can be any or all of educator, activist, organiser, or simply listener and reporter (MacDonald 2014). This feminist research employs empathy as 'Empathy is a virtue of care, and in transitional societies, it assists a movement towards securing rights and justice because it responds directly to suffering in the context of telling stories' (Porter 2016, p. 47). Feminist research is post-positivist in that it aims to transform exploitative aspects of positivist science by focusing and enhancing the interests of marginalised peoples and proposing the transformation of an oppressive social system (Liamputtong 2007). Maguire (1987, p. 29) goes further to say 'it is a way for researchers and oppressed people to join in solidarity to take collective action, both short and long term, for radical social change. Locally determined and controlled action is a planned consequence of inquiry'.

For feminist researchers, the deconstruction of their position as 'universal spokesperson' who has 'privileged access to meaning' (Lather 1992, p. 92) includes claiming their place within the research. Feminist research is personally transformative. Usually, having started an inquiry by identifying an issue of concern from their personal experience (Reinharz 1992), the feminist researcher 'tend[s] to unashamedly admit that the process of undertaking their research transforms them in some ways' (Liamputtong 2007, p. 11). Due to the personal nature of the research and the personal concern involved, feminist research is described as 'consciously reflexive' or 'excruciatingly self-conscious' (Liamputtong 2007, p. 11).

In the tradition of Dankoski (2000) and Reinharz (1992), it is now for me to situate myself in this research: a white, heterosexual, female, feminist, aid worker. I identified the topic while working on aid projects on the Thai-Burma border. During this time, I, in collaboration with my project partners<sup>6</sup>, advocated for the recognition of the validity of aid programs, such as cross-border aid programs, that were not being recognised in policy by international donors. My years of observation and experience are relevant to this research but do not allocate authority to me as researcher, however, there was some concern on my part that my role in an NGO may create some power imbalance in the research. Regardless, it is important to acknowledge that this experience has influenced how I came to establish this inquiry. The ideas, stories and experience of the participants of the research will be paramount, for although the outcome of the research is important, it is not pre-determined and the process of understanding the topic via learning is equally important in this methodology, as Lather (1988, p. 572) states a 'reciprocally educative process is more important than product as empowering methods contribute to consciousness-raising and transformative social action'.

## 2.2 Case study

The research methodology is a qualitative case study of CBOs operating on the Thai-Burma border. Case study method is defined as 'a method of studying social phenomena through the analysis of an individual case. The case may be a person, a group, an episode, a process, a community, a society, or any other unit of social life. ... this approach rests on the assumption that the case being studied is typical of cases of a certain type so that through intensive analysis generalizations may be made which will be applicable to other cases of the same type' (Reinharz, 1992 p. 164).

Case study method is the most appropriate study when the question is not 'who' or 'what', but 'how' and 'why' and when the question being asked is about contemporary events (Yin 2014). A further twofold definition first deals with the *scope* of the study that it '[i]nvestigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident' (Yin 2014, p. 16). As stated by Reinharz (1992, p. 164), feminist case study method in political sciences grapples with the

---

<sup>6</sup> The project partners of Union Aid Abroad APHEDA during my time as project officer for the Thai-Burma Border were: Mae Tao Clinic, Shan Health Committee, Karen Women's Organisation, Burma Labour Solidarity Organisation, Burma Children's Medical Fund, DARE Network, Karen Teachers Working Group, Karen State Education Group, Migrant Education, School for Shan State Nationalities Youth, MAP Migrant Assistance, and Karen News.

historical development of a particular political struggle and holds that case study is 'a tool of feminist research that is used to document history and generate theory, ... The power of the case study to convey vividly the dimensions of a social phenomenon or individual life is power that feminist researchers want to utilize'. The second part of the twofold definition regards the *features* of the study, being that the study will:

- Cope with the technical distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result;
- Relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result;
- Benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data and analysis (Yin 2014, p. 17).

In the situation of cross-border aid on the Thai-Burma border, where CBOs have over many years been implementing aid programs in conflict zones, a case study approach is most appropriate as it is examining *why* these interventions have been pursued, and *how* these interventions are seen as contributing to building peace in Burma/Myanmar.

It is the qualitative nature of the case study incorporating semi-structured interviews that makes it suitable for this research. This provides a fluid and flexible methodology that allows for meanings and interpretations and is open to the subjective experiences of those being interviewed from marginalised and vulnerable groups (Liamputtong 2007). It is sensitive and allows for participant voices to be heard, which is important for refugees who are often 'silenced, othered and marginalised by the dominant social order' (Liamputtong 2007, p. 7). In the case of refugees, it is not only in the country they fled but also in the country where they are now situated that the marginalisation continues. The in-depth nature of qualitative methods used with a case study interview method asks:

not only 'what is it?' but, more importantly, 'explain it to me – how, why, what is the process, what is the significance?' ... allow[ing] the researched to express their feelings and experience in their own words (Liamputtong 2007, pp. 7-8).

The research involves semi-structured interviews with people of varying ages and genders representing CBOs from varying ethnic groups having various aid intervention foci (health, education, ethnic media, environment protection, etc. as explained later in this chapter). As such, the four applications of the case study model described by Yin (1994, pp. 10-11) best apply in this research:

1. To explain complex causal links in real-life interventions

2. To describe the real-life context in which the intervention has occurred
3. To describe the intervention itself
4. To explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear set of outcomes.

Case study suits post-positivist research in the belief that all observations are theory-laden and researchers are inherently biased by our cultural experience and world view. Bias should be considered carefully and reflected upon (Hyett et al. 2014). Case study method is hermeneutic in its approach, or as Pare (2001, p. 4) puts it, most useful when ‘a phenomenon is broad and complex, where the existing body of knowledge is insufficient to permit the posing of causal questions, when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed, and when a phenomenon cannot be studied outside the context in which it occurs’.

### 2.3 Setting

As explained more fully in Chapter 4, Burma/Myanmar is a land of conflict due to a military dictatorship which began in 1962 and nominally came to an end in 2010 when the regime held democratic elections — although the democratic nature of these elections, and indeed present-day Burma/Myanmar, is contested due to the nature of the 2008 Constitution which reserves 25% of the seats in parliament for members of the military. This ongoing conflict has resulted in millions of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) seeking refuge in Burma/Myanmar’s neighbouring countries. The prolonged nature of the conflict has resulted in various aid interventions, from large programs, funded by government-level international development programs (such as DFID, USAID and AusAID)<sup>7</sup> and International Non-Government Organisation (INGO) programs, to smaller interventions run by civil society or CBOs.

CBO interventions are often able to go into conflict zones where communities and IDPs are deprived of basic services, such as health care, sanitation and education (described further in 4.11). In an environment where one in every five children dies before their fifth birthday (Back Pack Health Worker Team 2010, p. 22), CBOs see intervention as *social obligation* rather than choice. Larger aid programs are often unable or unwilling to undertake these interventions because of policy

---

<sup>7</sup> DFID is the Department for International Development for the UK; USAID is the United States Agency for International Development, and AusAID is the Australian Government Aid Program.

constraints imposed by their constituting government, the government of Burma/Myanmar, and/or or their own internal organisational processes.

In their stead, CBOs have been occupying this space with community run projects which reach far into areas of conflict. They do not ask for permissions from either the Burma/Myanmar or Thai governments to cross the border, but focus only on providing the humanitarian aid intervention necessary to the communities who are being denied access to all services as part of the ongoing conflict. These programs have longevity, with some being in place for 20 years, and they are also flexible, responsive and innovative with new programs emerging as the situation changes and the needs of the people in conflict areas changes.

The atmosphere at the time of this research, with the transition to an NLD-led government yet again changing the environment, many CBOs had started a process of engagement with their Burma/Myanmar departmental counterparts in health, education and social services. However, much of this engagement has been informal as the Myanmar/Burmese government was yet to overturn its *Unlawful Associations Act (1908)*<sup>8</sup> which effectively black-bans non-registered organisations, leaving people in Burma/Myanmar vulnerable to arrest or, in the most disturbing cases, arbitrary killing.<sup>9</sup> Despite these obstacles, CBOs have a durability and credibility within their communities, and yet do not have a place in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Peace process.

## 2.4 Contributors

The participants in this research are representatives from border-based cross-border CBOs, nominated by the CBOs themselves (further information can be found in sections 4.12 and 4.13). The interviews were focused on contemporary events and program history of the CBO and their cross-

---

<sup>8</sup> Several Journalists and two pastors have been arrested and jailed in Burma/Myanmar under the *Unlawful Associations Act* see <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/us-calls-end-unlawful-associations-act-following-jailing-two-pastors> and <http://time.com/4846625/myanmar-arrested-journalists-suu-kyi/>. Under this act anyone who meets with a deemed 'unlawful association' can be arrested in Burma/Myanmar. The Act was written in 1908 when Burma was under the administration of the British. [http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/UNLAWFUL\\_ASSOCIATIONS\\_ACT.pdf](http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs09/UNLAWFUL_ASSOCIATIONS_ACT.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Environmental Activist Saw O Moo was killed in April 2018 by the Burmese Army when he was working with communities in Karen State. He was travelling on a motorbike with a soldier from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). His colleagues insist that he was a peaceful campaigner who had just given the soldier a ride. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/13/indigenous-environmental-campaigner-saw-o-moo-killed-by-myanmar-government-karen-state>

border aid interventions, as well as discussions around the formal peace process in Burma/Myanmar and their personal reflections on peace or ‘peace visioning’.

Interviews were conducted in Thailand with 21 representatives from 15 CBOs chosen from a range of programmatic sectors including primary health care, women’s rights, emergency humanitarian assistance, youth leadership, primary education, human rights and environmental protection. These sectors have been significant in delivering community-based aid programs and also shaping border-based civil society. Because border-based CBOs represent all sections of Burmese<sup>10</sup> society, key contributors are: men and women; aged between 25 and 60 years; Burmese, but from varying ethnic denominations (Karen, Shan, Kachin); of various religious and original language groups found in Burma/Myanmar. The interviews were undertaken in the place where the CBO is headquartered (Mae Sot, Chiang Mai or Mae Sariang, Thailand). The interviews were conducted in English with contributors who speak English as their second (or third) language. Participants were asked to speak as the representative of their organisation and so their responses reflect not only their own thoughts and experience, but also the policies and experiences of their organisation. The contributors identified by a pseudonym as a requirement of the ethics approval for this research, along with the organisation they represent and the relevant program sector, are listed in Table 2.1.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 2.1:** Table of Contributors

Name	Organisation	Acronym	Sector
Saw Weh	Back Pack Health Worker Team	BPHWT	Health
Saw Eay	Burma Issues	BI	Human Rights
Saw Bey	Committee of Internally Displaced Karen People	CIDKP	Relief and Development
Naw She and Naw Jeh	Kachin Women’s Association of Thailand	KWAT	Women’s Rights
Saw Aar	Karen Environmental and Social Action Network	KESAN	Environment
Saw Aey	Karen Human Rights Group	KHRG	Human Rights

<sup>10</sup> All people from Burma may be referred to as Burmese, those who are of the Burman majority peoples are referred to as Burman or Bamar, while those who are of an ethnic minority group are referred to by their ethnic minority group name, which for this research includes Shan, Karen and Kachin.

<sup>11</sup> Burmese ethnic groups have different titles and ways of referring to men and women; Saw is the title for a Karen man, Theramu is appropriate for Karen women, Naw is appropriate for women from Kachin state, Shan state titles are Saw for men and Naing for women. See Glossary p. vi.

Theramu Lar	Karen Teacher Working Group	KTWG	Education
Theramu Kee and Theramu Dee	Karen Women's Organisation	KWO	Women's Rights
Saw Pey	Karen Office for Relief and Development	KORD	Relief and development
Theramu Mee	Mae Tao Clinic	MTC	Health
Naing Ceh	School for Shan State Nationalities Youth	SSSNY	Education and Social Justice
Sai Hey	Shan Human Rights Foundation	SHRF	Human Rights
Naing Nai and Naing Mai	Shan Women's Action Network	SWAN	Women's Rights
Sai Mey, Sai Mar, Naing Yeh and Naing Aeh	Shan Youth Power	SYP	Human Rights
Theramu Weh	Women's League of Burma	WLB	Women's Rights

I was familiar with some of the organisations involved in this research via my work as a project officer for the Australian-based NGO, Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA (APHEDA). Six of the organisations involved are organisations which had a partnership relationship with APHEDA. These are: Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN); Karen Women Organisation (KWO); Karen Teachers Working Group (KTWG); School for Shan State Nationalities Youth (SSSNY); Mae Tao Clinic (MTC) and Back Pack Health Worker Team (BPHWT). The other nine organisations who agreed to contribute were not known to me prior to the research, although I was familiar with some of them from reading their reports or hearing representatives speak at meetings.

I reached out to organisations where I knew they used the methodology of cross-border aid, and some organisations were introduced or suggested to me by those whom I already knew. There were some organisations I reached out to who were not able to participate as they did not have the time or a representative available.<sup>12</sup>

A full list of the 15 CBOs interviewed for this research is provided in Appendix 1, along with details of each of the interviews conducted between 5-28 August 2014. A brief description of the scope and aims of each organisation can be found in Appendix 2.

---

<sup>12</sup> See Appendices 3 and 4 for the Participant Consent Form in English and Burmese, and Appendices 5 and 6 for the Participant Information Statement in English and Burmese.

## 2.5 Data collection

Primary data for this research was collected via in-depth semi-structured interviews with contributors from the Thai-Burma border working with the CBOs who have been at the forefront of delivering aid in the conflict zones. The research draws on primary sources (interviews and observation) and secondary sources (academic literature, government and NGO reports, and media stories) to answer the research questions and develop a comprehensive understanding of the potential of cross-border aid and CBO perspectives and both the formal and informal peace processes.

A triangulation of the interviews, observation, research involving academic publications and CBO reports and media reports has allowed for patterns forming any conclusions in the research to be followed. This analysis enables the generation of knowledge with relevance beyond the anecdotal. This data collection is undertaken with a feminist lens of reflexivity to ensure the data is analysed and understood appropriately, without any 'inequality of power and ownership of the information' (Webb 1992, p. 420).

The interview questions addressed pre-identified themes and were open-ended questions which encouraged maximal responses to enable themes not anticipated in the design phase to be identified and developed. As such, the interviews were semi-structured, allowing for unstructured discussion following from the questions and themes. Pre-identified themes were developed from the researcher's familiarity with the environment and situation, and included peacebuilding, the Do No Harm principle, aid neutrality, peace dividend, aid delivery, cross-border aid, culture identity, local agency, the formal peace process and peace visioning. The interview questions (see Appendix 7) were informed by years of work on the Thai-Burma border environment and from a knowledge of the issues formed by previous encounters, observation and discussion with CBOs working on the Thai-Burma border. Each interview took around two hours.

Participants from BPHWT, MTC, SSSNY, JTWG, KWO, KWAT, SWAN were known to me from my role as an aid worker. One participant who represented CIDKP was known to me personally, although I had never professionally encountered their organisation previously (they were known to me via their work with a different organisation, one that was not a part of this research). I had never professionally worked with CIDKP, KORD, KESAN, SHRF, Burma Issues, KHRG, WLB, or SYP before this interview, although these organisations were somewhat known to me as organisations on the Thai-

Burma border take a collaborative approach and these organisations would have had representatives at meetings, workshops, reporting sessions, trainings, and conferences I had attended.

Secondary data collection and analysis occurred throughout the project, and was used both to identify themes and to analyse themes arising from the primary data. Secondary documentary data came from two sources: academic and scholarly literature; media reports and reports and publications from other CBOs or civil society organisations.

## **2.6 Data analysis: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

The analysis of data could be seen as problematic for the feminist researcher who understands that the nature of reality is local, that multiple constructions comprise reality and that the 'knower' is subjectively linked to what can be known. However, this becomes an issue for data analysis when the researcher is required to 'occupy the position of the expert who decides how to accomplish the interplay between data and theory, constant comparisons, theoretical questioning and theoretical coding' (Hall and Callery 2001, p. 261). How can participants participate in this process, or be guaranteed that the information they have given is not misunderstood, misrepresented or reported incorrectly? This is always a risk. However, with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) the risk is lessened as 'the researcher must approach their data with two aims in mind, the first is to understand their participants world, and to describe "what it is like"', and the second aim being to develop an interpretive analysis to see how these experiences engage with existing theoretical constructs (Larkin et al. 2006, p. 104).

IPA uses text directly from participant case studies, in order to let the contributor describe their own experiences in their own words. This forms the context for the wider literature and theory; 'therefore, by gaining insight into the individual, insight into the whole can be achieved.' (Pringle et al. 2011). However, there is a caution for IPA researchers to 'think in terms of theoretical transferability rather than empirical generalizability' (Smith et al. 2009). The aim is to 'illustrate, inform and master themes by firmly anchoring findings in direct quotes from participant accounts' (Smith et al. 2009). Direct quotes from the participants' have been used verbatim in this research to ensure that the process is empowering and transparent.

In the 2011 paper *Evaluating the contribution of interpretative phenomenological analysis*, Smith formulates criteria for acceptable and good IPA papers. IPA research is good if it subscribes to the principles of IPA by being phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic, and if it is transparent in the analysis, and also coherent, plausible and interesting analysis and provides sufficient sampling, which Smith defined as extracts from at least three participants for each theme. This is echoed by Finlay (2011, p. 140), who describes the touchstones of IPA as being;

- 1) A reflective focus on subjective accounts of personal experience.
- 2) An idiographic sensibility.
- 3) The commitment to a hermeneutic approach.

In practical terms, IPA is not prescriptive and researchers should be creative and flexible. In this way, IPA is a good match for both case study approach and feminist methodology, as it allows the participant to speak their own experience in their own voice. This research takes a hermeneutic approach believing that context is critical to comprehension, meaning that it is only possible to understand the meaning of an act or statement by understanding the world view or the context from which it originates. It takes an idiographic approach in that it is the individual case study that is expressive of the person's lived experience.

It is the case for this research where I, as the researcher, believed prior to conducting interviews that the most important question to answer was *'Does aid to Burma's conflict zones bring communities closer towards peace?'* and to that end I identified the main themes as: violence and human rights violations; formal peace process; international intervention in aid and peace; local agency; programs that counteract structural violence; peace with justice; culture of peace; interconnectedness; positive peace and peace visioning. However, upon applying the IPA analysis to the transcribed interviews it became clear that while my questions had been somewhat historical in nature - seeking to understand or capture the effects of cross-border aid during the conflict – the answers given to me were more future focused. My contributors' answers were almost always focused on the peace process and how it and international intervention in peace and aid were affecting their communities and their organisations' operations. With the objective of being flexible and to truly represent the discussion with my contributors and to allow their answers to guide my work, I decided that a more reflective overall research question would be *'Is Peace Possible in Burma? A Study of Community-Based Organisations on the Thai-Burma border and the challenges of building positive peace.'* And the themes explored became:

- Seeing the bigger picture – How violence impacts communities (this includes analysis of nested violence, direct violence, structural violence, national violence and gendered violence – explored in Chapter 5)
- Negative peace is a risk (this includes analysis of the formal peace process and critique of the risks my contributors observed in the process – explored in Chapter 5)
- Peace is not development and development is not peace (this includes analysis of the role and impact of international influencers on both the peace process and aid/development in Burma/Myanmar - explored in Chapter 5)
- Community Praxis and Peace (this includes analysis of CBOs and their programs, process and role in aid/development and peace – explored in Chapter 6)
- Could a paradigm shift make positive peace possible? (this includes analysis of what is missing from the current peace process and the changes that my contributors felt could be made to have a positive peace outcome – explored in Chapter 6)
- Peace visioning (my contributors envisioned peace in Burma/Myanmar and their hopes for their communities in the future – explored in Chapter 6)

These themes are future focused and are attuned to the desire of my contributors to have a future focus and a peace focus in our interviews. Chapter 5 outlines ‘the problem’ as it is described by the contributors: violence, lack of trust and inclusiveness; the danger of the peace process succeeding but with a negative peace outcome; and finally, the danger of the peace process failing. Chapter 6 explores the work of CBOs, their contribution to local agency, community strengthening and resilience, and also explores how the peace process could be improved and is needed (for example equality, decolonisation) to have the peace that is imagined — a sustainable positive peace outcome.

As one of the goals of IPA is ‘to enter another’s world and to discover the wisdom, possibilities and understandings therein’ (Matua and Van Der Wal 2015, p. 25), there is a tension to ensure that the perspective of the participant and the researcher can be shared. True understanding of a phenomenon can only occur when ‘the researcher’s horizon — often consisting of social, cultural and interpersonal views — intersects with the meanings attributed by the participants’ (Matua and Van Der Wal 2015, p. 25). This process can lead to the greater interpretation of phenomena and intersection with theory, taking the view that it is the responsibility of the researcher to surround his or her words with analysis and to position themselves as researchers in relation to the data, whether or not the researcher’s viewpoint or position is shared or agreed (Larkin et al. 2006). The strength of

IPA for this research is its ability to identify meaning and develop understanding which grows out of interpretive engagement. These understandings are rooted in the participant's lifeworld and, with the understanding of contextual interpretive layers, can give insights with the right amount of transparency and rigour applied (Finlay 2011).

## **2.7 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is important as part of a feminist research methodology, as outlined earlier in this chapter. It is important to understand that there is a need to, firstly, make the researcher (myself) visible including motivations and bias; secondly, reflect upon the relationship between the community participating in the research and myself; thirdly, reflect upon whose voice is being heard, that of the researcher or the participant; and fourthly, reflect upon the power dynamics in the research (Mahadevan 2011).

When using IPA methodology, the link between participant statement and theory relies on credible and transparent interpretation of the participant's accounts. Researchers need to be cognisant of their own 'positionality in their research, which involves often difficult analysis of personal values, beliefs, feelings, motivations, role, culture, ethnicity, age, gender' (Clancy 2013, p. 16). My motivation for this research, begins as an aid worker where I have worked in several areas and in my experience there is a marked gap between the perception of the outsider as the expert — the one holding and sometimes giving the knowledge — and the communities/insiders as the beneficiaries of this knowledge. It has been my experience that regardless of one's formal education, if one works closely with a community then knowledge is exchanged and the 'outsider' will often learn much more than they teach.

However, this idea is often contested. In areas of conflict, the knowledge of the community is often dismissed and their ability to speak out and be heard is hampered. They are dismissed for being 'biased' or 'too close to the conflict to be objective', and, while it is true that people in and affected by a conflict may not be 'neutral' or 'impartial', it is not true that an 'expert outsider' is more knowledgeable or can speak with more authority than those directly affected. Yet it is the outside view that is often preferred by international aid structures. As an aid worker working closely with community groups, I was appalled to routinely see their carefully researched reports and opinions be rejected in forums where INGO and government officials were present, because the community groups were viewed as being 'too affected and too close to the conflict'.

I was motivated to see if there was a way to conduct research where community representatives could be heard and speak in their own voices about the communities they represent and the conflict they have experienced. I wanted to see if there was a manner of research that could respect their experience and connect it to the larger world of theory as I felt sure there would be connections — if only someone conducted the research using methodology that decreases inequality and gives voice to the marginalised, such as feminist research methodologies which ‘emphasize non-hierarchical interactions, understanding and mutual learning, where close attention is paid to how the research questions and methods of data collection may be embedded in unequal power relations between the researcher and research participants’ (Sultana 2007, p. 375).

In this research, the question whether I was an insider or outsider arose. On the one hand I am firmly an ‘outsider’ — I am not Burmese, Karen, Shan or Kachin, I am not a refugee and I have never had to flee my home because of conflict. Indeed, I am the result of a comfortable middle-class upbringing in the suburbs of Sydney with high levels of education, afforded opportunities and support. I have a passport that allows me to travel around the world. I am white, female, approaching middle-age and was raised with a high degree of social justice awareness.

However, on the other hand I am also an ‘insider’ in that I have worked in the environment for many years. I have a deep knowledge and understanding of the topic, I have built trust and relationships with people in the community both on the Thai-Burma border and the Burmese/Karen refugee community in Australia. I fit Couture, Zaidi and Maticka-Tyndale’s (2012, p. 90) description of ‘insider’ as I am ‘able to easily establish rapport with ... participants and have an enhanced understanding of ... participant’s lived social realities’. My aid work creates an interesting power dynamic as, in some ways, there is an unbalanced power dynamic with my former employer being the donor and the community programs on the Thai-Burma border being the beneficiary — and on the other hand, there is also a sense of obligation, responsibility and commitment that puts me within this definition of an insider.

This research was not the beginning of my relationship with this community, and my relationship with this community will not end with this research. Perhaps the insider/outsider divide is unhelpful in this regard, as Couture, Zaidi and Maticka-Tyndale (2012, p. 93) explain because of our ‘numerous intersecting identities ... it becomes necessary to reconsider, reconstruct and negotiate or even

reject insider/outsider status as a dichotomy, Thus... the researcher is “never simply an insider or outsider”. As in my case, perhaps all researchers are at least a little of both.

Certainly, my relationship to the participants in this research could also be described as ‘teacher/friend’. I hope that the participants gain from this experience as I know I have learned and gained from undertaking this research, as ‘feminist researchers have in common their consideration of social science methods... a strong concern with reflexivity, with research relationships and with the protection of the researched’ (Sampson et al. 2008, p. 921). Having an ongoing relationship with the participants impacts on the value of this research and I have certainly reflected on what my role is, or will be, in the future. Undoubtedly there is a need for further advocacy by and for my contributors. As the participants in this research are representing vulnerable and marginalised communities in a conflict zone, they raise issues that they believe are essential for the future of Burma/Myanmar — being either one of positive peace or justpeace — and for me, like many feminist researchers, empowering the voices of those being marginalised is a strong motivation (Sampson et al. 2008).

My motivation has been varied throughout this process and has moved from concern to obligation to hopefulness and usefulness. The timeframe of this project has been extended. Some delays were born from personal circumstances and some were due to the difficulty of performing research in an area and time of great change and transformation and the need to understand and work in this fluid environment. Ultimately, my aim was to produce research that has some practical effect, represents the contributors and community accurately and provides useful analysis and insight to the issues of peace, representation and how power effects humanity. I feel a great responsibility to the contributors of this project to try to represent the issues they raised with humanity and empathy.

Among my many influencers I count Paulo Freire (1973) as being one of the most important. It was through his work that I was exposed to the idea that education is political and, indeed, I now see that there is very little in the world that is not political, from education to aid work and peacebuilding — all are subjected to the political ideologies of the donors, the leaders, the dominant powers. Neutrality is not possible and is actually undesirable when one has this understanding. I began this research motivated by social justice and peace, however, the understanding of feminism, eco-feminism, equality and peace that I have discovered by my own participation in this research has affected and changed my world view. It is impossible to examine the world from this lens and not be transformed. For me the question remains: transformed into what? While I may not know exactly

what I am — A researcher? No longer an aid worker? A peace worker? An activist? — I feel that the idea that issues of inequality and power imbalance are at the root cause of injustice, is now central to my understanding of the world. Being in the position of a researcher was difficult for me as I was accustomed to being actively engaged with the issues and the communities. This process forced me to take time away from practical work and immerse myself in the theoretical and scholarly world and, while I found this distance challenging and isolating at times, it also contributed to transforming my thinking and being. Indeed, this research has produced a profound change in my understanding of the world, as stated in Mahedevan (2011, p.165) 'defining participation as 'the situation in which one comes to choose to engage with a particular community and be transformed by it'.

## **2.8 Limitations and rigour**

Credibility and rigour are a contested issue when it comes to feminist research methodology. This is primarily due to the rejection of a positivist scientific approach and the notion of objectivity and neutrality in research. The embrace of 'bias', via reflexivity and acknowledgement of the researcher, to some invalidates the research, but for feminist researchers it makes the research stronger because it increases rapport with participants, improves inclusiveness and breaks down power relations and can result in more comprehensive data (Webb 1993).

Feminist researchers must demonstrate relevance and understanding of the field of research (as is true of all researchers), but it is argued that the link between a feminist researcher's understanding of the need for social change and disruption to power inequality leads to bias. However, while it is true that feminist research may begin with an issue or problem faced by the marginalised or vulnerable, feminist research will argue that it is not their research that is biased, rather it is a society that constructs itself to ignore the issues of the marginalised and vulnerable that is biased. And this is what needs to be ultimately challenged.

IPA also comes under critique in terms of rigour because of the intuitive, or impressionistic, nature of the analysis. IPA is also critiqued for its post-positivist nature, being non-prescriptive and adaptable (Pringle et al. 2011). Another critique of the IPA approach is that it can be too descriptive, poorly evidenced and insufficiently transparent (Smith 2011), particularly if a large number of themes emerge from the source material with 'insufficient extracts from the participants to support the themes being illustrated' (Smith 2011, p. 17). This research has tried to ensure that there are sufficient extracts from contributors to demonstrate the theme and show some regularity in the

responses. This research is not quantifiable, and as such there were instances when contributors had much to say on a theme and were unified in their position, such as the issue of federalism, however, there were times when a theme, such as peace with justice, was only mentioned by a few contributors, but those who spoke of it spoke with passion and urgency. It is difficult without trying to quantify the research to represent when a topic sparked much conversation and when only a little, however, with peace with justice being the exception, most other themes were more consistent in their answers and I have tried to represent the topics my contributors chose to speak of, in the manner that they most consistently spoke.

A feminist approach can be critiqued for being a process based on collaboration and empathy — there is an inherent power imbalance. It is noted by Berry (2016, p. 13) that researchers employing a feminist approach:

should understand that despite their attempts to reduce the ‘othering’ of participants, research is not democratic.’ Researcher power cannot be ignored — they base their philosophical and paradigmatic approaches to research on their own values and beliefs, they control what questions are asked and not asked, and they develop conceptual approaches to reporting the findings.

The imbalance of power must be recognised by the researcher. Indeed, I do recognise this imbalance of power and have felt a great responsibility to both ensure the voices of this project’s contributors are heard in their own voice as much as possible. Nevertheless, this research is inevitably limited by the power that I inherently hold in the situation relating to my contributors, however, this is mitigated by adherence to the five elements for feminist methodology outlined by Liamputtong (2007 p. 14) including the focus of decreasing inequality, reflexivity and a commitment to social transformation.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

Feminist research methodology seeks to empower the marginalised and disenfranchised and, therefore, is an appropriate methodology for this research. Using the case study approach for data collection — where participants from different CBOs in border-based civil society sectors are able to tell, in their own voices, the interaction between their aid work and peace — insights for answering the question *‘Is Peace Possible in Burma? A Study of Community-Based Organisations on the Thai-Burma border and the challenges of building positive peace’* will be better understood.

IPA has been used in the analysis of the contributors' interview responses. As a researcher who has been active in the area as an aid worker, I have not sought to claim 'objectivity' or 'neutrality'. I explicitly reject these notions and state that the issue of the politicisation of aid is what drew me to this research. By being reflexive, open and honest about my motivations and bias, this research is transparent and therefore can retain its rigour within a post-positivist epistemology.

This research has used the 'teacher and friend', researcher/researched model and I understand that it is I who has learned the most from the contributors to this study. Further, I acknowledge that just as my connection to the Thai-Burma border did not begin with this study, nor will it end with it. Recognising the importance of rigour, academic processes have been pursued by methods of triangulation and data analysis, completed with reflexiveness to minimise the impact of power imbalances that occur between the researcher and the researched.



KWO camp office & distribution of emergency supplies, Mae La, 2008.  
Photo credit: Zoe Bedford

### Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

*‘This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well’ – Paulo Freire*

In the post-World War II and post-Cold War environment, most wars and other armed conflict are not *between* states but *within* a state — civil war or intrastate conflict (Dibley 2014; Lederach 2013; Naraghi-Anderlini 2005; Wallensteen and Sollenberg 2001). This has resulted in deeply divided societies, predominantly located in areas already struggling with poverty and inequity, with conflicts emerging in underdeveloped states in the pursuit or defence of collective rights (Lederach 2013, p. 17). Peace is a goal inclusive of social justice in such conflicts where the *‘presence of conflict* and the *absence of development* are bound together in a downward spiral of violence and misery’ (Cortright 2008, p. 13, emphasis added). In Burma/Myanmar, the hope for democracy and peace has moved international interveners and donors to contribute to large development and democracy-

strengthening projects<sup>13</sup>, as well as peace projects.<sup>14</sup> This has seen a significant increase in aid, peace and development funding since 2010.

This chapter explores the theoretical paradigms relevant for understanding these interconnections between peace and violence, aid and development and the liberal peacebuilding project with its focus on democracy as a goal. In order to answer the question ‘Is positive peace possible in Burma/Myanmar?’, this chapter goes further to explore critiques of the liberal peacebuilding project that emphasise the significance of local communities, addressing power imbalances, and pursuing an emancipatory and resilient peace that addresses the structural and cultural root causes of the conflict. These theories will be applied in the analysis of the research interviews in Chapters 5 and 6.

### **3.1 Nested violence and positive peace**

Peace in this research is defined as not only the absence of overt or direct violence, but as positive peace defined by Galtung as both ‘the absence/reduction of violence of all kinds’ and as ‘non-violent and creative conflict transformation’ (Galtung 1996, p. 9). Peacebuilding is not simply to ensure an end to direct violence, but to enable an environment where peacebuilding is focused on dismantling the structures of power that contribute to violent conflict (structural violence). This research asks ‘Is Positive Peace Possible in Burma?’ and, therefore, seeks to understand the relationship between negative and positive peace as defined by Galtung (1969), and the interrelated aspects of direct, structural and cultural violence in the context of Burma/Myanmar. Communities on the Thai-Burma border are affected by direct violence, but driving that direct violence is structural violence, underpinned by cultural violence. It is here, in the response to the dual burden of direct and structural violence that we find the intersection of peacebuilding and aid and development work.

---

<sup>13</sup> More than US\$68 million has been provided to Burma since 2013 to strengthen democratic processes, including: \$18 million for the 2015 elections, which resulted in a civilian-led government; over \$11 million to build democratic justice and civilian law enforcement, including fighting trafficking in persons and reducing the supply of and demand for narcotics; and continued support for civil society organisations and marginalised communities to foster intercommunal tolerance and understanding and improve natural resource management. <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/11/275606.htm>

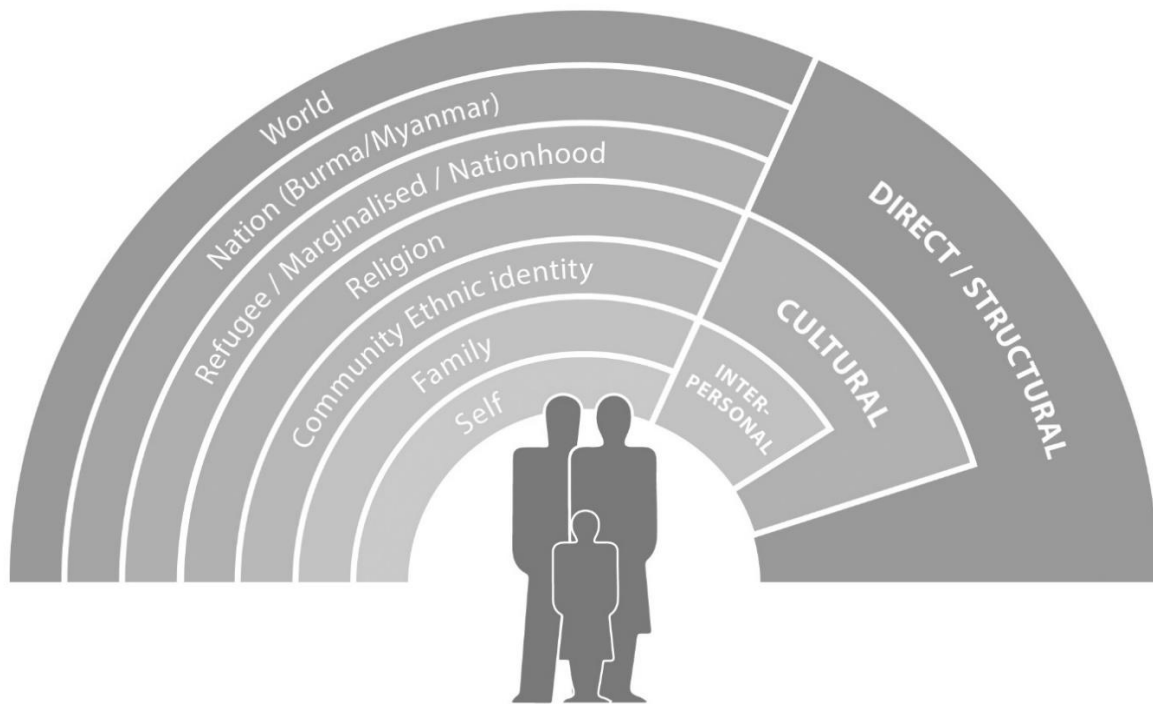
<sup>14</sup> In 2012, in order to keep up the momentum of the reforms, the EU provided further support to the country under a ‘Special Package’ amounting to 150 million euro. Given this funding, bilateral support was broadened to cover two more focal sectors, namely peacebuilding and trade. Under the 2014-2020 MIP, bilateral funding totaling 688 million euro has been allocated to four focal sectors: rural development, education, governance and peacebuilding. Together with assistance to the country under thematic and regional programs and instruments, EU funding for the country over the seven-year period comes to 746.3 million euro. <http://publications.europa.eu/webpub/eca/special-reports/myanmar-4-2018/en/>

An absence of overt/direct violence but with structures of power and dominance still in effect — which deny some communities access to basic human needs, services, systems of power and rights — contributes to structural violence which can only provide a negative peace (Galtung 1996; Jeong 1999; Stephenson 1999). Without challenging and changing the structures that created this displacement and inequality, peace will be evasive as direct violence can happen again at any time, and people are still disadvantaged in their access to political power and development. Achieving positive peace requires, in addition to an absence of overt violence, a state of being that provides the opportunity for full human realisation through the ‘elimination of all forms of discrimination (based on class, ethnic, tribal, age, religion, racism and sexism)’, and further, the elimination of repression and poverty as ‘[a]ll groups of people ought to have equitable access to the economic benefits of society as well as enjoying social, cultural and political development’ (Jeong 1999, p. 25). Change also requires a culture of peace, as expounded in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 52/13 (1997) as ‘an integral approach to preventing violence and violent conflicts’ (Jeong 1999, p. 23). The absence of direct violence will not create a positive peace, as peace ‘ultimately has to be obtained by changing the social structures that are responsible for death, poverty and malnutrition’ (Jeong 1999, p. 23).

Negative peace can create the appearance of ‘stability’ and, in doing so, can seem sufficient as institutions to promote democracy and security are established. However, human security, state security and stability are not always complementary. Radical reform, such as distributional justice or land reform, may be needed, and the failure to implement social justice and structural change can reinforce and institutionalise hierarchies rather than challenge them (Hudson 2011). Otherwise, negative peace and structural violence can coexist if stability and order are maintained via force under an oppressive system (Jeong 1999), thus leaving positive peace as an elusive goal.

Nested violence theorises that the one’s self is nested into layers of possible societal interactions. If violence is introduced, then these can become violent layers of interaction, or expose the vulnerable from one layer of violence to the next nested layer of violence. As Opatow’s theory of Nested Social Contexts (Opatow 2000, p. 406) outlines the relationship (the nest) from one’s self, to family, community, nation and world, so too can one experience violence at all these nested layers. The ‘nested violence’ describes the inter-relation between the introduction of violence at one level and the repercussions of that violence and any violence that follows.

Nested violence is outlined in Figure 3.1, illustrating the links between direct violence, structural violence and the interconnectedness of this violence to other areas of violence such as cultural violence and interpersonal violence. Some issues such as discrimination, displacement and gendered violence are cross cutting and occur at every level. However, with any issue the introduction of a vulnerability and violence to one area can have a domino effect of increasing vulnerability to exploitation, poverty, inequalities and further violence.



**Figure 3.1:** Illustration of nested violence. Source: Zoë Bedford.

Building a positive peace thus requires addressing structural and cultural, as well as direct violence. The concept of nested violence can be used to describe the interconnections between direct, structural and cultural violence. As explained by Galtung (1996, p. 40), these different types of violence can reinforce each other: '[d]irect violence, such as rape intimidates and represses; structural violence institutionalizes; and cultural violence internalizes that relation, especially for the victims, the women, making the structure very durable'. This can be seen in Burma/Myanmar where the Tatmadaw has used rape as a weapon of war in the ethnic minority states where it rapes women

with impunity according to reports from Shan Women's Action Network and other organisations<sup>15</sup>. The women experience direct personal violence, but this violence is aggravated by the structural violence that invaded their village with the army in the first place (the civil war), and also does not allow them judicial justice. A further layer of cultural violence is added by social stigmas that the women now have to overcome due to having been raped.

Structural violence as indirect violence is often imposed by the state. In the case of Burma/Myanmar, the military junta manifested in the systematic denial of people's political rights, and, in the ethnic states, a deliberate policy of 'quashing opposition by denying services and aid to ... ethnic areas, including the eastern states, under the well documented "Four Cuts" policy' (International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School 2009, p. 47). Under the Four Cuts policy, ethnic groups were targeted en masse for collective punishment and deprivation as part of the ongoing civil war. This policy included denial of services, such as education and health services, as well as under-development of sanitation services, roads, markets and the provision of electricity. These are manifestations of structural violence as described by Jeong (2000, p. 21), where poverty, hunger, repression and social alienation are used by the powerful over the vulnerable, and denies the possibility of self-fulfillment, based on race, religion, ethnicity, sexual preference or gender. As Jeong (2000, p. 21) illustrates:

If a young female's need for education is not provided adequately because of gender differences, it constitutes inequitable life conditions. When people starve to death because of a lack of food (which is abundant to others), an exploitative economic system contributing to the monopoly of wealth by a few becomes a source of structural violence.

Communities on the Thai-Burma border thus have their lives impacted by such nested violence. Direct violence forces communities to flee, displacement exposes communities to food insecurity, disease and exploitation. The exposure to violence makes communities vulnerable and prevents the 'optimum development of each human being and denies people important rights such as economic opportunities, social and political equality and a sense of autonomy and freedom' (Jeong 2000, p. 21), and becomes part of the oppressive social fabric (Galtung 1969). As explained, this direct structural and cultural violence can take the form of national or state violence as well as gendered

---

<sup>15</sup> Powerfully documented by the Shan Women's Action Network in their 2002 report *Licence to Rape* (Shan Women's Action Network 2002) and the Women's League of Burma in their 2014 report *Same Impunity, Same Patterns: Sexual abuses by the Burma Army will not stop until there is a genuine civilian government* (Women's League of Burma 2014).

violence, which interacting together as nested violence, are the fulfillment of decades of conflict and displacement.

In Burma/Myanmar's conflict zones along the eastern border with Thailand, most deaths are attributed *not to the overt conflict*, but to preventable diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, malnutrition and women dying due to complications in pregnancy and childbirth (Back Pack Health Worker Team 2010). The indirect nature of structural violence means that it can be difficult to identify as 'violence', even by those whom are directly affected by it. The victims are often situated as the 'problem', and, as structural violence usually means an increased exposure to risk for the vulnerable, deaths can be attributed to generalised hardship and danger which means that structural violence can become diffused and almost imperceptible (Opotow 2000, p. 405). On the Thai-Burma border, ethnic peoples are often blamed for their current state of poverty and displacement because of the refusal of the ethnic peoples to capitulate to the violence of the state, both direct and structural.

Cultural violence is evident in Burma/Myanmar through nationalisation, or the promotion of cultural difference through the distortion of knowledge and imagery about a people, ethnicity, race or gender (Jeong 1999), as will be discussed by my contributors in later chapters. Cultural violence can prolong conflicts and cause violence to be condoned by these cultural norms, often using social symbols (flags, crosses, military parades, songs). Violence of one people over another becomes ordinary, with cultural violence making 'direct and structural violence look and, even feel, right' (Galtung 1996, p. 191). This is a powerful form of violence as the differences between human cultures or social groupings can be used to justify the unjustifiable (Galtung 1996), and where communities can be manipulated via the state to turn a blind eye to structural violence or even to perform direct violence against another community themselves. Galtung identifies six domains of cultural violence — religion, ideology, language, art, empirical and formal science — which can act to institutionalise violence so that it becomes almost ritualistic and in many cases the norm.

For communities in conflict, the manifestation of this violence is the norm. It can be so normative that many may not be able to see beyond the most recent cultural violence (i.e. the burning down of a temple or church, or the banning of ethnic language being taught in schools) to the root cause — the structural inequality, the structural violence — behind it. The Tatmadaw has manipulated this 'divide and conquer' strategy to pit one ethnic group against another, and to exploit tensions between religious groups within ethnic communities, aiming to legitimise both the direct and

structural violence, and even motivate actors to commit direct violence against communities on ethnic, religious or other grounds (Galtung 1996, p. 31).

Women and children experience conflict differently to men. This gendered violence explains why women and children suffer most extensively from militarisation and war (Plümper and Neumayer 2006, p. 723). World Health Organisation global estimates indicate that 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime and that situations of conflict, displacement and post conflict settings intensify the risk to women from both their intimate partner or non-partners and may also lead to new forms of violence against women (World Health Organisation 2017).

In parts of Burma/Myanmar, there is a traditional saying 'A woman respects her husband as an animal respects its master' (Shan Women's Action Network 2002, p. 11) and where such patriarchy and sexism is ingrained there is a need to challenge the social structures that perpetuate this violence:

Many women continue to die from the patriarchal perpetuation and negligence of the massive problem of violence against women in all its forms. Patriarchy places males at the head of their families, elects men to most political offices, and creates opportunities for men to rise to the tops of most businesses, government agencies, religious institutions and educational organisations. Patriarchal hierarchy sets up a conflict where many men are granted cultural, social, economic and political permission to meet their needs at the expense of women's needs (Schirch 2003, p. 143).

This is an issue of nested violence, as it is the interconnectedness of structural violence, of a nation state and culture immersed in patriarchy, and the inherent inequality that this gendered violence breeds. Exposing the gendered nature of power and its relationship to human rights abuses, oppression of minorities and the poor, and violence against women is one of the goals of emancipation, as discussed later in this chapter. Defined by Hudson (2011, p. 37) as 'the removal of structural barriers which create situations of insecurity for individuals', emancipation would mean that it is not enough to simply negotiate with the oppressors without changing the system of oppression. It is here that feminism and peace converge, as they are both 'critical of and committed to the elimination of coercive power-over privilege systems of domination' (Warren and Cady 1994, p. 6).

### 3.2 Liberal peace: Why democracy is not enough for Burma/Myanmar

'Liberal peace' is an idea first introduced by Immanuel Kant in *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch, 1795*. The theory, developed by Kant, espouses that democracies are unlikely to engage in war, and that democratic development reinforces peace and stability (Hegre 2014, p. 159). At the core of liberal peace theory is a definition of long-term peace and security which is based on the values of democracy and justice. The central position of liberalism theory is driven by the notions of interdependence and democracy. Taking an institutional approach to human security and peacebuilding, liberal peace is designed around principles of democratisation, economic liberalisation, neoliberal development, human rights and the rule of law (Richmond 2007, p. 462).

Liberal peacebuilding sees a connection between democracies and peace, and can also be called democratic peace theory. This theory claims that democratic states rarely engage in war because they share common norms (Rosato 2003), and because there are social and political restraints that tie the hands of decision makers. There is an assumption underlying liberal peace that strong democratic institutions contribute to peace, and that constitutional checks and balances, term limits and accountability (Zimelis 2012) are fundamental 'pillars of peace'. In practice, this often translates to a focus on adherence to the 'Rule of Law' and prioritising the re-instating and strengthening of government institutions in a post-conflict setting.

However, this model is top down in its approach and focuses too heavily on physical security, and the security of a strong state (Richmond 2007, pp. 460-61). Liberal peacebuilding has been described as coercive, technocratic and uncompromising and 'blind to the local conditions in which it is pursued' (Nadarajah and Rampton 2015, p. 53). Liberal peace can be viewed as hegemonic (Howarth 2014) as it is centred on imposing the Western model of the liberal democratic state. The local or everyday are framed as 'outside' the process and resistance to hierarchy, exclusion and repression of local engagement for peace can occur as the local is colonised by both government and private INGOs (Nadarajah and Rampton 2015, p. 69).

The past two decades have seen the rise of an intensely Western-led subjugation of the global south via humanitarian, developmental, and peacebuilding frameworks — where problematic states are contained and indeed transformed to ensure they conform to western neo-liberal markets, democracy and rule of law, or at least pose no threat to them (Nadarajah and Rampton 2015, p. 51).

The scholarly critiques of liberal peacebuilding include that insufficient attention is paid to the various goals of peacebuilding and there is insufficient local ownership over the strategic direction of the peacebuilding including daily activities and operations, as discussed later in the chapter.

### **3.3 Aid and conflict-sensitive development**

Aid, development and liberal peace are often connected by the idea of a *peace dividend* (UN News 2009) — the idea that lives and fortunes are materially improved by peace, or that equitable economic development is an essential strategy for preventing war (Cortright 2008, p. 19). When states are at peace, the theory is that funds can be diverted away from military and weaponry towards social programs which will improve the lives of citizens. However, it has also been noted that even this peace dividend is ‘not automatic; it will only occur if there is true peace, with no low-key violence’ (Hoeffler 2012, p. 17). Development and aid frameworks and approaches have been formed to try to ensure that the link between development, aid and conflict is a positive one and that there are no outcomes, intended or otherwise, that will either cause conflict or will hamper a peace effort. The three main schools of thought in aid and development are: Neutrality, Do No Harm and Conflict Sensitive Development.

Neutrality and impartiality are key humanitarian principles. These principles are designed to ensure humanitarian aid prioritises the most urgent cases, and does so without discrimination based on race, religion, nationality, class, gender or political beliefs and ensuring humanitarian aid does not ‘take sides’ in hostilities (OCHA 2012, p. 1). It requires that humanitarian responses must be autonomous from political objectives and also the objectives of the military (OCHA 2012). These guidelines are clearly stated to prioritise the needs of the vulnerable over the powerful and to ensure aid is not misused as a weapon by its denial to those opposed to the powerful. Aid also should not be appropriated by the powerful to substitute their own responsibilities of care — such as food, shelter and other services — in order to free up finances for the government or military to pursue military conflict (Anderson 2001, p. 259).

Proponents of Do No Harm argue that aid inevitably has a consequence for conflict, and that aid workers should try to shape that impact in a positive manner, or at least one that does not create further conflict or inflict harm. The theory argues that it is best for aid and development workers to play the ‘outsider role’ (Anderson 1999, p. 147). Do No Harm is a framework which seeks to understand the war via proximate, rather than root causes, and to understand conflict dividers and

tensions while seeking out connectors and local capacities for peace. The approach is alert to the possibility of ethnic bias in messaging from aid work and that issues of power, transparency and corruption should be guarded against.

A critique, made by the contributors to this research, of the Do No Harm process is that it is directed singularly at humanitarian outside actors. This approach limits the involvement of local organisations and communities to merely beneficiaries of aid, while analysing the potential of individuals (rather than groups) to either be connectors or dividers of peace. This is inherently a top-down approach, that is trapped in hegemonic beliefs which struggle to see the value in local agency, solidarity networks, grassroots resilience and empowerment, diversity of viewpoints and a tendency to overlook structural violence and historical inequalities. This will be explored further in Chapter 5 as the relationship between international actors and CBOs is examined by my contributors.

Aid and its provision, often through NGOs and UN and government agencies, has now become linked to governance. The agendas established for creating human security mean that civil society has become intricately entwined with official actors and transitional administrations. This can have the effect of privatising peace via international NGOs and making conditionalities on aid that can be characterised as a form of cultural suppression (Richmond 2007, pp. 469-70), through attempting to reorder communities into Western socio-economic groups, or stifling protest and dissent on the condition of inclusion and access. As such, '[t]he problem may not be that only a limited capacity is being built but that institutional and local capacity is being destroyed in target conflict environments' (Richmond 2007, p. 477).

Negative peace opens up opportunities for development, however, development does not in of itself lead to positive peace. Indeed, development has the potential to stoke conflict, making conflict sensitive development crucial. In Burma/Myanmar, development assistance that would contribute to a positive peace transition requires an emphasis on inclusion, elite accountability, the decentralisation of economic and political power (Brachet and Wolpe 2005), and does not entrench power inequalities, especially in regard to natural resources. As summarised by Brachet and Wolpe (2005 p. ii), the eight principles to guiding conflict sensitive development assistance are:

- (i) 'do no harm' particularly to avoid reinforcing or triggering conflict causes;
- (ii) make peace dividends visible to the population;
- (iii) include short-term issues, especially the restoration of security;
- (iv) limit the potential for mass mobilization;
- (v) address the structural causes of conflict;

- (vi) address the perceptual and attitudinal legacy of the conflict;
- (vii) ensure that development assistance is consistent and sustained; and
- (viii) consider the regional context.

Conflict sensitive approaches need to address the unequal and discriminatory root causes of conflict and poverty, in an increasingly political operating environment. International NGOs and donors who are firmly opposed to 'direct global redistribution of wealth and opportunities and any recognition that difference is a viable political force' (Richmond 2015, p. 59), deny local agency and frameworks. There is a risk that negative peace will be the outcome if both the formal peace process and aid delivery, or development does not resolve issues of structural violence and power and wealth inequalities continue to deteriorate, preventing the realisation of a positive peace.

### **3.4 The Power of the local, emancipatory and resilient peace**

This thesis argues that CBOs have the potential to contribute to building a positive peace as, even though they were not created to prevent conflict, overcoming direct and structural violence has become the goal of many CBOs on the Thai-Burma border, whether their work is in response to human rights violations, health care crises, environmental injustices or, more commonly, to dealing with the consequences of war and violence. When non-combatant civilians are increasingly the victims and focus of war — via forced displacement, massacres, gender and sexual based violence that targets women, and conflict that makes children vulnerable to violence — civil society actors are compelled to use their energy and creativity to find alternatives to violence, end wars and prevent them from starting or reoccurring (Richmond 2007, pp. 11-12).

CBOs are an important part of civil society, leaders and representatives are based in the community and share the same marginalised status as their communities. CBOs often have local membership and community-based oversight in terms of elections or board members/committees. As Barnes (2005, p. 7, original emphasis) puts it:

*civil society* refers to the web of social relations that exist in the space between the state, the market (activities with the aim of extracting profit) and the private life of families and individuals.

Being embedded in the communities allows CBOs to act swiftly and with flexibility, whereas often larger organisations or governments are constrained by policy and processes, or encumbered by a

lack of political will. CBOs are often creative and innovative, and willing to use ‘noncoercive strategies to persuade people to engage in peaceful processes based on dialogue and deliberation to address problems and reconcile relationships’ (Barnes 2005, p. 5). CBOs can improve communications and relationships by fostering interaction across divides through informal exchanges and joint projects. CBO-led processes are often focused on helping ordinary people to articulate what they really need and then helping them to find common ground from which they can work to establish peaceful coexistence. CBOs can and will use people power, can monitor commitments and violations, and can provide reports and other witness-based evidence about violence and crime on the international stage. CBOs can also push for policies and practices designed to address the root causes of the conflict (Barnes 2005, pp. 15-16).

A diverse and thriving civil society is one of the crucial foundations for strengthening the capacity of societies to manage conflict peacefully. A sustainable peace is built by introducing social, political and economic reform, and investment in local capacity building and empowerment — local agency — is needed to overcome poverty, gender inequalities, educational decline, and unemployment (Jeong 2005, p. 28). Neglecting social and economic development contributes to dissolving trust and risks a return to the origin of the conflict. Disarmament and demobilisation efforts alone will not decrease the danger of re-escalation (Richmond 2007).

Well-organised communities have strong solidarity networks allowing them to cope with hardship or conflict. Interpeace (2016, pp. 1-2) lays out the importance of such trust networks:

The capacity of society as a whole to transform conflict drivers through constructive processes will be compromised if these networks are not engaged in relationships of trust with other communities and institutions of the state. It is therefore key to engage in peacebuilding efforts that allow people to connect between different levels of social organisation and across social constituencies.

Accordingly, recognising local agency, capacity and local structures and solidarity networks can be seen as a constructive part of the peace process and essential for a positive and sustainable peace.

A culture of peace comes from peace praxis, where there is meaningful progress in providing sustainable peace via meeting basic human needs, reversing the impact of structural violence and providing avenues for political engagement and autonomous decision making, as well as strengthening systems for managing differences peacefully (Barnes 2005, p. 23). Societies transform relationships, collectively and peacefully, by addressing the factors which enabled conflict to emerge

in the first place — the root cause issues. Interpeace (2016, p. 3) puts forward that a ‘balance needs to be struck between a focus on sources of fragility and a shared appreciation of existing capacities that can provide the way forward for a durable peace’. Those who desire peace, such as the CBO contributors to this research, but who cannot capitulate to a shallow agreement that does not address the root cause nor give hope for a sustainable positive peace (Interpeace 2016, p. 3), should be brought into the process rather than left out.

The reminder that peace *as a process* matters more than an outcome comes from Lederach (1995, p. 22) who notes that, in times of conflict, not enough attention is paid to how issues are to be ‘approached, discussed, and decided. There is a push toward solution and outcome that skips the discipline of creating an adequate and clear process for achieving an acceptable result’. A process-oriented approach to peace is one that is inclusive and attempts to ‘build on what is already there’ by working with local communities.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong agreement is currently restricted to the very top tier of Lederach’s peacebuilding pyramid, focusing on representatives from the Myanmar Government, the Tatmadaw, and ethnic armed organisations, there is little to no engagement with those defined by Lederach as middle range leaders (ethnic and religious leaders, academics, intellectuals and humanitarian leaders) or grassroots leadership (leaders of indigenous NGOs, community development workers, local health officials or refugee camp leaders) (Lederach 1997, pp. 38-43). As noted by Jeong (2005, pp. 32,33), a multilevel process approach allows for different dynamics between the macro and micro social space of peacebuilding with grassroots community leaders such as ‘health officials and refugee camp leaders ... more closely connected to meeting the needs of local people than ... the political and military elite, who are mostly detached from aid recipients’. Those who view themselves as deeply affected by the both the direct and structural violence of war and displacement ‘must be motivated to participate in decisionmaking’ (Jeong 2005, p. 33). Furthermore, community organisations who live closer to the community than the elites are in a more suitable position to develop links across communal boundaries with informal, low-key, non-threatening contacts and programs (Jeong 2005, p. 33).

Recognising local agency and the importance of process, there are several approaches that depart to varying degrees from liberal peacebuilding, including resilience peace and emancipatory peace. These are intercultural approaches that seek to engage, rather than bypass or ignore, both local meanings of peace and local peace actors (Funk 2012, p. 398). The themes behind resilience peace

seek to understand peace as a locally constructed reality and to view culture as a resource rather than an obstacle or constraint (Funk 2012, p. 398). A bottom-up approach results in communities who are empowered to negotiate and develop a form of human security, or sustainable positive peace, which is fitted to their needs. This inclusive approach, which recognises the contribution of local agency, is able to centre human security upon emancipation from oppression, domination and hegemony, as well as want (Richmond 2007, p. 461). There is a tendency to categorise those operating at the grassroots — the community or local level — as being only involved in day to day activities of relief and being concerned only with triaging the immediate effects of the conflict (ensuring adequate food, water, shelter and safety). There are accusations of bias, and that the communities are too divided by the identity politics of the conflict, being separated by ethnicity, religion and historical hostilities (Lederach 2013). There is often a perception of the local as being ‘the problem’ and little value is placed on the problem-solving resources and practices that can be drawn upon when the top-down or hierarchical approach is abandoned (Chandler 2015, p. 28). As Chandler (2015, p. 31) states, the resilience approach:

does not start from the position of an external subject equipped with superior interventionalist knowledge or instrumental goals. ... here, local responses and practices are seen as key to positive transformation once the relational context, through which the problem is understood to be generated can be understood and addressed.

The causes of conflict in Burma/Myanmar are deeply entrenched in historical dynamics of power and exclusion, rather than being the result of an external shock or pressure, and, as such, there is a concern that hierarchical and imported models of peacebuilding and peacebuilding resources will not have a sustainable or positive peace result. As Funk (2012, p. 401) puts it, “[t]he sustainability of contextually grounded peace efforts is a function of the fact that indigenous cultural resources ... are intrinsically renewable through the application of local skills and knowledge”. The prioritising of local knowledge aspires to challenge the hierarchical nature of peacebuilding in favour of a system where communities can act to challenge the causes and effects of conflict.

Emancipatory peace involves a process where marginalised peoples are recognised and represented, and radical reform removes discourses and practices of domination. Orthodox thinking sees emancipation through a limited political lens and prioritises political instruments as the remedy (Roberts 2011, p. 2538). The critique is that while political instruments such as ‘rule of law’ may serve to emancipate some, it will not work in conflicts where the rule of law is corrupted to ensure the entrenchment of the powerful elite and structural inequalities.

A critique of these approaches, raised by Chandler (2015, p. 36), is the question of why intervene at all if local knowledge is being supported, as intervention is consciously aimed at transforming the minds and understanding of local communities which unavoidably creates a hierarchy of understanding. Indeed, to achieve a genuine engagement of local knowledge, skills and resilience, the process of peace must involve an inclusiveness beyond the rhetoric of local ownership and participation. If not, then there is a risk that peace operations will eventually fail because their very design rests on externalised legitimacy and norms (Leonardsson and Rudd 2015).

To build a positive peace thus requires developing a critical consciousness and ability to think about, and address, issues of power and its relationship to privilege and oppression, division and conflict (Freire 1970). First introduced by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, the concept of *conscientization* — the development and awareness of one's position in social, political, economic, cultural, and historical contexts, with a particular emphasis on a critical understanding of one's position in power, privilege, and oppression — would thus be essential for any truly transformative peace process. Understanding power imbalances and the root cause of conflict is thus seen as fundamental, and seeking to redress this power imbalance is essential to establish positive peace.

Military impunity is an issue in Burma/Myanmar which encompasses both power imbalance and lack of justice for victims of the civil war. As many of those who committed human rights violations are both still within the power structures of Burma/Myanmar and embedded into the peace process (Aung 2015) the current peace process has no allowance for transitional justice, seemingly by design. Lederach's (1999) concept of *justpeace*, meanwhile, is holistic and sees peace as both the method and the outcome. Schirch (2002, p. 4) states that justpeace exists 'where there are a sustainable set of structures and processes that allow humanity to meet their basic human needs with an absence of both direct violence and structural violence'. Justpeace is a process with an emphasis on a multi-strategy approach to peacebuilding, which includes a strong focus on grassroots and 'people power' or community empowerment and seeks to empower conflict participants to play a role in peacebuilding. In order to change social structures in favour of peace, social justice and ecological balance, people at the grassroots level must play an important role (Johannessen 2007; Lederach 1999; Sen 1999). Justpeace is a process in which communities are important stakeholders — rather than recipients of a negotiated outcome from a top-down procedure. Justpeace is not negotiation-centric but develops 'practices and frameworks for understanding how to create and sustain collaborative nonviolent processes for structural change' (Lederach 1999, p. 32).

When formal negotiated peace agreements fail to understand the link between direct violence and structural violence, and only seek to address the cessation of overt violence, such as the case with ceasefire agreements, a *justice gap* emerges. According to Lederach (1999, p. 28), justice gaps ‘emerge from a reductionism focused on techniques driven by a need to find quick fixes and solutions to complex, long term problems rather than a systematic understanding of peace-building as a process-structure’. Failing to address the underlying root cause of the violence may only lead to negative peace and certainly will produce a justice gap.

Development and peacebuilding efforts both have a history of essentialising and homogenising the developing world and its peoples. Both development and peacebuilding have been accused of reproducing and valorising particular forms of western knowledge to maintain the economic and intellectual superiority of the West (Kothari 2002, p. 40; Richmond 2007, p. 470). Richmond (2015, p. 51) points out the pattern of neo-colonialism:

Modernisation and development, peacebuilding and state-building praxis maintain similar patterns of structural engagement with their subjects as did colonialism. Blaming local actors for their own ills and conditionality remains a common pattern ... by the sovereigns of intervention, imbuing it with a neo-colonial character from the perspectives of some analysts.

Peacebuilding and development practices can reflect, reinforce and distort existing power structures and inequalities via a top-down approach that fails to include and listen to marginalised and minority people.

Any peacebuilding approach that offers marginalised, minority and oppressed peoples merely the opportunity to ‘join and mirror’ ignores a desire and sovereign right of the marginalised to autonomy (Richmond 2015, p. 56). Such an approach is entrenched in the belief that the agenda of the powerful is ‘superior’ to that of the marginalised. There is only an offer of *assistance*, not an offer for the marginalised to resist, to have local agency or ownership of their future. Neo-colonialism exists in Burma/Myanmar — ironically a boastfully post-colonial state from the view of the nationalistic ruling class — where the hegemonic imposition comes both from the Burman majority and the centralisation of all services by the state, as well as from the interaction of vulnerable and marginalised people by INGOs and peacebuilding agencies. This has been well expressed by a Kachin woman and author, Stella Naw, who writes:

Cultural assimilation of minorities serves only to erase our ethnic identity and reconstruct a new one that is submissive to the Burman power structure. Full assimilation is not an option;

ethnic minorities are not empowered by being brought into the fold of Burmanization (Naw 2015).

Neo-colonialism refers to the attitudes and ideology that accompanies domination. There is a belief on the part of the colonisers in the superiority of one's own culture values and political and/or economic systems over that of the others, and that this 'superiority' justifies imposing one's own 'naturally' superior system on others 'for their own good' (Ife 2002, p. 114; Richmond 2015, p. 53). Neo-colonialism, just as colonialism before it, subjects those colonised peoples to domination in the interests of territorial expansion, financial profit, or both (Ife 2002, p. 113).

While there is clearly a need to decolonise development and peacebuilding by including and supporting local agency, knowledge and grassroots approaches, authoritarian political systems are likely to see community-based and civil society organisations as threats. Therefore, there needs to be special attention and support given to nurture civil society, community-based and advocacy organisations (Jeong 2005).

Decolonisation is aligned with post-modernism, which denies the single world view. As recognised by Ife (2002, pp. 114-5), any attempt to develop a 'universalist understanding of history, politics or indeed, community development, based on universally applicable generalisations, is effectively an attempt to impose one particular definition of reality on other people and to privilege one view over the other'. Modernism believes in progress and rationality, but it assumes that there is one right answer, while post-modernism and the decolonisation movement accept the validity of a diversity of viewpoints and experiences. The current Myanmar formal peace process, which seeks national unity above anything else, is clearly following the modernist conception of unifying discourses (Ife 2002, p. 117), rather than accepting the diverse concerns and viewpoints of the Burma/Myanmar's various ethnic peoples.

### **3.5 Feminism, peace and women's participation**

Feminist movements have an emancipatory agenda and it is this agenda that is compatible with the degree of change needed to challenge structural violence and create a culture of peace in Burma/Myanmar. Women's organisations are critical to the culture of peace on the Thai-Burma border having led the way in challenging military organisations, overcoming ethnic divisions and challenging a traditionally patriarchal culture by empowering local women in leadership positions.

The work of some feminist theorists such as Brock-Utne (1990) and Reardon (1990) draws a direct link between feminine values — such as good communication skills, willingness and the flexibility to compromise, practical problem-solving, and caring for people above abstract principles (Anderson 1999) — and a culture of nonviolence and peace.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 promotes women's participation in peacebuilding:

[This] resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

Demanding a place at the peace table is a feminist approach, as reflected in Security Council Resolution 1325 (Schirch and Sewak 2005; United Nations Security Council), and women's organisations on the Thai-Burma border, for example, are demanding a place at the peace-talk table yet negotiations have been exclusively between the government and armed combatant groups.

UNSC Resolution 1325 calls for women to be included as active agents in the peace process. However, without challenging and transforming the systems of power, cooperating with this system may only strengthen dominant power structures and contribute to negative peace. This means that merely including women in the peace process is not the only answer (Hudson 2011) as adding women to a structurally unequal system is unlikely to produce positive peace. Warren and Cady (1994, p. 6) identified oppressive social frameworks relevant to this context, including a valuing of hierarchical thinking, a conception of power as 'power over', and a logic of domination that presumes superiority justifies subordination. This oppressive social framework is contested in Burma/Myanmar by women and those from ethnic minority groups.

The holistic nature of the range of civil society organisations, which often collaborate and cooperate, is a result of understanding the interconnectedness of their respective issues. Women's rights, refugee rights, ethnic rights, and environmental rights are interrelated — all are the result of a patriarchal power structure that sees women, children and minorities as unequal, and therefore undeserving of an equitable, socially just life. This understanding of the holistic nature of violence and peace is also seen in the philosophy of ecofeminism, which is a political framework that makes:

the historical links between neoliberal capital, militarism, corporate science, worker alienation, domestic violence, reproductive technologies, sex tourism, child molestation, neocolonialism, Islamophobia, extractivism, nuclear weapons, industrial toxins, land and water grabs, deforestation, genetic engineering, climate change and the myth of modern progress. (Salleh 2014, p. ix)

Despite the positive outcome that the genuine participation of women could deliver to the ongoing peace process in Burma/Myanmar, women remain under-represented in formal roles. As pointed out by the work of the Council on Foreign Relations (n.d.), at the January and August 2016 talks women represented only 8 percent and 13 percent out of almost 700 delegates respectively — falling well short of the 30 percent target set. Only 4 percent of the committee leading the current peace process were women, following a pattern seen in the previous Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement where only four of the sixty-seven official negotiators (6 percent) were women. Limited by the terms of the 2008 Constitution, the transition to democracy is being controlled by the former military regime, and it is those male power structures — steeped in patriarchy — that are determining the peace process (Aung 2015). With the focus on unity and rule of law, the peace process is pushing ahead but this focus is problematic for women in particular as ‘domestic law’s hegemonic quality – its tendency to buttress powerful societal forces make it an unreliable check on oppressive power... there needs to be an awareness that legalism, a focus on law’s normativity... may privilege elite understandings and render invisible key issues affecting disenfranchised groups’ (Bell et al. 2007, p. 83). The formal peace process is not only a product of power relations in the decision-making process leading to its institutional design but an exercise in power itself.

Resistance arises when power relations are not accepted as legitimate, where there is a discrepancy between those who conform and those who do not (Bernath and Rubli 2016, p. 88). In the case of CBO’s based on the Thai-Burma border, there is a resistance to a process that does not include meaningful political dialogue and which is focused only on ending direct violence without the structural changes necessary to make peace possible. According to Bernath and Rubli (2016, p. 89), it is important to understand ‘those who resist and that which is being resisted, those who exercise power and those on whom power is exercised, those who ascribe legitimacy and those enjoying legitimacy’. It is, therefore, important to consider the power relations in the formal peace process of Burma/Myanmar, as it is women and the vulnerable who are resisting a peace process that has no process for political discussion or structural change. Researchers have established that for women victims of violence the change sought is structural, meaning a more equitable distribution of political, social or economic power, gender-just laws, employment provisions, health care, security,

and services to meet their family and their own basic needs (Naraghi-Anderlini 2005, p. 109; Porter 2015, p. 48).

Justice and a socially just peace have been raised as important by the contributors to this research, as will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. In the context of the civil war in Burma/Myanmar, overwhelmingly civilians have been the casualties of violence and displacement, and women are systematically targeted with all forms of sexual abuse, and yet a peaceful future will mean that victims and perpetrators will have to live side by side after the war (Naraghi-Anderlini 2005, p. 103). Limiting peace prospects to dismantling direct violence is failing to respond to the voices of the vulnerable and marginalised, including the ethnic minorities and women.

Women's contribution to peace is often ignored because it can take unconventional forms, and challenge the structure of both the state and the patriarchy. It often occurs outside of formal peace processes and can be overlooked because often household and local forms of peace work and conflict prevention are considered merely extensions of a women's normative gender role (Narang and Saini 2013, p. 1115). The teacher and friend contributors to this research spoke, for example, of programs such as 'Health as a Bridge for Peace' (BPHWT), 'Children Peace Maker' – a book published to inspire children to think about peace (KWAT), the 'Women is a peace builder' program run by both KWO and WLB, and training of youth and women in leadership and social justice issues by women's organisations and School for Shan State Nationalities Youth (SSSNY). Consolidating peace from the grassroots has been hindered by the top-down state-centred approach supported by the United Nations, which neglects women and local agency, resilience and capacity of communities in conflict and community organisations. This type of peacebuilding model reproduces the relationship between dominator and dominated and is stuck in a neocolonialist mindset (Pureza and Cravo 2009). For a peace process to be a transformative process, which includes social justice rectifications, the process itself needs to ensure it is inclusive of women and the vulnerable in order to promote a sustainable and positive peace outcome.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that peace processes which only address direct violence without addressing structural violence will only reinforce the structural violence and lead to negative peace. For positive peace, there needs to be a justpeace process that will address structural violence and its enabler —

cultural violence — so that the nested violence pattern can be changed or broken. In Chapters 5 and 6 there is an examination of the research sub-question ‘In what ways might the peace process limit the prospects of a positive peace outcome?’ which goes beyond identifying the challenges to the peace process and examines how missing critical elements in the formal peace process are creating further obstacles to a sustainable positive peace.

The issue of power in the Burma/Myanmar peace process also needs to be confronted, irrespective of whether it is an international-led peacebuilding program creating cultural hegemony which restricts or erodes the space for local agency and CBOs, or the military restricting conditions of the peace process having already constitutionally constrained the process, or the government of Burma/Myanmar failing to understand the importance of plurality and autonomy going forward. This chapter has highlighted how CBOs operating on the Thai-Burma border have the potential to exercise their local agency to pursue a more resilient and emancipatory peace as a challenge to the prevailing liberal peacebuilding model of top-down development and democratisation. This potential will be further explored in Chapters 5 and 6 from the perspective of the contributors to this research.



Land mine victim at Loi Kaw Wan IDP camp, 2008. Photo credit: Zoe Bedford

## Chapter 4: Historical Context

*‘Radical simply means ‘grasping things at the root’’  
– Angela Davis, speech, 25 June 1987*

Burma/Myanmar’s history is a chronicle of power-grabs and militarisation. It can also be seen as a record of resistance. Every time there was an oppressive force in a dominant position there were forces which opposed and organised against this power. Burma/Myanmar’s pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history is one of division and conflict. It is a land with a great many assets and geographic strategic significance being situated between China and India. It is rich in natural resources, with an abundance of agricultural produce, and is well positioned in South East Asia to benefit from tourism, yet Burma/Myanmar has failed to reach its potential (as will be further examined in this chapter) and is now one of the poorest nation states in Asia. This is due to decades of authoritarian rule and civil war and the desire of those in power to prioritise their personal gains over nation-building. Burma/Myanmar’s recent history includes a number of significant key events: colonial rule; the overthrow of colonial rule; natural disasters; and, most significantly, three major internal conflicts.

The three major internal conflicts can be summarised as: reactive pro-democracy movements challenging authoritarian rule; civil war conflict against ethnic minority peoples’ autonomy and the challenges of developing a federated nation; and a sectarian conflict where one minority is being

persecuted and not afforded the physical or legal protection of the state. Arguably all of these conflicts were, and are, uprisings against authoritarian centralised power that prioritised suppression and control into the hands of an elite few. It is the second of these conflicts — Burma/Myanmar’s civil war against its ethnic peoples — that is the subject of this thesis.

Although the use of such terms as *ethnic-minorities peoples* and *borderlands* could make the casual observer think that Burma/Myanmar’s ethnic peoples are few in number, in fact their numbers are great. When all 135 minority ethnic groups<sup>16</sup> are combined they make up approximately one-third of Burma/Myanmar’s population and occupy over half of Burma/Myanmar’s land mass, predominantly — and significantly in terms of traditional causes of conflict — in the resource rich mountainous states which border Thailand, China, India and Bangladesh (Steinberg 2010).<sup>17</sup> Similarly, the influence of Burma/Myanmar’s ethnic minorities people on the country’s history is significant and pervasive. There is no major event in Burma/Myanmar’s modern history where the ethnic minority people have not been significantly involved — or more accurately *excluded* — and adversely impacted. The many ethnic groups of Burma/Myanmar are, it seems, central to Burma/Myanmar’s future peace and prosperity, because of their continued social and political exclusion and the incursions of violence against them have made peace and prosperity unattainable.

While a country’s history is shared by its people, it also often predominantly reflects the victor’s version of the truth — as history is often written by those who end up in power. To understand the multifaceted history and perspectives of those who were not the victor or in power can seem radical, but as it has been said being radical is simply ‘grasping things at the root’.<sup>18</sup> In this same vein, it is ethnic minority peoples, who for decades opposed the military regime’s centralist policies, that are the groups demanding pluralistic political arrangements and a right to political participation. They do this with deep and personal understanding of Burma/Myanmar’s long history and how these patterns of control — centralising power and exercising dominance over those who are in the periphery or who will not comply — are influencing Burma/Myanmar’s present day issues of conflict, sectarian violence, oppression, resistance and corruption (Human Rights Watch 2019; Stanton 2017).

---

<sup>16</sup> There are 135 ethnic minority groups recognised in Burma/Myanmar, defined via the state and the *Taingyintha* process (Cheesman 2017, p. 462). This thesis focuses on CBOs from three ethnic groups; the Karen, Shan and Kachin.

<sup>17</sup> The remaining population of Burma/Myanmar comprises ethnic Bamar people who make up approximately 68% of the population, the majority peoples, Bamar, mostly reside in the Irrawaddy basin, which covers the Magwe, Sagaing, Mandalay, Bago, Yangon and Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) divisions.

<sup>18</sup> American feminist activist Angela Davis (1987).

#### 4.1 Pre-colonial rule

In many ways Burma/Myanmar's pre-colonial times still have great influence on power and politics in modern Burma/Myanmar (Taylor 2009, p. 5). Pre-colonial Burma/Myanmar has a history of many hundreds of years and to understand the ways that pre-colonial times have influenced modern Burma/Myanmar, and laid the groundwork for conflict, there are a few aspects to discuss: the role of kings, kingdoms and principalities; how war and violence shaped pre-colonial Burma/Myanmar; how power was perceived and contested; social mobility; and the role and relationship of those in power to Buddhism.

In pre-colonial times, Burma/Myanmar was an ethnically pluralistic country (Ikeya 2012, p. 19). It was not uniformly ruled, but instead ruled by a number of monarchs and princes who had control over territories. These territories were not fixed but at times expanded over much of modern day Burma/Myanmar. In lower Burma/Myanmar, it was the Mon in the south and Arakanese rulers in the south west who for various periods had their own kingdoms (Fink 2009, p. 9). In the north east, the Shan kingdoms were engaged in expansion into Thailand. Borders and boundaries were not fixed and the size of the kingdoms fluctuated significantly depending on the strength or weakness of the monarchs as, in times of weakness, princes and tributary states would revolt and seek power for themselves (Fink 2009).

This history of power shifting and warring created a precursor for modern day Burma/Myanmar. Importantly, in pre-colonial Burma/Myanmar there was no fixed caste system as was the case in India. Consequently, there was a large amount of social mobility both upward and downward. Social and political status was still important, with monks considered higher in status than lay people, elders higher than young people, and people within a monarch's inner circle higher than commoners. A patron-client model was in operation with those inferior in status providing goods and services to those considered superior in return for their protection (Fink 2009).

The power of the monarchs was absolute within their kingdom, but the king's power was not infinite in reach nor fixed in nature and it was constantly being contested. Steinberg (2010) and South (2011 p34) both describes a monarch's power as a 'mandala' system with the power radiating outwards. The power was greater in strength in areas closer to the seat of power, but those in distant regions might owe allegiance and pay tribute to one or more kingdoms.

In this environment of mobility and fluidity there exists inherent instability. People may go from humble social origins to being in a monarch's favour and having a position in their administration, only to find they lose their job or are even executed when that monarch is overthrown. The monarchs too, felt the pressure of this mandala system of power and to assuage the resulting fear and paranoia, members of the royalty were often patrons of the *Sangha* (Buddhist religious institution), positioning themselves to receive favour from an institution with significant influence over the people. Burmese kings often waged war in the name of Buddhism (Fink 2009) and the pre-colonial era of kings is often associated with the glorification of the Buddhist faith (Fink 2009).

This pattern would continue in the post-colonial period with the military regime wanting to hold power from a central seat and 'radiating' it out to the borderlands, using war and dominance, as Cady expressed 'the spirit of the exercise of authority owes much to pre-British custom' (cited in Holliday 2011 p. 15), using systems of divide and conquer — or patron and protector — against ethnic minority people, and having a paranoid viewpoint of finite power. It is interesting to note that, despite the monk-led 2007 Saffron Revolution, the Sangha is the only institution in Burma/Myanmar today which is as large as the Tatmadaw.

#### **4.2 Colonial rule: Divisive pattern**

Although British forces were in Burma/Myanmar for only two generations, from 1885 to 1948, the effects of the colonial occupation of Burma/Myanmar can be felt in the divide and conquer manoeuvres and militarisation of the modern Burmese state. The British destroyed much and built very little, leaving institutional weakness and ethnic nationalism as a colonial legacy (Callaghan 2004; Fink 2009; Holliday 2011; Rogers 2012; Steinberg 2010). As a result of the British colonial forces ruling Burma/Myanmar as an annexed province of British India, rather than a country in its own right, they 'favoured the laissez-faire policy by government, strong police control, easy money, and abundant Indian labour ... Few [British] associated with Burmese people or knew anything about Burma except as a place to do business' (Cady cited in Holliday 2011, p. 31). The focus of the British colonial period was first on conquest via three pacification campaigns, then economic exploitation by the same armed forces, who 'ensured that even indigenous Burmese met the state at the end of a rifle' (Callahan 2004, p. 14).

British colonialism opened Burma/Myanmar up economically. With investment in the national railway system (Holliday 2011, p. 30), rice cultivation and export grew from 162,000 tons to two

million in the colonial period (Holliday 2011, p. 30) making Burma/Myanmar the 'rice bowl of Asia' (Turnell 2009a). However, the focus on export and extractive industries (oil and teak), and the favourable business conditions for imperial companies and people of mercantile or '*Chettiar*' castes, meant that the real beneficiaries of this growth were, on the most part, not local Burmese (Callahan 2004; Charney 2009; Fink 2009; Steinberg 2010; Turnell 2009a).

Burma/Myanmar was built by armed force and relied frequently on an extensive security apparatus. The British did not perceive any threat externally in terms of a border invasion, but significantly 'internal security' was their primary focus and concern (Callahan 2004, p. 27). One effect of modernity and colonisation was an increase in urbanisation and international migration to Rangoon (Ikeya 2012 p. 22) with no more than 30 percent of Rangoon residents being ethnically Burmese by the late 1930s. It was, as Holliday (2011, p. 31) described, a 'foreign city on Burmese soil'. With the migration of Indians and others to Burma came an increase in xenophobia towards foreigners, and Burmese 'anger and resentment periodically exploded in the form of anti-Indian and anti-Chinese riots' (Fink 2009, p. 15). As will be discussed further in this chapter, this is another legacy of colonialism that has lasted until today.

Tensions also erupted over the lack of respect British authorities showed towards Buddhism. The British established secular education in both English and Burmese, and they abolished the position of *thathanabaing*, the supreme patriarch and administrative head of the *Sangha* (Steinberg 2010, p. 22). In the ethnic mountainous regions, Christian missionaries were successful in converting Karen, Karenni, Kachin and Chin people to Christianity. Churches also set up schools and hospitals in hill tribe areas allowing ethnic minority people access to healthcare and education (Fink 2009).

There was disparity between the treatment of Burmans and ethnic Karen. This can be seen most clearly in the disproportionately low representation of Burmans in the colonial armed forces in Burma. Karen, Chin and Kachin recruits made up 80.32% of the army despite representing only 12.77% of the population, while Burman soldiers only made up 12.30% (Callahan 2004, p. 35; Charney 2009, p. 55). The reason behind this disparity is argued by the historian John Furnival (as cited in Callahan 2004, p. 35) to be a 'policy to exclude Burmans [which] came out of British concerns about arming and training Burmans who might someday be swept up in the growing anti-colonial nationalist movement'.

This concern may seem like a self-fulfilling prophecy, as indeed the resentment of British economic exploitation, and experiences of xenophobia, anti-colonialism and the exclusion of Burmans from the military, were indeed disastrous and set a dangerous path for the independence movement. Fuelled by national pride and resentment of the British, a 'powerful ethnic nationalism, based narrowly on the idea of a Buddhist and Burmese speaking peoples took root' (Myint-U 2006, p. 197).

### **4.3 Independence movement: Uniting or dividing a country?**

Beginning with the *Dobama Asiayone* (translated to '*Our Burma Association*'), founded in 1930 following several 'race-riots' in Rangoon, the target of the Burman nationalist agenda was indeed those Burmese ethnic groups that collaborated with the British Imperial forces. Renouncing foreign influences in language, clothing and literature, the Dobama Asiayone rallied support by targeting indigenous ethnic people who took English names, ate English food, or wore English clothes and labelling them as collaborators. Dobama activists claimed the politically motivated title *Thakin* meaning 'Master' while those branded collaborators were called *Thudo* (meaning those who did not love their country) (Callahan 2004, p. 36; Holliday 2011).

By the 1930s, every major nationalist or religious organisation, including the Dobama Asiayone, had its own '*Tat*', a unit designed to give (male) youths basic military and physical training for the nationalist movement (Ikeya 2012, p. 160). These Tats became paramilitary units or 'private armies' (although often unarmed) linked to private patrons, unions (including Student University Unions) and political parties. The Tats further institutionalised the ethnically demarcated boundaries between 'collaborators' and 'nationalists' (Callahan 2014, p. 39).

However, it was World War II and the entanglement of countries like Burma/Myanmar in the global events of the war that turned the tide of the independence struggle. Led by young revolutionary Aung San, a group of nationalist radicals was recruited by Japan to form the Burmese Independence Army (BIA) with the goal of expelling the British from Burma/Myanmar in 1942 (Holliday 2011, p. 37). While the BIA were at first pleased by the Japanese persecution of the Indian and Chinese communities and even the ethnic Karen in the Delta regions of Rangoon, it soon became apparent that in colluding with the Japanese Imperial forces they had simply removed one occupying force to replace it with another. Aung San led a revolt in 1945 against the Japanese occupiers and joined the British in driving the Japanese out of Burma/Myanmar. In the post-WWII environment, it became

clear that a return to British Colonial rule was not feasible and plans were negotiated for Burma/Myanmar's independence in 1948 (Fink 2009; Holliday 2011).

British colonial rule ended with a mixed legacy for Burma/Myanmar: the economy was opened up, infrastructure built, and arguably professional administration and legal systems introduced alongside the idea of legislative government; however, the encouragement of immigration and the use of ethnic minorities in the colonial army created new forms of ethnic tensions (Fink 2009, p. 16). This also had the effect of linking Burma/Myanmar's independence struggle with the military and Burma/Myanmar's national heroes with its Generals (like *Bogyoke* (Major-General) Aung San). The Tatmadaw would later even claim the independence struggle as their victory alone (Fink 2009; Steinberg 2010).

The nature of Burma/Myanmar's separation from Britain, so closely connected to Japanese Imperialist forces and WWII, had the effect of both creating and aggravating racial tension between Burman and ethnic-minority peoples in central Burma and in the frontier areas alike. The collaboration of the Burmans with the Japanese — fighting against not only the British but also Karen, Kachin and Chin people during the war — as well as the collaboration of the Karen with the British based on their promises of post-war autonomy or independence (a commitment that the British did not deliver during Burmese independence negotiations), showed how wartime guerrilla armies and soldiers could end up fighting against the same enemy but for very different visions of the future (Callahan 2004, p. 85).

#### **4.4 Panglong Agreement and 1947 Constitution**

Around the time of independence under the 1947 agreement between Aung San and British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, two significant events occurred which signaled the possibility of a different more pluralistic future for Burma. The first was the Panglong Agreement, signed in February 1947 between the Burmese government under Aung San and the 'frontier' Shan, Kachin and Chin peoples, and the second was the 1947 Constitution enacting the 'Union of Burma'. Since the Panglong Agreement has had such an enduring legacy it is important to not only examine the reason behind it, but also to ask why the Constitution backtracked on its promises.

Firstly, it is pertinent to look at who was included and who was excluded from the negotiations for the Panglong Agreement. The negotiating party on behalf of the Government was General Aung San

of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) Party, and the ethnic minorities groups involved — the Shan, Kachin and Chin — were represented by their traditional leaders, Shan *Saophas* and Kachin *Duwas* as well as a delegation from Chin State. A Karen delegation was also present but only had observer status (Fink 2009; Lintner 1994; Walton 2008). Excluded groups were the Mon, Arakanese, Wa and Naga peoples and the reasons for their exclusion are quite varied. Mon and Arakanese were excluded because their geographic boundaries fell within the British concept of so-called 'Ministerial Burma' and therefore they were not considered peoples from the frontier areas. Wa and Naga were excluded because of the believed 'primitive nature of their civilizations and the impossibility of their finding persons who will be able to assist in the drawing up of Burma's future Constitution' (Tinker cited in Walton 2008, p. 903).

General Aung San was a key participant in the Panglong agreement and the subsequent 1947 Constitution. Aung San was at this time a national revolutionary hero and was set to become the first Prime Minister of Burma/Myanmar. He also held views which supported autonomy for ethnic minority peoples, stating before the Panglong Conference: 'As for the people of the Frontier Areas, they must decide their own future. If they wish to come in with us we will welcome them on equal terms' (Maung Maung cited in Walton 2008, p. 896). Aung San also drafted the 1947 Constitution where he stressed the importance of a secular society and did not prescribe an official religion for Burma/Myanmar, stating instead that the Government would be neutral on matters of religion (Sakhong 2003, p. 219).

One fatal flaw in both the Panglong Agreement and the 1947 Constitution was that much of the implementation was reliant on the unifying vision of the leader Aung San. When Aung San was assassinated on 19 July 1947, by political rival U Saw, just months before the formal independence of Burma, those leaders that followed failed to follow through with Aung San's inclusive intentions, and even directly contradicted his secular legacy by changing the Constitution to give Buddhism a 'special position' in the country (Sakhong 2003, p. 219).

Both the Panglong Agreement and the 1947 Constitution are now seen to be documents that are more hopeful than perfect. Indeed, it is noted that as the drafting of the constitution was taking place, groups of Karen, Karennis, Mons, and the divided communities of Muslim Arakanese and Buddhist Arakanese were preparing for armed struggle as 'the failure to resolve adequately the ethnic nationalities' demands through the constitution drafting process set the conditions for outbreaks of violence later' (Fink 2009, p. 18).

The Panglong Agreement itself offered ethnic nationalities ‘full autonomy on internal affairs’ (Walton 2008, p. 908), and further stated that the concept of a federal union ‘was agreed upon’ (Fink 2009, p. 17). The Constitution allowed that ‘states would have their own state councils, whose members would also serve in the union government’s parliament, and one head of each state would automatically be a member of the union cabinet’ (Fink 2009, p. 17). It also facilitated that both Shan and Kayah states could opt to leave the Union after 10 years and hold a plebiscite on the issue (Callahan 2004, p. 158; Steinberg 2010, p. 57).

Another flaw in both the Panglong Agreement and Constitution was that, although they granted autonomy to the ethnic nationality states, the ethnic states had no independent funding nor financial autonomy. Funding was to have come from the central government, but was not delivered as Aung San had promised when stating ‘If Burma gets one Kyat,<sup>19</sup> then you will get one Kyat’ (Walton 2008, p. 897). Autonomy was accordingly in name only, as recognised by one Burmese consultant to the constitutional process who noted that ‘Our constitution, though federal in theory, is, in practice, unitary’ (Steinberg 2010, p. 53).

The changing of the Constitution to link the state with Buddhism, as well as policies put in place to outlaw education in languages other than Burmese, brought into existence a restrictive neo-colonialism that was not in the ‘Spirit of Panglong’. The ‘Spirit of Panglong’ is often referenced when leaders seek unity, most recently by Aung San Suu Kyi, now State Counsellor of Myanmar, who titled the three peace conferences held in 2016, 2017 and 2018 as the ‘21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong’ conference (Beech 2016; Burma News International 2019). However, while the day of the signing of the 1947 Panglong Agreement, 12 February, is celebrated as a national holiday known as ‘Unity Day’ (Lintner 2011; Sakhong 2003), the country descended into civil war immediately after the agreement was signed.

The Panglong Agreement and the 1947 Constitution were nevertheless significant in being an attempt at a pluralist future for Burma/Myanmar and for introducing the possibility of federalism. They promised a federal union and equality for at least some ethnic nationality states, including large amounts of autonomy, independent legislature, judiciary and administrative powers. However, as Linn (2013) states this agreement has never been honoured and the contested issues of equality

---

<sup>19</sup> The Kyat is a unit of Burmese currency.

between the majority Burman and the minority ethnic peoples, autonomy, independence and federalism continue to be at the core of the country's 60-year civil war.

#### **4.5 The outbreak of civil war: How did it happen?**

For years the British colonial forces referred to the central plains of Burma/Myanmar as 'Burma Proper' and the surrounding mountainous regions as 'the Excluded Areas'. This terminology changed as mapping exercises were carried out and a Legislative Council was introduced in 'Burma Proper' but the subsequent terms of 'Scheduled areas' and 'Frontier Areas' had a similar meaning (Holliday 2011). British occupation played a key role in exacerbating racial divisions (Holliday 2011) through what many have termed a 'divide and rule' strategy (Fink 2009; Holliday 2011; Steinberg 2010).

Before the transition to Burmese independence, there was already tension between ethnic Burmans and Karen peoples. The Karen at this time were about to lose their greatest ally, the British, who had in some circumstances offered an independent Karen state (Walton 2008). At the time of the Panglong Agreement, the Karen had just formed a representative political organisation called the Karen National Union (KNU). The KNU went to the conference as observers, facing the difficult prospect of being unable to form their own state due to the split of the ethnically Karen population across both the Frontier Areas and the Ministerial Burma zones (Walton 2008, p. 901). This division of their population set them at a disadvantage and Karen and Burmese leaders were unable to agree on the boundaries of a new Karen state (Fink 2009, p. 19). Also weighing against Karen statehood was 'a combination of false British promises, sustained Burman hostility towards the Karen and the refusal of Karen leadership to compromise when faced with the loss of British support' (Walton 2008, p. 901).

Tensions were raised by a number of massacres of Karen peoples, including one instance where a hand grenade was thrown into a church on Christmas Eve of 1948 (Callahan 2004, p. 132), and other military skirmishes resulted in the establishment of the armed Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) and the expulsion of Karen soldiers from Burman Army Units (Callahan 2004, p. 132-134; Walton 2008, p. 902). In addition, a demand by the Karen for an independent Karen-Mon state would have included parts of the Irrawaddy Delta, in the divisions now known as Bago, Yangon and Ayeyarwady (see Map page vii) where there are significant Karen populations, and ultimately surrounded the then capital of Rangoon. This proposal was rejected and tensions inflamed as the Burmese language press depicted this initiative as a plot to wipe out the Union government

(Callahan 2004, p. 132). In January 1949, just months after Burmese independence, the KNU revolted against the government of Burma/Myanmar triggering what was to become the longest civil war in modern history (Steinberg 2010, p. 12; South 2011).

Tensions also grew in other ethnic nationalities,<sup>20</sup> as the high hopes that had been put on the Panglong Agreement and 1947 Constitution for federalism were eroded and abolished. By the 1950s there were smaller rebellions among the Mon, Pa-O, Karennis and in Arakan state (Lintner 1994, p. 110). Tensions were raised in Shan state when Burmese troops, ostensibly sent in to expel the Kumingtang who had crossed over from China, began to mistreat Shan villagers and acted like an occupying army (Fink 2009, p. 19).

By the early 1960s, it became clear that there would be no federation in Burma/Myanmar. At a 1962 meeting, which became known as the 'Federal Seminar', ethnic minority leaders discussed proposals ranging from moderate constitutional amendments to more radical secessionist demands (Callahan 2004, p. 203). The meeting, however, coincided with a military coup by army leaders in the Tatmadaw (discussed further in Section 4.6) who arrested fifty people including the President, Prime Minister and the attendees of the Federal Seminar (Callahan 2004, p. 203). This event marked the beginning of the Shan rebellion. With a new hardline government emerging from the coup, any hopes for a pluralist, federated state were dashed, with the British ambassador at the time writing 'U Nu's Government shows no signs of being ready to make any major concessions to the federalists' (Callahan 2004, p. 203).

It is interesting to note that those who were party to the Panglong Agreement were among the last to rebel — the Shan and Kachin rebellions did not begin in earnest until it became clear that the military government had no intention of honouring Panglong — whereas those groups who were not party to the agreement rose up almost immediately following independence (Walton 2008, p. 907). From the time of independence there was little room for dissenting views, it was an environment where political victories came from 'identifying, disarming, and in some cases destroying enemies, not from accommodating and cooperating with opponents' (Callahan 2004, p. 113). It was in this environment that the state of civil war became the norm.

---

<sup>20</sup> Ethnic Nationalities people are also known as 'National races' or *taingyintha*.

#### **4.6 Militarisation, authoritarian rule and repression of independent civil society**

The government of the newly independent Burma/Myanmar faced a coup in 1958 when tensions within the AFPFL forced it to split into two factions. Elections were held in 1960, but these lacked any rigour and would not have been declared free and fair with 'soldiers posted near ballot boxes and aimed guns at the voters while they were voting' (Callahan 2004, p. 197). However, it was the 1962 coup led by Ne Win that was definitive, with the Tatmadaw seizing power — not to install any 'caretaker government' but to hold power for themselves by installing the military-dominated government of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP).

The excuses used by the Tatmadaw to justify the coup included that 'democracy had not worked', that the Union was 'disintegrating' and that the government was going to make too many concessions, including autonomy to minorities (Charney 2009, p. 108; Fink 2009, p. 24; Steinburg 2010, p. 60). The arrest of the 'Federal Seminar' attendees, including ethnic minority leaders, showed that this regime would make no concessions to federalism. Indeed, General Ne Win publicly deplored federalism as the first step to secession and confirmed that a unitary state with power at the centre was how the military would govern (Steinburg 2010, p. 69). This was further confirmed when, in 1974 while a new constitution was being drafted, a Chin delegation wrote recommending the adoption of federalism and a multiparty system (Fink 2009, p. 31). The Chin delegation's recommendation was rejected without any scope for negotiation on the subject.

Prior to the 1962 coup it would be fair to say that democracy in Burma/Myanmar was in a fledgling stage and had not yet managed to free itself from the influence of the 'Tats' or personal armies which had sprung up during Colonial times. Even within the AFPFL, there were a number of people exercising personal power with 'each leader [having] a power base, and his own entourage, and sometimes armed supporters ... mass organisations were affiliated with the AFPFL; a workers association, a peasants association,... [even] police were also organized along political lines' (Steinberg 2010, p. 54). The introduction of public welfare, such as free education, land reform and redistribution, and programs to build wells, roads and schools, was marred by politics with the provision of welfare tied to political allegiance. The concept of legal political opposition was new and often resisted. Fink (2009, p. 20) states that '[t]he political parties of the day sought to monopolise power and eliminate their opposition altogether. The idea that the opposition could play a constructive role in offering different points of view had no roots in Burma.'

In this environment, the Tatmadaw had grown from small disorganised units to a large professional army and, with numerous business entities under its control, it was able to be financially independent and powerful. The military under Ne Win had expanded from a few thousand men in 1948 to over 100,000 in 1962 (Fink 2009, p. 25). In the 1950s, the Tatmadaw was viewed with respect because of the role they played in delivering independence (Fink 2009, p. 21). However, after their seizure of power, the BSPP, which was linked explicitly to the Tatmadaw, sought to consolidate its power with a new constitution calling for a unitary state under one-party rule (Fink 2009, p. 31). Independent trade unions were outlawed, political opponents were jailed and their parties disbanded, journalists critical of the 'government' were jailed, and avenues for participation in civic life for ordinary citizens were increasingly limited (Fink 2009; Holiday 2011).

In this restrictive environment, the 'Burmese way to socialism' was launched. All banks, industries and large shops were confiscated by the state, and Chinese and Indian immigrants, who had previously run much of Burma's economic and administrative life, left the country. Burma/Myanmar, which had been economically ahead of neighbouring Thailand and Malaysia at the time, declined from 1964 onwards (Fink 2009, p. 27). The government became financed by profits from the exports of extractive industries, and all civil servants had to take a course in the 'Burmese way to socialism', which, although called 'socialism', was actually an ideology devoid of Marxism and contained instead a blend of Buddhism, socialism and nationalism (Turnell 2009, p. 223). All imported books and journals were subject to censorship and the local media was strictly controlled (Steinburg 2010).

Under the 1974 Constitution, the unitary state was implemented and, consequently, ethnic insurrections spread. The repression and isolation experienced by Burman people in central Burma/Myanmar was in high contrast with the border-based ethnic minority peoples who had contacts across the Thai and Bangladeshi borders, and therefore could communicate with and make allies in the outside world. Religious contacts of both Christian and Muslim groups intensified these relationships. However, this outside contact had the effect of casting suspicion on the ethnic minority groups that they were seeking to break up the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma. Military forces were assigned to the periphery regions, which for the ethnic minority people felt like occupying forces (Steinberg 2010, p. 70). A pattern of resistance and oppression of all peoples of Burma/Myanmar had begun and would seem to have no end, for, as Callahan (2004, p. 206, emphasis added) states: 'In this solution, *citizens* became barriers to the army's consolidation of political power and national sovereignty'.

#### **4.7 Democracy movement unites and the world takes notice**

The period since the establishment of the military junta in 1962 became the most bloody and repressive time in Burmese history with the military regime utterly intolerant of dissent (Lintner 2007, p. 45). However, it is important to note that resistance — both armed and non-violent/political — began almost immediately with university students leading protests in 1962 (Fink 2009, p. 24; Steinburg 2010, p. 63).

In early 1988, a student-led movement was sparked into action once again — ostensibly outraged at demonetisation, but spurred on by a demand for an end to military and one-party rule. Their demand was clear — democracy was the goal — and the students engaged in a frenzy of grassroots organising which saw them quickly joined by monks, professionals, workers, workers unions and civil servants (Fink 2001; Schock 2005). The movement at first lacked definitive leadership (Fink 2001) but, irrespective of this, the movement was able to implement a broad range of diverse non-violent actions, including protests, non-cooperation campaigns, local citizen committees, civil disobedience and other disruptive and creative nonviolent actions. In cities and towns throughout Burma/Myanmar, the activists were very successful with over 100,000 people estimated to have joined the struggle (Schock 2005).

At the height of the 1988 uprising, former President Ne Win resigned from his then position as party leader with a warning to protesters: ‘When the army shoots, it shoots to hit; it does not fire into the air to scare. Therefore, I warn those causing disturbances that they will not be spared if in the future the army is brought in to control disturbances’ (Rogers 2010, p. 81). Over 3,000 people were killed according to unofficial sources (Lintner 2007; Rogers 2010) and 10,000 students fled to the borderland and neighbouring countries after the junta’s crackdown — some eager to join the ethnic minority insurgents (Schock 2005). According to Fink (2001, p. 62), the junta was content to let the protesters seek refuge in the borderlands stating ‘[t]he military regime was eager for the students to move out of the cities recognising that as successful as the students had been in organizing people in urban areas, they were no match for the battle hardened Tatmadaw troops in the jungle.’

Out of this leadership vacuum rose Aung Sang Suu Kyi, and the National League for Democracy (NLD) party. The daughter of independence hero General Aung San, Aung San Suu Kyi’s charisma and unifying speeches helped to consolidate the movement and eventually the junta conceded to

holding general elections. However, the 1990 elections were marred by intimidation, the arrest of NLD candidates (Linter 2007) and a divisive dilemma faced by ethnic minority peoples. Ethnic minority groups were torn between fielding candidates for the NLD or fielding candidates for their own ethnic political parties (Fink 2009). In the end, the NLD won the vote by a landslide winning 392 out of the 485 seats (Fink 2009, p. 66). Significantly, candidates from 19 ethnic minority parties won parliamentary seats and most of those were political allies of the NLD. The junta were suspicious of Aung San Suu Kyi's experiment with inter-ethnic coalition building and saw it as a significant threat to military power and a unitary state. The threat of an alliance between the border regions and Rangoon was one the junta was not willing to face as the army lacked the capacity to fight united battles on so many fronts (Callahan 2004, p. 215).

The post-election aftermath saw the junta refuse to concede power to the NLD. NLD-elected ministers were arrested, including Aung San Suu Kyi, while other elected members of parliament, along with student organisers and ethnic activists, fled to the Thai-Burma Border to escape arrest (Fink 2001, p. 67).

Authoritarianism was further entrenched with the suspension of the 1974 Constitution and the declaration of martial law. The military junta re-named itself from the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and then changed the country's name from Burma to Myanmar without any referendum or consultation with the people (Callahan 2004, p. 211; Charney 2009 p. 171). Any attempts to 'rebrand', however, failed to fool the international community which condemned the continued human rights violations, taking of political prisoners, forced labour, forced relocation, and other crimes including the infamous 'Four Cuts' strategy being implemented in ethnic states and the continued civil wars. The United Nations General Assembly and UN Commission on Human Rights passed resolutions on the human rights situation in Burma every year from 1992 until 2010 (Swe 2012) calling for the release of political prisoners, the cessation of torture and arbitrary execution, and to end human rights violations causing excessive flows of refugees to neighbouring countries such as Thailand and Bangladesh (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 47/144).

#### **4.8 Asset rich but poverty stricken**

*'At the dawn of the twentieth century Burma was the richest country in Southeast Asia. At the dawn of the twenty-first century it was the poorest.'* (Turnell 2009a, p. 1).

Once considered to be the 'rice bowl' of Asia because of high levels of rice production and export, under the military junta's control rice production plummeted from pre-World War II export levels of 7 million tons annually to just 778,000 tons in 2011 (Boot 2012). Despite a recovery of sorts in recent years, Myanmar's rice exports remain at less than 50% of pre-World War II levels (Wai 2020). Ordinary Burmese people were the ones to suffer the most from this reversal of fortunes with between 12% and 36% of children under the age of three recorded as suffering moderate to severe malnutrition under SLORC/SPDC military regime management (Hudson-Rodd and Nyunt 2001, p. 2).

During the British colonial period, the Indian moneylenders who financed the expansion of rice production were known as *Chettiars*. Chettiars most commonly lent money for land purchase and improvement in the agricultural sector, with the loan being secured using the land itself as collateral. Therefore, even though it was through Chettiar financing that Burma was experiencing economic growth, when the Great Depression caused a global downturn in rice prices, many small Burmese farmers had their land foreclosed. The Chettiars became scapegoats for Burmese Nationalists who argued that the moneylenders were land grabbing (Turnell 2009a). Also during the colonial period, the British built roads and ports and began to extract and export Burma/Myanmar's rich natural reserves of teak, minerals (gold, silver, zinc, copper), precious gems (rubies, sapphires and jade) and oil (Steinberg 2010). These early twentieth century trends — the promotion of xenophobia, the scapegoating of foreigners, and unabated resource extraction while ordinary Burmese people become poorer — would continue under the military junta well into the twenty-first century.

From its inception, the Tatmadaw had the foresight to make itself financially independent from the Burmese Government. Beginning in the 1950s with the setting up of profit-making corporations — first shops, then larger profit-making ventures such as wholesale imports and exports — the Tatmadaw became a major player in the economy (Fink 2009, p. 22). Since it took power in the 1962 coup, the military junta consistently expropriated the country's output while dismantling its basic market institutions (Charney 2009, p. 106). There are no effective property rights in Burma/Myanmar outside of the state, and the centralisation of power within the military-state has enabled extensive dispossession and displacement of the country's small-holder farmers from their hereditary lands (Karen Peace Support Network 2019, p. 16). The regime spent far in excess of revenues and resorted to printing money to finance its spending, fuelling inflation (Turnell 2009b). Most of Burma/Myanmar's prominent corporations were owned by the military, and the country has

been judged by Transparency International as the second most corrupt in the world after Somalia (Turnell 2009b; Bak 2019).

In accordance with the junta's 'Burmese Way to Socialism', banks were either nationalised or closed and management of the banks was assigned to military officers (Turnell 2009a, p. 212-224). The impact of the coup and the junta's Burmese way to socialism on Burma/Myanmar's financial system was 'immediate, profound and deeply destructive' (Turnell 2009a, p. 223). Poor economic policy continued under the BSPP regime of General Ne Win, and indeed it was the numerology-guided decision in 1987 to withdraw from circulation all 25, 35, and 75 Kyat notes and instead issue 45 and 90 kyat<sup>21</sup> notes — without compensation for monies devalued, unlike previous demonetisation episodes — that plunged Burma/Myanmar into chaos. This demonetisation incident was the spark behind the 1988 student unrest which resulted in protests, mass killings of civilians, mass arrests and the end of the BSPP 'government' which was replaced by the SLORC and then the SPDC (Charney 2009; Turnell 2009a, p. 252).

One key facet of structural reform, the distribution of national spending, reveals two areas where structural violence is ingrained: education and healthcare. Under the military junta, state spending on the military was estimated to be between 35% or 45% of the national budget (Simpson et al. 2017) with education and health combined at a low 3% (Beyrer et al. 2016) of the budget. Yet even in the 2017 budget, spending on the military accounted for 13.95% of the total national budget making it the third highest budget line (behind planning and energy). Health and education *combined* only receive a total of 13% of the 2017 budget ('In Burma, students question size of military budget' 2018). This is in spite of these areas historically being grossly underfunded and underdeveloped. Defence spending is still prioritised over items that would help structural transformation, such as health and education (Lwin 2014), a model that privileges those in power over those who are vulnerable. Unfortunately, under the 2008 Constitution the military has the power to control its own budget so currently there is no easy solution. Additionally, a lack of political will to challenge military spending and to prioritise spending in other areas is evident.

---

<sup>21</sup> General Ne Win was known to use numerology for guidance and believed in the 'mythical virtues of the number 9' both the 45 and 90 kyat note relate to 9 as they are divisible by 9 and when 9+0 or 4+5 is added it equals 9 (Turnell 2009b, pp. 253,254).

This mismanagement of the economy and the brutal response to Burma/Myanmar's political uprising in 1988, led to international sanctions which the SPDC in turn conveniently blamed for the country's economic failings. The sanctions, however, cannot be blamed for Burma/Myanmar's poverty as the country was identified as a 'Least Developed Country' as early as 1987 under the junta-led 'Burmese Way to Socialism' economic policy (Swe 2012). Rather, it was the continuance of the military junta's policy to rely on resource extraction, energy and agricultural sectors to drive output and economic growth; dysfunctional policymaking institutions; degraded and missing infrastructure through failed and corrupt state investment; constant energy shortages; insecure property rights; and, a poorly educated and equipped workforce, that made the people of Burma/Myanmar the poorest in the region (Turnell 2015). At the same time, the military elites and their cronies profited from Burma/Myanmar's resource extraction and its system of 'quarantining' foreign exchange earnings from the country's public accounts, enriching themselves and the regime (Charney 2009 p. 203; Turnell 2009b) while their country is poverty stricken.

#### **4.9 Resource cursed?**

Under the military regime, the nation was in economic, social and political disarray due to the actions of an incompetent and corrupt regime that misused and misappropriated much of the wealth being produced from the nation's large mineral and energy reserves (Pick and Htwe Htwe 2010). Burma/Myanmar has been classed by some as a 'resource cursed' nation (Pogge 2008; Ross 2003) as it is a nation rich in natural resources but plagued with conflict and, ultimately, one that finds itself the poorest country in Asia. Underlining a reason behind the longstanding civil war, the most valuable natural resources in Burma/Myanmar are found almost exclusively in the ethnic borderland states, which are rich in teak, minerals, gemstones, and energy commodities, such as crude oil and natural gas.

Burma/Myanmar has emerged as a major regional supplier of natural gas in the Asia-Pacific, with Thailand and China as its biggest clients. Valued at around US\$3 billion annually this is a major revenue source for the Myanmar military elite (Htwe 2018). As one of its profit-making enterprises the military established the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) which means that the sale of Burma's non-renewable natural resources will not benefit the people of Burma/Myanmar, nor do they see benefits from increased domestic access to fuel and electricity (Human Rights Watch 2007). Historically this exploitation was compounded by the dual exchange rate system, a system which overvalued the Burmese currency, so that when gas earnings were recorded in the government's

published accounts in local currency, they translated into less than 1% of budget income. However, Turnell (2009b) notes that '[b]y contrast, if the same gas earnings [were] recorded at the market exchange rate, their contribution would more than double total state receipts, and largely eliminate Burma's fiscal deficit.'

Consequently, not only do those in ethnic minority areas share the nation's collective insult of the military elites profiting personally from the nation's energy reserves while the nation is the most impoverished in Asia, ethnic minority people also suffer a more acute, and sometimes very real, injury by virtue of the fact that these natural gas fields are situated within ethnic minority states — the Shwe Gas pipeline alone cuts across Burma/Myanmar's Arakan (Rakhine State), Kachin State, and Shan State (Ahmed 2013), with the Kanbauk Myaingkalay gas pipeline affecting Mon state and Karen State (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation 2003) — and the building of oil and gas pipelines and other 'economic' infrastructure is accompanied by increased militarisation, forced relocation and human rights abuses.

Not only do the military elite benefit directly from the revenue from these mega development projects, but the Tatmadaw was contracted to secure the areas proposed for mega development projects like mines, pipelines and dams. This resulted in local villagers in ethnic minority states being forced to comply with land seizures, forced relocation, restrictions on movement and travel, the loss of their fishing and farming lands, and other human rights abuses resulting from increased militarisation such as forced labour and rape (Earthrights International 2007; Shwe Gas Movement 2006, 2009). Furthermore, resource extraction or dam development of these areas impacts the environment irreparably and robs the ethnic minority peoples of the chance to exercise any autonomy of decision making over these projects and the preservation of their environment.

#### **4.10 Drugs and the Borderlands – Who is in control?**

The Tatmadaw and SPDC have long been involved in the drug trade in Burma/Myanmar for dual purposes — increasing revenue to the military and controlling the borderlands. Since the 1988 uprising the Tatmadaw has grown from a force of around 190,000 to 400,000 and with the military junta choosing to spend most of their allocated budget on weapons procurement, the army instituted a 'self-support system' to pay the wages of its soldiers which involved land confiscation from local farmers, and military involvement in the drug trade in both taxation on production and expansion of the army's own poppy fields (Lintner and Black 2009, p. 96). Indeed, it is access to the

drug trade which has led to the bulk of the infantry battalions (some 120 out of a total of 528 nationwide) being garrisoned near the poppy fields found in central and southern Shan state and, not unexpectedly, the presence of the military in high numbers has led to sustained fighting and resistance in Shan state (Linter and Black 2009, p. 97).

Several historical factors led to the rise in the drug trade and its entrenched place in the conflict. One factor was the gross mismanagement of the centrally planned economy by General Ne Win's regime which created a thriving black market. Another factor was the 1962 military coup and the brutal attempts by General Ne Win and the military regime to force a unitary state, after which ethnic military groups (representing around one-third of Burma/Myanmar's population) took up arms and retreated to the mountains, with many themselves turning to the opium trade to finance their own activities. And finally, the Ne Win decision to try to establish self-financing 'counter-insurgency militias' in the border regions also strengthened the drug trade. These militias, known as *Ka Kwe Ye* (KKY) units, had access to all government-controlled roads and virtual legal impunity to engage in the drugs trade in return for a promise to 'fight against the state's enemies' (Meehan 2011, p. 382)

Although officially the SPDC was spending between 40 and 60 percent of the annual budget on the military during the 1990s<sup>22</sup>, it is impossible to know exactly how much funding the military received in total as much of it came from a so-called 'whitening tax' on the foreign exchange profits reaped from the sale of opium and the methamphetamine (Callahan 2004, p. 212). The state has further provided business permits and government contracts to organisations known to be participants in the drugs trade and offered a money laundering service through the SPDC-owned Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings (UMEH) (Meehan 2011, p. 391). UMEH effectively became a slush fund, holding interests in banking, tourism, power companies, and the gem trade. With UMEH having no public reporting requirements, there was no accountability for this company of which 40% was owned by the Directorate of Defence Procurement and 60% owned by active and retired military officers (Callahan 2004, p. 213). By protecting elements of the illegal drugs and gems trade, the government 'offered lucrative business opportunities to influential members of former insurgent groups in return for greater cooperation with the state' (Meehan 2011, p. 391).

---

<sup>22</sup> This spending is disproportionately large, especially when compared to the health and education budget which was below 6% annual GDP combined, and considering that the Burmese military forces were engaged in no external conflicts during this time, only in funding and arming themselves for civil war (See: Back Pack Health Worker Team (2006) 'Chronic Emergency').

Unwillingly underpinning this path to wealth and excess used by military junta elites, and those who collude with them, are the losers of the drug trade: the farmers who grow the poppies — earning a pittance and having to pay taxes to various rebel groups and protection money to various government officials — and the opium and methamphetamines addicts, where some ethnic minority villages addiction reached levels as high as 70-80 percent of all male inhabitants (Lintner and Black 2009, pp. 57-60).

Other illicit industries also flourished in this environment. In Kachin state, the exploitation of resources, such as jade and gold, saw mining concessions corruptly given to Chinese interests or those who are cronies of the junta, and, although Kachin towns swelled in population, the only employment opportunities for locals were exploitative or dangerous — women have been most at risk with prostitution and sex trafficking growing (Kachin Women’s Association Thailand 2005). Illicit trade in the poaching and smuggling of endangered wild animals, and the selling of animal parts to neighbouring China and Thailand also flourished in this lawless environment (Karen Environmental and Social Action Network 2010).

Ultimately, illicit trade in drugs and the conflict became so intertwined that the drug trade could no longer be treated as simply a criminal issue or agricultural issue. As observed by Lintner and Black in 2009 (2009, p. 111), any ‘sensible approach to the drug problem in Burma includes tackling the political and ethnic issues... a lasting solution to Burma’s decades long ethnic conflicts has to be found before there can be any end to drug production in the Golden Triangle’. The drug problem will not be solved by simply a ceasefire agreement, for such agreements have been made and broken in the past and may have acted to exacerbate the conflict as the ‘[ceasefire] agreements did not seek to tackle the more intractable underlying issues surrounding the future status of the country’s ethnic minority regions and may be seen as creating a “kind of post-civil-war-not-quite-peace environment”’ (Callahan 2007, p. xiv). The 2019 International Crisis Group report states ‘the drugs trade is partly a symptom of Shan State’s conflicts, it is also an obstacle to sustainably ending them’ (International Crisis Group 2019). This ‘kind of post-civil-war-not-quite-peace environment’ is otherwise known as negative peace, where overt violence is stopped but the root causes such as injustice, inequality, poverty, discrimination and, in this case, tensions around access to natural resources, are left to fester and eventually re-ignite.

#### 4.11 Refugees, internally displaced people and migrant workers

Civil wars bestow most of the suffering on non-combatants, who tend to have little say in whether the conflict is initiated or if and when it is settled. As the conflict rages, incomes tend to plummet, mortality rises, and diseases spread. A generation's worth of education can be lost as education systems collapse for all but the privileged few (Bannon and Collier 2003, p. 1)

People displaced from their homes in Burma/Myanmar are categorised as refugees, internally displaced persons and economic migrants. There are approximately 150,000 people living on the Thai side of the Thai-Burma border in established refugee camps, and approximately 500,000 people living as internally displaced people within the borders of Burma/Myanmar. It is not known how many economic migrants, migrant workers or working refugees are living in Thailand as many are undocumented, but the estimates are between 2 and 3 million in Thailand with a further 1.5 million in Malaysia, Singapore, India and Korea combined (Arnold 2013, p. 89).

The determination of a person as a refugee or a migrant is often based around whether the person settles in a refugee (or IDP) camp, or lives in the community and finds work. Yet while many individuals find work in Thailand, and would, therefore, be classified as 'migrant workers', the term *working refugees* may be more appropriate. 'Push factors', such as exploitative abuse, increased poverty, livelihood vulnerability, food insecurity, and environmental factors such as flood and drought, were found by Karen Human Rights Group (2009) to be the primary reasons individuals cited for leaving Burma/Myanmar, rather than the 'pull factors' of a better livelihood or economic situation. The relatively high wages in Thailand do still provide a 'pull factor' even though the Burmese migrant workers/working refugee population in Thailand commonly face exploitation and abuse, often working for lower than minimum wage, and in conditions described as dirty, dangerous and demeaning (Pearson and Kusakabe 2013, p. 13).

In the decades since it first took power, the Tatmadaw created a choke hold on political power unrivalled in the world but their approach to the two areas of Burma/Myanmar differed. The Divisions area, previously known as Ministerial Burma, was mostly pacified, with amnesties offered to insurgents and overt force by the military only used in rare political crisis. However, in the 'Frontier Areas' or ethnic states, there was an ever-present force engaged in military campaigns against the ethnic guerrilla armies, but also targeting civilians through the 'Four Cuts' strategy — a

strategy that it is estimated resulted in the loss of approximately 500,000 lives (Callahan 2004, pp. 207-210).

The Four Cuts policy was a malicious counter-insurgency program designed in the 1970s which targeted the ethnic minority civilian communities of Burma/Myanmar — cutting off food, funding, supplies and information to contested areas. Essentially, *all* ethnic minority people were seen as potentially feeding into and supporting ethnic armed organisations by supplying them with personnel, food, or other support and were, therefore, collectively punished via the Four Cuts. The cornerstone of the policy was forced relocation accompanied by widespread human rights abuses, including forced labour, crop and livestock destruction, torture, rape and extrajudicial execution (International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School 2009).

Accompanying this policy were centralist policies that did not allow ethnic minority peoples any control or autonomy over their education, health, infrastructure, and, most controversially, their resources. Both the continued conflict, and the direct impacts of the Four Cuts policy, saw the ethnic states of Burma/Myanmar, and the ethnic minorities peoples residing in them, become poorer than their Burman counterparts, with fewer vital services, such as health, education, electricity and economic/market access. This can be viewed as a form of internal neo-colonialism, forcing the dominant Burman viewpoint and culture onto the ethnic minority peoples (Naw 2015).

The violence inflicted upon Burma/Myanmar's civilian population by the Tatmadaw and the military junta has been deliberate and the human toll has included not just displacement but death. There is no accurate estimate of how many have been killed during the decades of conflict as it is difficult to quantify. In ground-breaking research, the John Hopkins Institute along with the Back Pack Health Worker Team (2006, p. 10) noted the direct relationship between human rights violations and health:

[S]everal human rights abuses were found to be closely tied to adverse health outcomes. Families forced to flee within the preceding twelve months were 2.4 times more likely to have a child (under age 5) die than those who had not been forcibly displaced. ... Food destruction and theft were also very closely tied to several adverse health consequences. Families which had suffered this abuse in the preceding twelve months were almost 50% more likely to suffer a death in the household.

This nested violence link between overt violence and structural violence, lack of health care, food, clean water, sanitation and safety shows that the total death toll from the decades of conflict in Burma is much greater than any previous estimate and may never be accurately known. The number of people affected grew significantly following the recent escalation of violence in Rakhine state and an estimated 626,000 refugees — or more than half the estimated number of Rohingya living in Rakhine state — sought refuge in Bangladesh since October 2016 ('UN rights chief' 2017). Rohingya communities have been struck by the double pain of both direct and structural violence as they are also denied citizenship and essential human rights (Abdelkader 2017; United Nations Human Rights Council 2016), and state-imposed limitations on Rohingya rights treat the Rohingya as second class citizens (Maxwell 2015).

The effects of war, poverty, inequality and political oppression on Burma/Myanmar and its border regions has caused a great outflux of people. Policymaking for a future Burma/Myanmar needs to specifically confront these issues in seeking to re-integrate these people into society — addressing the direct threats to their safety, their political and social exclusion, and issues of discrimination and inequality if there is genuine political will to repatriate these refugees back into a safe and inclusive society.

#### **4.12 The emergence and growth of cross-border civil society organisations**

Due to the authoritarian nature of the military regime there has been division within Burma/Myanmar society in relation to civil society. As it was in pre-colonial Burma, power inside Burma/Myanmar is mostly centralised, under a 'mandala' power structure where power radiates from the centre where it is strongest towards the periphery where it is weakest. While those in the centre have felt the weight of the censorship and scrutiny of the law applied by the authoritarian regime, those on the periphery have felt the effects of full military force, but have been freer from the authoritarian grip as many activists have their organisational base in Thailand (while their program of work may still be active in Burma/Myanmar). This has resulted in a positive effect — significant growth and development of civil society on the Thai-Burma border. There is an abundance of civil society actors on the Thai-Burma border who have formed into ethnic organisations around issues such as human rights, the environment, women's needs and rights, health, education and welfare issues, youth issues and workers' rights.

Conversely, the development of civil society inside Burma/Myanmar was constrained under years of

authoritarian control. The military junta used several physical and legal elements to repress and inhibit civil society's growth and influence, including the use of the Tatmadaw to control protest and suppress and arrest protesting individuals — stifling dissent via fear, surveillance and arrest (Steinburg 2008). The development of community-based groups and networks was also suppressed through the closure of universities and other public institutions where effective organisations, such as student unions, were commonly formed, as well as restrictions on freedom of movement enforced by the control and issuance of National ID cards (Lorch 2006, p. 124). It was illegal to travel without an ID card, which must contain the following information 'citizenship status, normal place of residence, date of birth, name of father ... ethnicity and religion' (Liddell 1997), and failure to report a person staying in your house could also result in arrest and jail time — an order implemented to intimidate those willing to assist dissidents after several opposition members were safely kept on the 'run' following the uprising in 1990 (Liddell 1997).

The most frequently used law has been the *1908 (1957) Unlawful Associations Act*<sup>23</sup> which allows for punishment, by detention of up to three years, for anyone who is a member of, or assists in any way, an unlawful association (Liddell 1997). This law was first written under the colonial era, but was kept in place for the convenient control it places on citizens under the authoritarian years as the law allows Government authorities to intimidate and arrest political activists. Not unexpectedly, it was most commonly used against members of ethnic minorities. Disappointingly, the Act has even been invoked in the 'new democratic era' to arrest five journalists in 2017. Three of the journalists were reporting on the ongoing wars in ethnic states ('Jailed for Journalism' 2017, 'Detained journalists' 2017) and two were Reuters journalists reporting on the sectarian violence against the Rohingya (Agence France-Presse 2017).

However, there is one place to find a healthy and independent civil society that adheres to democratic norms, has flat hierarchies, transparent decision-making, pluralistic dialogue and democratic principles — and it is found in exile, on the Thai-Burma border. Activists and ethnic minorities fled to the borderlands in the 1980s and 1990s and established refugee camps and communities that have allowed them a flourishing civil society. This is not, however, a diaspora community that is cut off from their homelands, as the borderlands are extremely porous with activists and members of CBOs frequently travelling across the border to connect to their

---

<sup>23</sup> The 1908 Act was amended in 1957.

communities<sup>24</sup> and provide aid, welfare, training or other interventions. In a conflict where the ‘divide and conquer’ strategy is an open tactic used against vulnerable communities, as noted by Norwegian Church Aid (2012), it is the ability of civil society to work together in a network that runs across diverse border communities — including ethnic minorities with affinities to both Burma/Myanmar and Thailand, ethnic minorities fleeing fighting, repression and neglect in Burma/Myanmar, as well as political exiles originally from deeper inside the country, including urban areas — and deep into the conflict zone, that has made its resistance effective and enabled longevity. The partnership and community-based approach taken by this network of organisations has made the distinction between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ groups largely inconsequential for the communities concerned (Norwegian Church Aid 2012, p. 3).

The growth and strength of civil society on the Thai-Burma border has been another form of resistance to Burma/Myanmar’s oppressive regime. It is problematic to view the borderland conflicts only through the lens of civil war, for while a military conflict is still occurring, and while the military conflict certainly shapes the landscape of the borderlands, communities have been offering resistance to the military junta in many forms. Civil society offering political resistance, social welfare and community projects are all forms of resistance.

For ethnic minority people, cultural rights are as important as human rights<sup>25</sup> and, as some cultural history and traditions exist only in oral traditions rather than written records, the saying ‘an old man passing away is synonymous with losing a chapter of history’ (Lorch 2006, p. 107) rings true. As Naw (2015) notes, a form of neo-colonialism can be seen in the denial of cultural rights, such as the bans on the teaching of ethnic language and history in schools under the military state:

Some people think that colonialism ended when Burma gained independence from the British in 1948, but that’s not the case. What we have now is a new brand of colonialism under the Burmese military and its corollary, the ruling Union Solidarity and Development

---

<sup>24</sup> Most Burmese or ethnic CBOs in Thailand have their ‘administrative base’ in Thailand but their programs involve the community in Burma. Which could mean that the program leaders either frequently re-enter Burma (illegally as most would be arrested under the Unlawful Associations Act) and conduct their education/health/human rights or other interventions/trainings/ surveys inside Burma. Alternatively, members of the community inside Burma will travel out to the borderlands in Thailand to receive medical assistance, or attend a training or workshop conducted by a CBO. In this way the contact between the communities ‘inside’ Burma and ‘outside’ in the borderlands is constant.

<sup>25</sup> However, the Government of Myanmar only signed the United Nations *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* in July 2015.

Party (USDP). This government continues the tradition of colonial oppression by dominating the people, especially in areas populated by ethnic minorities. They justify this to the Burman majority by projecting an image of moral, intellectual and cultural superiority, while a broad range of people in Burma—no matter whom they are or where they came from—are routinely denied basic human rights.

Even prior to the 2010 elections, civil society had begun to establish itself in central Burma/Myanmar. However, there are few organisations — even large groups such as the Metta Foundation or Shalom Foundation — that are completely free from state control and influence. The abbreviation GONGO or ‘Government Organised NGO’ is used for such compromised organisations (Lorch 2006, p. 127). The gradual re-emergence of civil society inside Burma/Myanmar since the 1990s noted by Petrie and South (2014) includes a recognition that ‘many of the more dynamic sectors of Myanmar civil society were situated among ethnic groups’ and that ‘[t]he space for civil and political society has again expanded dramatically since mid-2011 when the new government took power in Myanmar’. On the borderlands, the CBOs are, in the main, independent and it is their collaborative nature and community focus that has made them so effective and relevant.

#### **4.13 Modern women’s organisations**

In 1919, the first women’s organisation in Burma/Myanmar was formed, the Burmese Women’s Organisation (BWO), along with the Young Women’s Buddhist Association (YWBA) in the same year. Both of these organisations had links to the anti-colonial struggle and were established by members of the elite class. They also had clear nationalist and Buddhist aims and ‘urged women in Burma to defend the *Sāsana* [meaning Buddhist teaching, practice and doctrine] and to abstain from marrying men of religious faiths other than Buddhism’ (Ikeya 2012, p. 86). These early organisations did, however, still have feminist goals, such as campaigning for women’s participation in political life, education and for their rights to be upheld in marriage and divorce (Ikeya 2012, p. 87).

Women’s organisations in Burma/Myanmar are often accused of being merely a support mechanism for the aspirations of their male counterparts or husbands and, while not all current women’s organisations are independent or have purely feminist goals — see for example the SPDC-sponsored and controlled Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation (Prager-Nyein 2009) — it is important to understand the role of women in the Burma/Myanmar struggle with the nuance it deserves, as women’s organisations are not homogenous. Modern, independent, community-based women’s organisations — such as those based on the Thai-Burma border — have broken free of this paradigm

and have challenged the regime on key issues, such as the use of rape as a weapon of war, xenophobia and racism, the need for an inclusive future with women's participation and representation, and the law and justice issue of ending military impunity. Shan Women's Action Network and the Shan Human Rights Foundation's publication *Licence to Rape* (2002) was groundbreaking in exposing the use of rape as a weapon of war — detailing 173 incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence, involving 625 girls and women, committed by Burmese army troops in Shan State. The report provided clear evidence that rape has been officially condoned as a 'weapon of war' against the civilian populations in Shan State. This was followed up by the Karen Women Organisation's *Shattering Silences* (2004). In total, to 2018, eleven women's organisations from Burma/Myanmar had published 33 separate reports on violence against women perpetrated by the Tatmadaw. In the Women's League of Burma's report *Same Impunity, Same Patterns* (2014), the organisation appealed to the Burmese Government for genuine structural and judicial reform to end impunity of the military.

Likewise, the Women's League of Burma, Myanmar/Burma Women's Network and the Karen Women's Organisation have all spoken out against the government's *2014 Law on Protection of Race and Religion* on the grounds that it is discriminatory and sexist to women ('Women's Rights' 2014), and also against the ongoing persecution of the Rohingya, and called for an end the sectarian violence ('Karen Women's Organisations Statement' 2017). What is important to understand is that the ongoing civil war has affected and burdened women disproportionately to men, challenging women's roles as caregiver for their family through blockades on food, medicines and medical treatment, and the deprivation of their family's livelihoods which has forced women to focus on income generation and crop production, including resort to more risky labour, such as foraging for food in forests littered with landmines (Karen Human Rights Group 2006). The burdens and demands on women's labour created by military looting, extortion and forced labour are:

even more severe where male family members have been killed ... Overall, the prevailing human rights situation has at least doubled the workload of most women, while also forcing them into greater mobility and forms of work which are physically dangerous. This takes a toll on women both directly, as when women are raped, shot, or maimed by landmines, and indirectly, as the increased workload and worsening living conditions combine to erode women's health and deprive girls of education (Karen Human Rights Group 2006, p. 5).

However, it must be stated that, as demonstrated particularly by women's organisations, CBOs and women in other leadership positions, women in conflict are not passive victims, but have agency and

power and use this power to demand change to their societies, as discussed further in the following chapters.

#### **4.14 The Saffron Revolution, the 2008 Constitution and Cyclone Nargis**

Two concurrent events, the 2007 Saffron Revolution and Cyclone Nargis in 2008 changed the fabric of modern Burma/Myanmar society. Each event proved a number of things: the deep mistrust between the state (the military junta) and the people; the people's deep dissatisfaction with the state; the callous and brutal nature of the state; the military's desire to entrench itself in power at all costs; and, finally, that all hope for a better future for Burma/Myanmar was not lost.

The Saffron Revolution was a landmark event for protest, civil disobedience and the demonstration of civil society in Burma/Myanmar. A change in petrol pricing in 2007 caused a domino effect of events that led to protests of the size and significance that had not been witnessed since the 1988-1990 student-led democracy movement (Steinberg 2008). Thousands of saffron-robed monks protested with their alms bowls overturned — signifying that they would not allow the military junta to gain spiritual merit — and were joined in the streets by young people, student protestors, underground unionists and ordinary citizens who formed a protective chain around the monks in emotive and effective scenes. For Burma/Myanmar, this was the first protest of the globalised communication age which saw footage and news of the protests leak out past the censors via satellite dishes and internet connections (McCurry 2007).

The Sangha's break from the state cannot be understated as prior to the Saffron Revolution every Burmese leader, even Prime Minister U Nu, Burma/Myanmar's first democratic leader, blended Buddhism and politics:

In 1960, facing pressure from the Sangha, U Nu's electoral campaign included a desire to make Buddhism the official state religion and, in 1961, U Nu used his parliamentary majority to do so. ... attempting to meet the demands of radical monks and officially sanctioning the Burman majority's religion [this] would fuel the already widening ethnic and religious divisions across the country. (McCarthy 2012, p. 300)

Buddhism and the Burmese state have been inseparable since the time of the SLORC, and legitimising itself via the predominant religion was considered essential to the military junta. More than past regimes, the SLORC had an implicit 'One nation, One race, One religion' ideology which was clear in all of its dealings with ethnic and religious minorities. For example, the *1993 Development of Border Areas*

*and National Races Law* includes as an objective ‘to cherish and preserve the culture, literature and customs of national races’, and one of the duties and powers of the Ministry created by the Law was ‘making arrangements for the promotion and propagation of the sasana [Buddhist religion] in the Development Areas’ (Liddell 1997). While acceding to the political demands of the Sangha — an organisation of approximately 300,000 people — the Tatmadaw, which was estimated to be a force of only between 400,000-500,000 people, also saw the essential need to control the Sangha. Monks, as McCarthy (2008, p. 300) reports, were ordered to:

obey the orders of the state Sangha organisations, whether or not they belonged to them, and avoid politics. If they did not follow the regulations, then they would not be considered a member of the Sangha and would face prosecution. Order 7/90 decreed that the only Sangha organisation would be the Union of Myanmar Sangha Organisation and that no other Sangha organisations could be formed.

The defiance of the Sangha against the state in 2007 was a momentous shift in Burmese society and the brutality of the crackdown on protesting monks and civilians — with images of murdered monks in the streets — showed that the state had violated the most cardinal of its own social norms through its actions. Following further protests in February 2008, the junta made the surprise announcement of a referendum on a new constitution to be held in May 2008 and to be followed by general elections in 2010 — all as part of a ‘roadmap’ to a so-called ‘disciplined-flourishing-democracy’. It is speculated that the Saffron Revolution may have prompted this decision (Steinburg 2008, p. 56).

Cyclone Nargis developed in the Bay of Bengal in late April 2008 and tracked across the low-lying delta of the Irrawaddy River on 2-3 May, passing just north of Yangon before dissipating near the Burma-Thailand border. According to the Post-Nargis Joint Assessment, compiled by UN officials, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Burmese government, 84,537 people died, 53,836 were missing, 19,359 were injured, and some 2.4 million people in the delta were severely affected by the storm, left without food, water, and adequate shelter (Seekins 2009). The SPDC had failed to issue a cyclone warning or put in place any evacuation program (Jackson 2008).

Following the disaster the military junta refused to allow aid into the country, sparking debate about the invocation of the UN’s Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine and international intervention (Barber 2009), the R2P doctrine imposes a responsibility on governments to protect their own populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and a commitment by the international community to take timely and decisive action when national

authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations (United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect n.d.). Ultimately, it was local communities and informal CBOs who responded first, with the military regime eventually following suit. The local, Yangon-based, civil society groups that tried to help cyclone-affected communities were frustrated by regime roadblocks, confiscation of relief supplies, and even arrests. The SPDC, with the previous year's Saffron Revolution fresh in the memory, clearly regarded any 'uncontrolled' relief effort as a threat, with the risk being allowing people to experience and explore civil space in which people could potentially organise against the regime (Seekins 2009, p. 168). One such civil responder, a popular Burmese comedian named Zarganar, organised several hundred volunteers to bring and distribute supplies to remote parts of the delta. Zarganar, who was long associated with the opposition, was charged with 'anti-state activities' and sentenced to 59 years in prison for public order offences. He was eventually released in 2011 as a part of a mass amnesty of political prisoners. The most effective aid deliverers proved to be Buddhist monks, with a network of monasteries being used for shelter and the distribution of goods. The Burmese respect for monks and monasteries also meant that officials generally refrained from challenging their activities on this occasion (Seekins 2009, p. 168).

While the survivors of Cyclone Nargis were struggling to recover from the devastation, to rebuild, reunify with displaced family and mourn those lost, the referendum on a new SPDC-sponsored constitution went ahead on schedule throughout the country on May 10, although it was postponed to 24 May in the 47 townships most affected by the cyclone. It is a referendum process that has been described as a sham and neither free nor fair, and the validity of the referendum was dubious

people were given ballots already marked 'yes,' officials voted for them (checking the 'yes' box), and voters in some localities were required to write their ID card numbers on their ballots. In many places, especially the cyclone-affected areas, observers saw very few people actually voting. According to local reports, the 'yes' vote was only 53% of the total in Yenangyaung Township in Magwe Division, 67% in Meiktila Township in Mandalay Division, and even lower in some parts of Shan State. Yet, at the end of May, the SPDC announced that countrywide, 98.12% of qualified voters participated and the 'yes' vote was 92.48%. (Seekins 2009, p. 169)

It is important to note that the SPDC regime completed the constitutional process at a point in time when it had consolidated its power convincingly and when the outcome could be controlled.

The most controversial provisions of the 2008 Constitution (the current constitution) include the requirements that one-quarter of all members of the national legislature be army personnel

appointed by the commander-in-chief, that members of the post-1988 military junta be given immunity from criminal prosecution, and that persons married or once married to foreigners cannot hold political office — a measure which was transparent in its intention to exclude Aung San Suu Kyi from political office as her (now deceased) husband, Michael Aris, was British. The Tatmadaw commander-in-chief also has a decisive say in the appointment of the President and two Vice Presidents of the Union of Myanmar, and the army has exclusive control over strategically important portfolios, such as Home Affairs and Defence. The Tatmadaw's commander-in-chief also has the authority to dismiss a civilian government and re-establish martial law (Seekins 2009).

One of the biggest obstacles to any real change in Burma/Myanmar's power relations is the pervasive control of the military over the formal sector of the economy and the country's natural resources. This monopoly provided a constant stream of funding that allowed the military to sustain its power position despite international sanctions (Prager-Nyein 2009, p. 643). Given this 'self-sufficiency', it is interesting to contemplate why the military regime troubled themselves with this transition at all? The simple answer seems to be to test the low-water mark of democracy required for international acceptance. Prior to this transition to 'disciplined-flourishing-democracy', the regime suffered under sanctions and had limited trading partners. Since the application of this veneer of democracy, trade sanctions have been lifted but the established powerful elites have had to relinquish very little in terms of personal wealth and power, and still maintain control over Burma/Myanmar's future governments and their decisions — even when those governments are democratically, or at least popularly, elected.

The twin crises of 2007 and 2008, the Saffron Revolution and Cyclone Nargis, changed the social fabric of Burma/Myanmar in several ways. They exposed the extreme cruelty of the military regime once again — both to its own citizens and to the world. They also demonstrated that there were civilians and civil society organisations in Burma/Myanmar who could organise quickly and were prepared to do so at great risk to themselves to defy the regime. Further, it squarely pitted the military regime against the largest civil organisation in Burma/Myanmar — the Sangha. However, what was not achieved was the overthrow of the military regime in a long-hoped-for people power revolution. In fact, by the end of 2008, the military regime had further entrenched themselves in power for the foreseeable future via the referendum on the 2008 Constitution — once again demonstrating the military junta would always choose the centralisation of power over pluralism, and showing little trust in the people of Burma/Myanmar to govern themselves or take part in deciding their own future.

#### 4.15 The 2010 elections and post-2010 'new democratic' environment

Democracy was the demand of the protestors in 1988-90 and again during the Saffron Revolution. It was the great hope for change in Burma/Myanmar. A hope that with democracy all the ills and problems of the past would be ended and Burma/Myanmar and its people would be able to flourish. However, it has proven to be a slow change and difficult transition. It could be argued that this is because democracy was not achieved with a people power revolution as hoped — overthrowing the oppressive military regime and ushering in a new phase of people-led progressiveness. The current model of a 'disciplined-flourishing-democracy' has, since its inception in 2010, been seen to preference 'discipline' of the people over any 'flourishing' in its democratic transition.

Burma/Myanmar's transition is said to rely on three core socio-political forces: the military elite, the opposition — in particular the iconic Aung San Suu Kyi — and, the involvement of ethnic communities. Two of these elements, the military elite and the NLD/Aung San Suu Kyi, have been working together.<sup>26</sup> Conventionally, the most desirable form of civil-military relations in a democracy is 'objective civilian control' or 'parliamentary oversight' over the military and a separation of the military from politics (Myoe 2017). This is not the case in Burma/Myanmar where the military entrenched themselves in parliament and gave themselves a political oversight role in the 2008 Constitution. The Constitution gives the military complete authority over the Ministries of Home Affairs, Defence and Border Affairs, with article 20(b) enabling it to appoint the corresponding ministers. Importantly, with the General Administrative Department housed in the Ministry of Home Affairs, much of the direct administration of the state is military-controlled by law. The Constitution leaves a return to direct military rule open as a legal possibility. The most often quoted manifestation of the military's continuing power are the articles that reserve 25 per cent of parliamentary seats for the appointees from the Defence Services nominated by its Commander-in-Chief. The amendment of the Constitution has been made virtually impossible as more than 75 per cent of the members of parliament must agree to it first, while the amendment of most sections of the Constitution requires further approval by more than half of the population eligible to vote, in a nationwide referendum. In no other country can the military veto proposals in parliament, thus the Myanmar military's veto capacity over the constitutional changes proposed by the elected members of the parliament 'singles out Myanmar's Constitution from all others in the world and is out of step

---

<sup>26</sup> It has been suggested to be an 'elite pact' by Dr Mary Callahan (2012).

with international constitutional standards' and the tenets of democracy as they are internationally understood (Dean 2017). Here the opposite civil-military relationship exists — it is a parliament under 'military oversight', and, objectively, a military with no constraints or control mechanisms able to be initiated by a civilian (Myoe 2017).

Even with overwhelming public support the NLD has been unable to institute constitutional change and those within the NLD calling for change have paid dearly. Given the NLD's history of struggle for freedom and democracy by non-violent means, it was assumed by many within Burma/Myanmar and the international community that the NLD would attempt to achieve genuine democratisation. A well-known NLD legal adviser, U Ko Ni, questioned the pace and scale of change required — publicly calling for a new constitution, criticising the military's control of key security ministries and guaranteed seats in parliament, and publicly proposing in 2016 that the NLD accept a less conciliatory approach in the power-sharing arrangement with the military — and was assassinated in broad daylight at Yangon airport in 2017 (Dean 2017, p. 499).

Indeed, in this transition there are more questions than answers — there is the primary question of who is actually in control? Is it the government of Aung San Suu Kyi and her NLD Party, which was popularly elected in November 2015, or is it the military, which still controls key positions in parliament and retains key decision-making powers under the 2008 Constitution?

There are still unknowns, such as if the government is transitioning from a military junta to a democracy, then what is the military transitioning to? The 2008 Constitution was designed to leave the Tatmadaw in control with only a limited democratic space for elected political parties to operate in. The NLD seems to be of the understanding that it is not in their interests to undermine the political role of the Tatmadaw, and instead seeks to minimise the Tatmadaw's influence by circumventing the latter's involvement in policy development. However, this leaves the Tatmadaw's power intact, power that they can use to influence the NLD and others through Parliamentary means or means of direct violence. At the time of writing the NLD appears to have suspended or abandoned any attempts at constitutional amendment to curb the military's power (Myoe 2017, p. 260).

There is clearly a difference between a government that has weak points and constitutional constraints, and a government that is so constrained that it is unable to effectively govern. At best, the popularly elected government has been exposed to have weak points, but if it is a government

that cannot control the Sangha and cannot control the military — two of the largest institutions in the country — then is it just a weak government or a truly ineffective one.

#### **4.16 Rohingya and sectarian violence**

Nationalism based on a Buddhist identity and xenophobia towards ‘others’ is not a new phenomenon in Burma/Myanmar. It has been a part of Burmese history and culture since colonial times, as this conflict analysis has shown. There is, however, a particular racism and resentment reserved for the Rohingya peoples in the western state of Rakhine. Tension over the Rohingya people appeared soon after Burmese independence during the process of defining *Taingyintha*, or the 135 state recognised ethnic groups of Burma/Myanmar (Cheesman 2017), which excluded Rohingya from the list. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, official histories and laws support the claims by ultra-nationalist Rakhine Buddhists that historically Rohingya are not part of Burma/Myanmar. This erasure of Rohingya identity and rights was set in stone in 1982 when junta leader General Ne Win passed the *Citizenship Act*, excluding Rohingya peoples (Zarni and Cowley 2014).

Although there has been a recent and deadly escalation in violence towards Rohingya, discriminatory policies and persecution has been ever present in the Rohingya’s experience in Burma/Myanmar:

Discriminatory policies against the Rohingya include the denial of citizenship, restrictions on their movements, restrictions on marriage, and a two-child policy, including a blacklist of unregistered babies. Local Buddhists and state and central government officials use the term ‘Bengalis’ or ‘illegal Bengalis’ and refuse to accept the term Rohingya, stamping them as illegal aliens from neighbouring Bangladesh, despite the fact that many of the Rohingyas have been living in Burma for centuries. Their travel is strictly controlled, limiting their access to markets, employment, health care, and education. Those displaced live in squalid camps, dealing with severe malnutrition, high infant mortality rates, and death from preventable diseases. ... The Rohingya are excluded from educational opportunities and government jobs, yet they are often demanded as forced manual laborers for projects for which they are not paid and are expected to bring their own food. (Brooten 2015, p. 136)

The ‘Race and Religious Protection Laws’ passed in 2015 further codified the State’s oppression of Muslims, and extended the idea that for the Government of Burma/Myanmar (just as it had been in the past with military junta regimes) access to religious freedom for non-Buddhists was severely

limited (International Crisis Group 2017).<sup>27</sup> Historically, not only Muslims, but Christians and other faiths faced restrictions on movement, their ability to construct buildings, and on public worship. Burmese nationalism became increasingly conflated with Buddhist religious identity, conveying a sense that to be an 'authentic' citizen of Burma/Myanmar was to be a Buddhist (and ethnically Burman). This exacerbated the dynamic of non-Burman and non-Buddhist 'others' being considered a threat to the state, and of being tools of regional or global power interests (Walton and Hayward 2014). The *Ma Ba Tha* or '969' Buddhist ultra-nationalist movement has sprung from this climate, with a leadership who openly and regularly stir up fear among Buddhist populations about the 'threat' of the Muslim minority peoples to both their culture and religion (Brooten 2015; Walton and Hayward 2014).

2017 saw the largest outbreak of violence towards the Rohingya which resulted in 600,000 new Rohingya refugees fleeing into Bangladesh in that year alone. The result was that estimates of the total population of Rohingya seeking safety in Bangladesh rose to more than 836,000 ('Violence drives more Rohingyas' 2017). Given that in 2014 the Rohingya population in Burma/Myanmar was estimated at 1.2 million (representing one third of population of Rakhine State and approximately 2% of Burma/Myanmar's total population (Mahood et al. 2017)), then this most recent exodus means that more than half of the Rohingya population has been displaced from Burma/Myanmar. This has been described as a 'textbook example of ethnic cleansing' by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein (Westcott and Smith 2017).

Advancing the rule of law has been touted as the way to normalise the situation for the Rohingya and stop any further sectarian violence; however, this suggestion is flawed. In the case of the Rohingya, any appeal to the legal system of Burma/Myanmar to resolve the issue seems improbable as it is the laws of Burma/Myanmar that both delegitimise their identity and citizenship (Zarni and Cowley 2014), and restrict their rights and freedoms (International Crisis Group 2017). The concept of 'rule of law', Walton and Hayward (2014, p. 48-49) note, has become:

a mantra repeated by political figures inside Myanmar and by much of the international community, but it is in danger of becoming an empty signifier, if not already so.  
Implementing an impartial legal system with publicly known and understood processes and

---

<sup>27</sup> For example: The *Population Control Law* (May 2015) gave the government the power to implement (non-coercive) population control measures in areas designated by the president with high population density, growth, maternal and child mortality, poverty or food insecurity. No such areas have been designated, but the provisions would appear to apply particularly to Muslim-majority northern Rakhine state where coercive local orders that limited Muslim couples to two children have been in place in the past (International Crisis Group 2017).

clear channels for appeal is undoubtedly a critically important step in Myanmar's political development. But it is also important to recognize that Myanmar is currently in the earliest stages of transitioning from an arbitrary legal system in which informal mechanisms outside the justice system have become the norm, to a more formalized system where citizens would be expected to respect the law and work within its confines, and could also expect fair treatment from legal institutions....Legal reforms will also need to recognize other social, political, and economic factors that continue to inhibit the equitable administration of justice. This may well mean instituting legal protections for certain minority populations. ...The process pursued by the government must involve public participation, transparency, and a fostering of intergroup and civic-government collaboration, thereby building trust between groups and trust in governance.

This humanitarian crisis has exposed a weakness in the Aung San Suu Kyi-led NLD Government which is seemingly unable or unwilling to constrain the *Ma Ba Tha* movement with the International Crisis Group (2017) noting that:

[g]rassroots support for Ma Ba Tha is flourishing in areas where the government is perceived to be weak, in particular basic service provision around education, access to justice and disaster relief. Many of these weaknesses are the longstanding legacy of failures by previous regimes. Nevertheless, a perception that the current government has not communicated a clear strategy for addressing them has allowed Ma Ba Tha to create a narrative that [Ma Ba Tha] is reluctantly stepping in to fill gaps left by an ineffective government.

Hamstrung by the 2008 Constitution and unable to direct or control the Burmese military, the Government seems ineffective and unable to stop this crisis or prevent something similar from occurring again. As pointed out by Ware and Laoutides (2018), the Rohingya conflict has quickly become a 'litmus test for change in Myanmar, a country in transition, and current assessments are far from positive. Whitewashing by the military, and a refusal by Aung San Suu Kyi's government to even use the name 'Rohingya', adds to international scepticism'. Given that the Sangha and Burmese military are the two largest institutions in Burma/Myanmar, the impotence of the Government must leave all ethnic minority peoples feeling vulnerable. This is a true test of the Government which, to date, has been found wanting through either a lack of ability, or a lack of political will, to act.

#### **4.17 Formal peace negotiations**

In 2015, when the NLD swept into power and Aung San Suu Kyi became State Counsellor, Suu Kyi promised to make peace her top priority. As State Counsellor, Suu Kyi has personally taken control of the peace process by appointing herself chairperson of the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, a slimmed-down version of the Myanmar Peace Centre established under Thein Sein ('Time to lead' 2017). The revised process has been branded '21st Century Panglong'. The name is of course

intended to evoke the 'Spirit of Panglong' and the co-operation between the ethnic groups and Suu Kyi's father General Aung San in 1947.

A differentiation between the original Panglong Agreement and the current negotiations is that the current negotiations are for a national ceasefire only — not an agreement that addresses all political grievances. Critically, 'root cause' issues of the civil war are not part of the NCA discussion. Examples of the issues still to be discussed in future negotiations include the role of ethnic armed groups in a future federal state, and power-sharing between central and state governments. Questions about redress for victims of violence or the establishment of a truth commission, which could potentially threaten the moral and political legitimacy of both sides to the talks, have also so far been excluded (Thawngmung 2017).

The structure of the formal peace process was originally laid out as follows:

1. Signing of the NCA and submission to the legislature for ratification.
  2. Drafting a framework for political dialogue 'by representatives of the government and ethnic armed organisations', including mandate, agenda, working methods and proportions of representatives, to be adopted within 60 days of NCA signing by the signatories 'in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders'.
  3. Convening the political dialogue within 90 days of NCA signing, with all parties endeavouring to work on a consensus basis. It would consist of successive rounds, including representatives of government (legislature, executive, military), armed groups, registered political parties and 'ethnic representatives and other relevant representatives', including a 'reasonable number' of women. The contentious issue of a 'union army' would be discussed.
  4. Convening a Union Peace Conference.
  5. Signing a Union Accord containing the decisions of that conference, which would be 'the basis for amending, repealing and adding provisions to the constitution and laws, in line with agreed procedures'.
  6. Submitting the Union Accord to the legislature for ratification.
  7. Implementation of Union Accord provisions and 'security reintegration'.
- (International Crisis Group 2015).

Although there were already signatories to the NCA when the civilian NLD Government assumed power in March 2016, with eight of twenty-one armed groups having already signed on, as of May 2018, only a further two groups have signed. An additional four groups, known as the Northern Alliance, were still engaged in armed conflict with the government (Thawngmung 2017), and progress has been slow:

The NLD government faced three major challenges for achieving reconciliation with ethnic armed groups following its accession to power on March 30, 2016: (1) finding ways to stop the fighting with the four armed groups in northern Myanmar; (2) convincing non-NCA signatories not engaged in fighting to sign the NCA; and (3) working with NCA signatories to consolidate the peace-building process through the implementation of the NCA. Very little progress has been made in any of these areas in the year since the NLD came to power. The government has not been able to stop the war in the north nor convince non-signatories to sign the NCA. As far as the signatories are concerned, the situation has deteriorated as a result of renewed hostilities between the army and the Restoration Council of Shan State, and the failure to implement interim arrangements for the NCA signatories and to adhere to the agreed process of the NCA (Thawngmung 2017, p. 282).

The formal peace process is lacking transitional justice as it is limited by the 2008 Constitution, which 'was carefully designed to maintain military power over all state institutions and contained controversial provisions that gave the military veto power, barring the possibility of any transitional justice measures against the past military governments serious human rights violations' (Aung 2015). The formal peace process has placed primary focus on three major political actors in terms of negotiations — the Tatmadaw, the ethnic armed groups and the third actor is the Government. However, there have been many times where the objectives of the Government and the objectives of the Tatmadaw did not align (Aung 2016). The Government's concern has been to sustain the peace process for political reasons, but the Tatmadaw has been often reluctant to commit to ethnic peace negotiations, seemingly placing perceived threats to national security above all others. The Tatmadaw's primary concern seems to be federalism — a level of autonomy promised to ethnic peoples in the 1947 Panglong Agreement — and a term which the Tatmadaw has long considered as a 'threat' to national unity, believing federation could foreshadow the breakup of the country, and makes this issue the most difficult obstacle in negotiating peace (Aung 2016).

Trust is, of course, an ongoing issue and there have been times when trust has been broken between parties, such as when former President Thein Sein 'issued two executive orders in 2011 for the military to cease its offensive against the KIA but they came to no avail... Elements within the military are also known to doubt the peace process and remain unhappy about some of the

assignments' (Ganesan 2014, p. 136). Aung San Suu Kyi, who once held the hope of so many, has failed to gain trust with the ethnic opposition by failing to try to stop the military offensives in ethnic states. Further, Suu Kyi remained silent about ongoing military campaigns against ethnic groups. Her silence is interpreted two ways; that she is either unable to influence security and military decisions or that she agrees with the decisions being made (Thawngmung 2017, p. 383).

There is only one opportunity for CBOs and other civil society to influence the peace process and this is by influencing the ethnic armed groups and their political arms to raise issues of importance in the dialogue process. However, the ethnic armed groups then have to pass a resolution through a five stage review process, including the Thematic Working committee (TWC), the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) and its secretariat (UPDJC-S), and the Union Peace Conference (21<sup>st</sup> Century Peace Conference) to be eventually ratified at the *Pyidaungsu Hluttaw* (Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament) (Karen Peace Support Network 2019 p. 12). This process ensures that resolutions for a peaceful resolution are filtered and constrained by the 2008 Constitution, and means opportunities for resolutions that challenge the status quo and the power structures of Burma/Myanmar are limited.

However, power imbalance and inequality are at the root of the conflict, and it is important to understand the root cause issues of the conflict to appreciate why the current form of the NCA is not adequate to be considered a 'peace process' or a process that could produce lasting or sustainable peace, as will be discussed further in the coming chapters of this thesis. One of these issues is the inequitable distribution of resources between the Burman central areas of the country and the resource-laden ethnic periphery which has been one of the key drivers of ethnic conflict in Burma/Myanmar (Kramer 2015). Other issues include land rights, resource management, infrastructure, development and economy. However, NCA discussions have been limited to the topics of 'politics', 'the economy', 'social issues', 'land and resources', and 'security' and go through an assessment process via Dialogue Steering Committees (DSCs), which deal with individual topics, and by the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC), which is authorised to set the agenda, rules, procedures, and basic principles for various stages of political dialogues (Thawngmung 2017). As this committee is tripartite in nature and made of representatives from government, military and ethnic armed groups, the government and military have established effective control over the matters that are discussed. As Kramer (2015, p. 358) notes, the likelihood that democracy, peace, and development will emerge from a process that does not address the grievances and aspirations of ethnic peoples are low:

[t]here are two main forms of conflict in Myanmar. The first is over what the nature of the state should be and how state power (dominated today by the ethnic Burman majority) from the centre connects with the periphery, which is dominated by a wide range of ethnic minority groups. Concomitantly there is the struggle over how the state is governed and the absolute control exerted by the military until recently over all executive, legislative, and judicial powers. The main grievances of ethnic minority groups in Myanmar are lack of influence over the political decision-making processes; the absence of economic and social development in their areas; and what they see as the military government's Burmanisation policy, which translates into repression of their cultural rights and religious freedoms. Ethnic minorities in Myanmar feel marginalised and discriminated against, and in effect, the armed rebellions in Myanmar are their response. Without addressing the grievances and aspirations of the ethnic groups, the prospects for democracy, peace, and development are grim.

The NCA should thus be viewed only as a part of the peace process. The military's recalcitrant view of what would and would not pose a threat to 'state sovereignty' and 'national solidarity' (Thawngmung 2017) — the two pillars the military is committed to protect under the 2008 Constitution — means that any ceasefire agreement reached would never be more than a short-term solution. Although a ceasefire may appear to be an expedient way to end military conflict, building true peace and national reconciliation after six decades of civil war will require a more nuanced response which addresses the political concerns and root causes of the conflict, discusses reconciliation and structural changes that need to occur to ensure societal harmony, and allows time for both the building of trust, and to allow other affected participants, such as civil society, to participate.

#### **4.18 Conclusion**

Burma/Myanmar is a country whose past has defined its future. Unable to escape the patterns formed in the pre-colonial times of the 'mandala' power structure — where power was centralised and trust was only held in the hands of the highest leaders and their cronies — Burma/Myanmar slipped back into the divide and conquer patterns utilised during its own Colonial period. Some British colonial policies, such as mass immigration, favouring Chinese and Indian immigrants for finance and administrative positions, and preferring ethnic minority peoples for positions in the military, had repercussions in future years with the emergence of Burmese nationalism and xenophobia — although interestingly repercussions not suffered by the British themselves. Other patterns created under colonial military occupation, such as the extraction of Burma/Myanmar's

wealth for the interests of the oligarchy and private business, the connection of the government with the military, and perception of the greatest threat to Burma/Myanmar as being 'internal security' rather than an external border threat, have had devastating consequences on Burma/Myanmar's future.

At all junctures in Burma/Myanmar's history there existed the choice of inclusion of ethnic minority people — inclusion through federation, inclusion in democracy, inclusion in the opening up of Burma/Myanmar for a greater sharing of power and wealth with its people — and, until 2010, and more recently in 2015, the powers within Burma/Myanmar have opted each time for the opposite. The military junta, and indeed their predecessors in the colonial and pre-colonial times, have opted for policy that is *exclusionary*, that centralises power and wealth, and that treats many of its citizens as the enemy.

Burma/Myanmar's ethnic minority peoples have been seeking a place in the country's power structure, to have greater autonomy and power sharing. Indeed, this has been the same demand of the everyday Burmese people through their democracy struggle. With the ethnic minority peoples, the demand is for federation, to have some autonomy and control over their ethnic states, with the ability to make choices over language, education, healthcare, religious freedom, resource management and security.

While the democracy struggle has to a limited extent succeeded, there is still a question remaining over whether the ethnic minority peoples and their demands for greater power sharing and federation can be a part of the new Burma/Myanmar. Resistance is a part of Burman history, sometimes military, sometimes nonviolent, sometimes organised by civil society, feminist movements, nationalist movements, religious movements, volunteers, labour unions — the clear narrative of Burma/Myanmar is a story of both the centralisation of power and those who struggle against it.

While Burma/Myanmar has been on a pathway to reform since 2010, the military oversaw its 'discipline-flourishing-democracy' transition which has meant that, until 2018, any reform has been very much on the military's terms (Karen Peace Support Network 2019, p. 33). Is peace possible in Burma/Myanmar? One primary obstacle, raised by my contributors, is the 2008 Constitution which constricts the terms of the peace negotiations, and will be explored further in the following chapter,

along with other key elements missing from the peace process or indeed forming obstacles to a sustainable positive peace outcome.

There has been some much-praised progress, such as the release of political prisoners and the easing of censorship restrictions allowing more media freedoms, but there has also been 'backsliding' or demonstrations of power that show that the government has not yet differentiated themselves far from their authoritarian predecessors. Examples of this backsliding include the arrests of journalists, student and land rights demonstrators, and the emergence of sectarian violence between the rising power of the *Ma Ba Tha* movement against the now stateless Rohingya people, which is largely seen as state sanctioned (Min 2015), and the ongoing direct violence and civil war in Kachin and Shan states (Beaumont 2018; Kelleher 2018).

Is Burma/Myanmar's history doomed to repeat? Or can civil society participation in the peacebuilding process contribute to the societal transformation required for a socially just, positive peace outcome? The following chapters analyse issues of peace, trust and power raised by the CBO contributors to this research. The threat of a stunted transformation, one that does not offer emancipatory processes and positive peace are concerns raised by these contributors and discussed in the following chapters.



Migrant children learning centre, Mae Sot, Thailand, 2010. Photo credit: Zoe Bedford

## Chapter 5: Challenges of Building Positive Peace

*'Some old people say, "I never had peace in my life, my whole life.'"*

*- Committee of Internally Displaced Karen People*

This chapter will examine the experience and lived history of violence of my contributors and their communities. It will also examine my contributors' relationship with the formal peace process and the international organisations whose stated intent is peacebuilding and development. As such I will be using long form quotes from my teacher and friend contributors to capture their thoughts in their own words as much as possible, while applying IPA to analyse their contribution. The teacher and friend contributors all were selected by their CBO to represent the organisation and are from high ranking positions in their organisations.

During the analysis it became clear that, while my intention was to collect information about the practice of cross-border aid during the conflict, this was in fact a 'historically' focused issue (see list of questions in Appendix 7), and that the answers my contributors provided were more future-focused and more about the current peace process than their historic contributions towards undermining the effects of structural violence within their communities during the conflict. As discussed in Chapter one, it was appropriate thus to change my thesis question to *'Is peace possible*

*in Burma/Myanmar? A Study of Community-based Organisations on the Thai-Burma border and the Challenges of Building Positive Peace'* and to really understand the conversation my contributors wanted to have about power, power structures, cultural hegemony, violence and trust. My contributors took the opportunity of speaking to me to explore their lack of trust towards the Burmese military and government because of their experience of violence over many decades. They also wanted to critique the current formal peace process and explore the themes of the violence experienced by communities on the Thai-Burma border, as well as the risk of negative peace if issues of trust, inclusiveness and structural violence are not addressed by the peace process and by aid and development activities. These are the elements they feel are forming an obstacle to a positive peace outcome. As such, this chapter responds to the first research sub-question 'In what ways might the peace process limit the prospects of a positive peace outcome?' explored from the perspective of my CBO contributors.

This thesis has attempted to embrace the notion of radical transformation, in the way that feminist methodology is conducted with no pretence to neutrality, a resolve to understand and a commitment to represent marginalised and vulnerable people. I have been cautioned<sup>28</sup> that, in some circles, it is seen as a radical act to invite participants to join a study and then to believe them, whereas feminist research methodology allows for listening, believing and acting. It allows the researcher to see the participants as teachers and friends, and, in fact, I cannot refer to them as 'participants' in this analysis as they are not in any way commentators sidelined from this experience. Rather, they are community activists and leaders actively taking part in this process, so instead they will be termed 'contributors' or teacher and friend. It is through both working in this environment, and my interactions with the teachers and friends of this research, that has sharpened my activism and my dedication to feminism, social change and peace. It is impossible for me to view anything as apolitical or neutral. This is the lens through which I have chosen to see the research. It is understandable that community leaders represent their communities — asking them to be neutral or accommodating is akin to asking them not to do their job.

This research offers a macro analysis of the formal peace process, based on the knowledge and experience of my contributors. The contributors are the representatives from sixteen CBOs representing a range of civil society on the Thai-Burma border, from women's organisations, to health and education organisations, environment organisations, human rights and youth

---

<sup>28</sup> This caution has come from private conversations with former colleagues.

organisations (as previously outlined in Chapter 2). The leaders of these organisations are uniquely positioned as they are both refugees themselves, but also people with leadership elevation and political awareness. I approached this research with a heavy responsibility to try to understand their stories, in relationship to the current changes in Burma/Myanmar — What impact does the 60-year civil war have on their programs, their relationships with each other as CBOs? What do they fear for the future and what are their hopes for the future?

I discovered that there was no part of the work of my contributors that was separate from the conflict and the present-day politics of the peace process. The capacity of my teachers and friends was laid bare — and it became clear that there was an enormous depth of knowledge that was at risk of being sidelined via a hierarchical system and a process heavy in cultural hegemony, furthering the risk of a fragile peace or indeed a negative peace. My teacher and friend contributors expressed that this is a real danger to themselves and their work, and also to their communities' survival and the prospects for genuine sustainable socially just peace in the future.

Emerging issues reported to be missing from the formal peace process by the contributors to this project include areas usually considered key components for conflict transformation — justice, power analysis/power sharing arrangements, transitional justice, and transformation (Bernath and Rubli 2016; Jeong 2005; Naraghi-Anderlini 2005; Ni Aoláin 2009). Listening to my contributors, it is clear that very little is being offered to ethnic peoples in terms of a more equal society that has endeavoured to resolve issues of power imbalance, inequality, and prejudice/discrimination.

The critique from my contributors is that this peace process is focused on unity, acceptance of the political and power status quo, with a determination to resolve only state-building and economic growth. The unwillingness to address issues outside a narrow concept of state-building is reinforced by the attitude of some aspects of the international community, such as the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), whose guidelines for working in fragile and conflict-affected states include statements such as '[d]evelopment assistance can do harm if it damages pre-existing state capacity by channelling large amounts of aid outside state structures thus undermining state legitimacy', '[f]ailure to focus on strengthening core state functions (such as to manage conflict peacefully, to raise revenues, and for planning expenditures) can undermine any nascent capacities' and '[a]dvocating too much reform in a short period can be counter-productive' (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011).

In casual conversations with NGO colleagues outside of this research, the peace process has been termed a 'negotiated surrender' rather than a peace process, as the processes and terms operate in such a power imbalance. Ethnic minorities are seemingly being invited to re-join a fractured and flawed society, where violence, inequality and injustice are still the norms, rather than being invited to genuinely contribute to enabling a supportive environment for societal transformation and positive peace. This thesis will argue that, just as the violence is interconnected, nested and complex, so must be the peace process in order to achieve a sustainable solution.

## 5.1 Seeing the bigger picture – How violence impacts communities

As described in Chapter 3, there is an interconnectedness between direct violence, structural violence, cultural violence, community and gendered violence. This complex intersection has been termed 'nested violence' as it relates to the experience of individuals and their communities and multiple levels of direct and indirect violence. Communities on the Thai-Burma border are made vulnerable by direct violence; it is direct violence and structural violence that results in forced displacement and then communities are made further vulnerable as refugees, internally displaced persons (IDP) or illegal migrant workers. Upon removing themselves from the direct violence, families are faced with ongoing structural violence that limits their capacity, separates children and ultimately sees both children and adults mired in the vulnerability of being stateless, being denied education, and only offered dangerous, illegal, insecure and exploitative work. This quote from my teacher and friend, Theramu Mee, from the Mae Tao Clinic explains how the violence is interconnected and how violence can be compounded and long lasting, often affecting people for their whole lives.

*On both sides of the border – who is responsible for undocumented people and refugees? It is very unclear. Sometimes the Thais don't have a good system or support, even UNHCR is here but the Thais are not a signatory for the refugee convention. There are some in the camps- but there are more outside the camps who are not documented, like migrant workers. We have migrant workers and people as internally displaced people, most people are undocumented, even in Karen state people are undocumented – they are born there in Karen state but they never have birth certificate and their parents never have it.*

*How to deal with the issue of statelessness - we have to start from the birth. We deliver baby here, at the Mae Tao Clinic, – and also, we see that they deliver baby and we see that many women deliver at home, because of the lack of health services in these areas, but there is no birth certificate or registration program either here in Thailand or in Burma. Mae Tao Clinic works to improve the access for safe delivery but how about these children? Who will document these children? There is no system to register the birth of the child. Another*

*problem for us is that Back Pack Health Worker Team and also MTC is not registered on both sides- this is an obstacle. So, we have to advocate for these children for child protection. We see that is the impact of this long term for the children. So, we need to talk about the policy, we want to talk about safe birthing but who will take responsibility to register these children?*

*We see that children die before they turn five, because of malnutrition or other preventable disease. Children are abandoned, what is the impact of the policy and who is responsible? We try to do safe deliver but we see that we need to be the ones to advocate for these children, the ones who need their birth register, who are abandoned, the teenage pregnancy etc. We are the ones who take responsibility to advocate for them....*

*We start with the advocacy and we begin keeping the records for the children. We see that the children are abandoned because they have no documentation, the parents they need to go and work in Bangkok but they cannot bring the child because of no documentation. The child does not have the opportunity to see their parents again. So, there is the next problem of family separation. And at the time there is no NGO, no organisation working on child protection. So, we MTC started to work together with education organisation BMWEC etc, health worker and teachers we worked together -how can we do more child protection and advocacy. The reason for MTC is because we deliver around 3000 babies per year here. And now in 2008 Thailand said regardless of the parents and their legal status we can register the birth here at MTC so we see it as an important part of our work. – Theramu Mee, MTC*

Theramu Mee explains the interconnectedness of violence and how the act of direct violence causes statelessness, and from that there is further vulnerability for a woman and child as neither Thailand nor Burma/Myanmar take responsibility for registering births, and this leaves both the woman and baby vulnerable to further violence. This reveals the nested nature of this violence, the way that one violent event impacts on a life and exposes those already vulnerable to the further violence of separated families, exploitation, and lack of opportunity. All the contributors to this project reported that their communities have experienced more than one level of violence. To understand peace, it is important to understand how violence was experienced by the most vulnerable, otherwise it will be difficult to identify what needs to be transformed to build a positive peace. Hearing the experience of the vulnerable in their own words, as Nang Ceh, from the School for Shan State Nationalities Youth (SSSNY) offers below, is important to this understanding:

*Because at that time in Shan State, there were massive forced relocation carried by the Burmese military regime, especially between 1996 to '98 and that have caused a lot of mass destruction because people were shot at gunpoint to leave their home. People's homes were looted, a lot of abuses like killings, massacre, torture, and burning of their villages. So, people of three generations fled to Thailand—like hundreds of thousands of them to Thailand. However, because there are no refugee camps for the Shan in Thailand like the Western*

*Border Karen and Karenni so most of the Shan refugees were faced with the same persecution with the Burma Army. In Thailand they become unregistered and they don't have any status, are stateless, in Thailand and they have to become migrant workers with no protection and support—support for their living, health, and education and the Shan and the children just go to work with their parents. A lot of them don't have any kind of identification card so they were facing lots of exploitation from their employees and all kinds of restrictions, and when they are sick, they cannot go to the hospital to get access to healthcare. And a very big problem for children is the education needs, especially for youth, they don't even have like schools. What is their future so they just work with their parents doing the labour just day by day on a daily basis? – Nang Ceh, SSSNY*

Here Nang Ceh is describing nested violence. Nested violence is the increase in violence that occurs when there is an increased exposure to risk, hardship and dangers (Opatow 2000, p. 403) and, as stated by my contributors, it is a domino effect where exposure to one risk increases the likelihood of violence in other forms. In this situation, state directed violence increases vulnerability via forced displacement and displacement increases exposure to other forms of violence and exploitation. Communities already affected by the violence of displacement can be further subjected to any or all of the violence accompanying forced labour, the denial of access to schools and health services (structural violence), and the vulnerability that comes from being stateless in another country with little or no protections, exposed to dangerous and exploitative work and child labour.

Another example is the impact of violence on education, as discussed by Theramu Lar, from the Karen Teachers Working Group:

*Usually when the village was attacked [by the Tatmadaw] the school is destroyed and students have to run away. Everyone runs, right. And usually what the villagers do when they move to another place, they think that they cannot go back to their village then they start a new site like a village and start a new school. If they have materials to continue. One challenge is when school has to close often and children will run often so children will feel like they don't want to do this anymore. They have less interest in their education. – Theramu Lar, KTWG*

Theramu Lar's experience describes the nested violence effect where direct violence destroys the safety of a village, which then has the domino effect of interrupting the lives of the children to the point where they are no longer able or motivated to attend school. They can only rebuild their village infrastructure so many times before it is too difficult and creates a burnout in the community due to the constant violence which prevents the optimum development of the community (Jeong 2000, p. 21). This nesting of direct and structural violence occurs in all manner of ways, including through the basic survival needs of communities as Theramu Lar further explains:

*There is a problem at that time, some villagers were found, and they [the Tatmadaw] burned down and destroyed the farm so the villagers were faced with food shortage. And the villagers also, when they have been running many times and many miles in the forest, they cannot take care of their rice paddy so the field does not produce a lot of food, as much as they expected so it affects these people, they become malnourished. – Theramu Lar, KTWG*

A person forced from their village will also be vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition, to malaria, diarrhoea, and complications in pregnancy and childbirth. The 2010 study completed by John Hopkins University and the Back Pack Health Worker Team directly linked conflict and human rights abuses to deaths caused by displacement through high exposure to malaria, and lack of access to clean drinking water. The report noted that while violence in the conflict zones was 'endemic ... direct losses of life from violence account for only 2.3% of deaths. The *indirect* health impacts of the conflict are much graver, with preventable losses of life accounting for 59.1% of all deaths and malaria alone accounting for 24.7%' (Back Pack Health Worker Team 2010, p. 6, emphasis added).

This nested violence is confirmed by the accounts of my contributors who detail the link between direct violence and displacement and structural violence, cultural violence and gendered violence:

*The woman dies during pregnancy and child birth ... this is not acceptable because compared to many countries we are behind and we are the worse. ... Sometimes they are influenced by culture and family members – this is also women's rights and reproductive rights – how far to travel and how much money you need and also if you feel like you are stigmatised or discriminated against or afraid of police then you cannot travel to get the services – so the human rights issue is very much linked to women's health. – Theramu Mee, MTC*

Here my teacher and friend Theramu Mee highlights the complicated nature of nested violence. Direct violence causes displacement, structural violence results in lack of healthcare services, and the failure of state systems mean that children and their parents are stateless leading to further vulnerability and violence, such as exploitation and family separation. This is what Galtung (1998, p. 196) refers to as the *violence triangle*, where the three points of the triangle are direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence. In his triangle, the three points all serve to 'have exploitation at its centre-piece' (Galtung 1998, p. 197). This creates a system of inequality where there is a consistent 'unequal exchange' where the oppressors benefit (from the direct, cultural and structural violence) and the vulnerable are left with a complicated web of issues and concerns stemming from each point. The complicated nature is described by Galtung (1996, p. 199) who said '[d]irect violence is an *event*, structural violence is a *process*, ... cultural violence is an *invariant*, a

*“permanent”*. This increases the vulnerability and exposure to other violence for individuals and communities.

Direct violence is present and ongoing in the lives of those affected. Direct violence is a part of the lived experience of the CBO contributors to this research and direct violence is present in their immediate experience and work. Often it is the genesis for the formation of their organisations and/or their programs. Direct violence is ever present, in that it is part of living memories of the communities that my teachers and friends work with. Although the civil war in Burma/Myanmar is considered the longest in Asia (South 2011, p. 6), it is not a historical war and neither is the violence historical in nature. Direct violence is recalled by my contributors as killings and murder by the military, forced displacement, and the destruction, looting and burning of villages, rape, food insecurity and forced labour, as experienced by CBOs and their communities, described below by Theramu Kee from the Karen Women Organisation:

*In war torn conflict areas, people are targeted by the Burma army; they're being slaughtered and their houses burned down and they become displaced to the refugee camps or hiding in the jungle. So, these are the situation and so trying to survive with very little support so when the organisations started helping them it's getting better. This is the situation when we first started working with our communities. – Theramu Kee, KWO*

Direct violence and the decision to target civilians was based on the Tatmadaw's 'Four Cuts' policy under which civilians were suspected of supporting ethnic armed groups, and by this assumption all civilians were classified as the enemy. The centre of the 'Four Cuts' policy was a strategy to cut the ethnic armed forces off from sources of food, funds, intelligence and recruits that may have come from ethnic minority civilians (Callahan 2004, p. 209), as it was believed that 'the best way to destroy these [rebel] groups is to destroy the ability of the civilians to support them' (Callahan 2004, p. 210). This transpired in military attacks on civilians, resulting in an estimated 500,000 deaths. These deaths included many landmine victims. Burma/Myanmar has the third-highest landmine casualty rate in the world after Colombia and Afghanistan (Lone 2013), according to Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, and it is estimated that up to 5 million people live in areas riddled with landmines (Mosbergen 2016). Landmines have the effect of being both a physical threat and a psychological threat and highlights the importance of the healthcare responses from cross-border health CBOs. Saw Baw discusses his organisation's (Committee of Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP)) response to the threat of landmines:

*And for the mine- issue programs, we do high-risk education. Land mines education and at the same time we do mine education and also do some, we call it dangerous area survey,*

*whether it is a land mine thing or a UXO- unexploded particles field so we just mark it, in the document. That's the mine issue program. Recently, we started a clinic inside where we provide like the ER [Emergency Relief] team. When they are in the field, if they see someone who need prosthetic [from land mine injury], they are trained to cast it. – Saw Baw, CIDKP*

Fleeing to Thailand from Burma/Myanmar does not ensure safety as Saw Aey, from the Karen Human Rights Group, explained to me. He received a death threat directly, as a 'warrant' with a reward was stuck to their organisation's gate. This, and the 2008 murder of KNU leader Mahn Sha Lar Phan in Mae Sot, Thailand by unknown assailants shows that direct violence is not limited to the war zone and threats can extend to those taking refuge in Thailand.

*In my experience, we do a report about human rights violation for KNU and the [Burmese] government people on the different issue. I'm not sure the government knows where we are located. Also, our organisation is very, very strict for our security and we are not people who are registered in that area. We are staying in Thailand, so we are not registered. We're very strict, we never allow people to go into our office... But at our field centre we were given a warrant. A warrant. You know, if you get this man, I will pay 5,000. – Saw Aey, KHRG*

The link between direct violence and other types of violence is again made by teacher and friend Theramu Lar, who outlines how a direct violent attack on civilians results in loss of income and the threat of malnutrition from loss of food staples, and also details how communities have become strategic and resilient:

*At that time, the Burma government always started to attack... The villagers in those area at that time, during the summer time they have to, even if they are in the village, they have to build a secret place for them to flee always. Whenever there will attacks, they leave the village and house and leave to stay there. So, in a house they only keep a small property that they can carry within their family members. Other things they just hide in the forest. Rice paddy stores were built in the forest and rice were kept in the forest. They think that even if their village was attacked, they run into their secret place they can still survive with the rice that they are hiding in the forest. – Theramu Lar, KTWG*

Using Galtung's violence triangle (1998, p. 196), there is the visible violence of direct violence, and then the less visible violence of cultural and structural violence. Direct violence can be seen as the visible symptoms of the underlying disease of structural and cultural violence. Structural violence is described by Galtung as being less 'visible' as it is often understood by reference to what is absent or being denied. The absence or denial of healthcare, electricity, roads and economic marketplace access, and the absence of sanitation are all manifestations of structural violence. As outlined by teacher and friend Theramu Wah, from the Women's League of Burma:

*If I was a woman in our Karen state, as an IDP in the rural area, would I have electricity? Would I have sanitation, toilet or running water? No. In these areas, it's still very poor because we only focus on the capacity of women but there is no service provider. What people really need now, what we give is, that's important to build their confidence, to build their capacity so that they are part of decision making ... but to solve that daily problem, nobody is working to solve their problem, their basic need, their survival. – Theramu Wah, WLB*

Structural violence has been used in Burma/Myanmar's civil war as a form of collective punishment. Although health, education and other services declined for all Burmese generally under the period of military junta rule (Lall 2008), there was a marked difference in the service provision and the experiences of the ethnic communities supported by the CBO contributors to this project. Usual government services, such as education, health care and access to utilities (electricity, water and sanitation), were denied in large part to communities who were in the 'black zone' of the conflict (Gyo 2017). Galtung (1998, p. 197) states that there are four classes of basic needs, namely survival needs, wellbeing needs, identity meaning needs and freedom needs, and these are negated by direct, cultural and structural violence causing death and mortality, misery, alienation and repression.

Different forms of abuse are present during the civil war. Ethnic communities have faced death and mortality, misery from both direct and structural violence, and the cultural violence of neo-colonialist alienation that has resulted in discrimination and policies that limit ethnic people's ability to practice their language and culture. The experience of repression in Burma/Myanmar was faced by all peoples under the military junta, but remains present in ethnic communities who are refugees and IDPs who still do not have equitable access to citizenship rights and birth registration as explained by Theramu Mee;

*For us we have to start from birth. All mothers have safe birthplace and children have access to birth registration. And stay in the family, a lot of sadness and worry and problems from is because the worry is family separation. People don't know where is their family, they don't know how to contact them, they don't know if they can go back home even if they can contact them – they need the safe space. – Theramu Mee, MTC*

The contribution of Daw Seh, from the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT), below, explains further the structural violence faced by those communities in the conflict zone where more women die in childbirth and pregnancy related complications than the rest of Burma/Myanmar due to inadequate health care — tragic outcomes that can only be exacerbated when communities are

displaced and living rough in the jungle. Maternal mortality rates, child mortality rates and death by preventable and treatable disease is high (McGready et al. 2012).

*Well, actually, in the Kachin State even before also very few public health, health place, even under the care control area they have nurse, doctor, but they don't have enough medicine. If the woman is pregnant and having the baby they can only have a traditional birth attendant, there is no hospital... That's why when the delivery is complicated then it's when the people usually die, the woman or the baby. – Daw Seh, KWAT*

The consequence of structural violence is reduced opportunity to achieve full human potential, and human misery is created by poverty, repression, social alienation and hunger as is articulated by Jeong (1999, p. 20):

Poverty, hunger, repression and social alienation constitute another way to characterise situations causing human misery. Quality of life is reduced by denial of educational opportunities, free speech and freedom of association. These conditions are associated with uneven life chances inequitable division of resources and unequal-decision making power.

This is achieved by the powerful in an indirect and insidious nature, and as a result structural violence most often works slowly in eroding human values and shortening life spans. This has been shown to be the lived experience of my contributors and the communities where they work.

There is no doubt that ethnic minority peoples are targeted and that their situation is worse, in terms of health and development indicators, than others in Burma/Myanmar. The infamous 'Four Cuts' policy was, in its effect, a collective punishment and is a form of cultural violence. Cultural violence makes direct and structural violence 'look and, even feel, right' (Galtung 1996, p. 191). This is a powerful form of violence as the *differences* between human cultures or social groupings can be used to justify the unjustifiable, serving to 'legitimize direct and structural violence, motivating actors to commit direct violence or to omit counteracting structural violence' (Galtung 1996, p. 31). Cultural violence is evident in Burma/Myanmar as ethnic minority peoples are targeted by the direct and structural violence. Like many civil wars, close to 80% of the casualties are civilians and the number of refugees and displaced persons has increased sharply (Lang 1995). These violations of humanitarian and human rights law are not a 'side effect' of armed violence, wrote Kaldor (2003), but instead the 'central methodology of new wars.'

Under the Four Cuts policy, all ethnic minority people were viewed as either being insurgents or as having the potential to aid insurgents, and so the structural and direct violence was often intermingled with propaganda against the ethnic minorities, such as billboards reading 'PEOPLE'S

DESIRE. ... Oppose those trying to jeopardize stability of the state and progress of the nation. ... Crush all internal and external destructive elements as the common enemy' (McDougall 2010) and 'Tatmadaw and the people in eternal unity, anyone trying to divide them is the enemy' (Rivers 2016). Billboards such as these seek to place the blame on the ethnic minority people for their situation of poverty, displacement and inequality — insinuating that ethnic minority peoples are the orchestrators of their own misery because, after all, they are 'the common enemy'. This is expressed below by contributor Daw Jeh:

*[A]lso, our government also gives a lot of propagandas... every day in the TV and also in the sign board so like inside [Burma], But it's kind like of bad thing, the propaganda is like propaganda make us look bad, 'she wants to destroy the country', this kind of propaganda,'*  
– Daw Jeh, KWAT

This amounts to the central government wanting to control the ethnic minority groups, including banning ethnic language from schools, controlling curriculum in schools which denies ethnic people their language, stories and history and creates inequality (Gyo 2017). This is a further denial of Galtung's (1998, p. 197) survival need, wellbeing need, identity meaning needs and freedom needs, where the pattern of denying freedom and identity is a constant oppression, as described below by Saw Eay from Burma Issues:

*So, for people to participate or to share this story, it's important to them to understand the human rights education, human rights training. To hear their stories, sometimes they need to write. It's necessarily that [we have a] literacy program. Again, through these struggles for changes for the next generation, it is very important for them to or the children to learn to understand peace, unity and to work together. And also, how to be a community leader in the future and how. Because in the ethnic areas, people are oppressed and they [the Government] try to eliminate the language literature. That is why in the ethnic area, children feel sometimes like if you're Karen or if you're a Shan or Karenni, you feel like ... less. No power. That's why we have another program for children education. It's to encourage children to be proud of their origin. If you're Karen, you speak Karen. To be ready for ... to the leader of the next generation. And also, of the children to talk about peace, unity, justice, we also create a children's storybook so that their parent could read for them and they start learning about this and also in the stories-- we try to collect stories from different ethnic traditions. We live under the same oppression but speak a different language, different culture or different religion. – Saw Eay, Burma Issues*

Attacks on ethnic identity have both practical and ideological consequences. Denial of language and ethnic history can lead people to have a crisis in their own identity and to lose hope that there is a place for them in the future of Burma/Myanmar, as explained by my contributor representing the MTC below:

*Access to school is another issue. They don't know where to send their children for school – the border or here or in Burma? Even the teacher, the ones that come from inside Burma they have the same way of thinking if they come here – when people are Karen they don't understand the different ethnic nationalities and they have suspicion – is this the rebel group? Why do they wear their Karen/ethnic clothes? They are afraid of the Karen national song. In the education people identify their identity, Karen or Burmese or Thai. Children here go to different schools, maybe Burmese, maybe Thai. Children here they don't speak Burmese but they are also not Thai citizen. A lot of children when they start in the middle years, 7 or so, they ask – what is my identity? But also, they don't have id so they ask – what will be my future? – Theramu Mee, MTC*

For my teachers and friends, it is apparent that there is a keen awareness that, although there has been violence and oppression throughout Burma/Myanmar, the violence, both direct and structural, and oppression inflicted in ethnic areas is of a certain kind, one mired by bigotry, systemic lack of trust, it is cultural violence. It is designed to rob them not only of their land, health and security, but essentially of their ethnic identity, their language, traditions and culture. There is a pervasive neo-colonialist standpoint from a government which is blaming the ethnic minority people for 'disunity' while, at the same time, ensuring via structural, cultural and direct violence that the very same people are collectively punished and labelled 'the enemy'.

State-directed violence can lead to vulnerability to other forms of violence and exploitation. Nested violence can be seen where communities already affected by the violence of displacement, are also subjected to gendered violence — direct violence such as rape, trafficking, and the vulnerability that comes with being displaced into another country with little or no protections as discussed by Theramu Kee:

*KWO also does the documentation work, documenting the acts of violence against women in Karen state, documenting women leadership not only as victims but as leaders, their roles in the conflict KWO already produced three books. Those are Shattering Silences that is about rape of the women [rape of women as a weapon of war], State of Terror is the different kind of human violations that are committed towards women and then the last one is Walking Among Sharp Knives documenting the women leaderships being abused and being targeted [by the Tatmadaw] as a women but also a women chief trying negotiate and to protect the communities so that the community would be able to live peacefully or better, even under extreme threat of violence. - Theramu Kee, KWO*

Two concepts are being described here by Theramu Kee: sexual and gender-based violence by the military; and the violence women face when they are in community leadership positions in conflict affected communities. It has been well documented that the Tatmadaw of Burma/Myanmar use

rape as a weapon of war, with sexual violence used by the regime as an ‘integral part of its strategy to subjugate the ethnic peoples, and establish control over their lands and resources’ (Women’s League of Burma 2008, p. 55). When perpetrated by military groups, it is very difficult for a woman or her family to achieve justice in these circumstances, as there is no rule of law and the military have impunity under the current laws. In this instance, sexual and gender-based violence ‘serves multiple purposes; terrorizing local communities into submission; flaunting the power of the dominant troops over the enemy’s women; humiliating and demoralising ethnic resistance forces and also serving as a ‘reward to [the Tatmadaw’s] troops for fighting’ (Women’s League of Burma 2008, p. 55). The interconnectedness, or nested nature of this violence, and the link between justice and peace is set out below by Theramu Weh. It raises the issue of military immunity and the exclusion of women from the peace process:

*For us it's like, for issues that we are raising is the women's violation and especially system of impunity, sexual violence that continually committed by the military regime. That's the issue we continue to raise and again we need to have participation in the peace process because we believe that it is important that women are part of the peace process because we have been involved in this struggle since the beginning. They talk about peace, but what kind of peace do we want? Then for us it's like, you need to bring justice. Unless we bring justice to the victims of violence, to the survivor how can we guarantee that this peace process will bring a lasting peace? For us it's important that we bring the perpetrator to account and also bring justice to the victim or survivor. Sexual violence, peace and reconciliation and women and political empowerment. It's kind of linking, it's linked to each other. If you want peace you need to bring justice, continue on the programs on eliminating sexual violence against women, at the same time raise awareness about peace programs. It's all kind of linked to each other, these programs. – Theramu Weh, WLB*

Sexual and gender-based violence can undermine peacebuilding in a country where women’s participation is still limited and women’s voices are silenced by misogyny, violence and social stigma. Nationally — emerging from decades of military rule — women’s political participation is at an all-time high of 10.5% (Sein Latt et al. 2017). While this is improvement from coming from a very low base, it is obviously far from equal representation.<sup>29</sup> This gendered violence is a part of nested

---

<sup>29</sup> The 2015 general elections afforded women in Myanmar their second major opportunity to participate in representational governance, and the number of women parliamentarians increased significantly to a total of 151 elected seats across both national and state/region levels. In the national parliament, 23 women parliamentarians entered the upper house and 44 entered the lower house. As such, the number of female representatives in the national parliament more than doubled from 6.0% to 13.7% of all elected MPs. This percentage of female MPs drops to 10.5% of all MPs including military appointed MPs, as the military only appointed two female MPs to the lower house. At the state/region level, 84 women were elected, tripling the number of women parliamentarians from 3.8% to 12.7%. Thus far, the military has only appointed two female MPs in the states and regions (including Yangon Region and Shan State), bringing that percentage down to 9.7% when all MPs are considered (Sein Latt et al. 2017).

violence and it has an impact on peace as when women are excluded from dialogue at the community and national level, and women's leadership is excluded from decision making, there is little prospect for a society built on equality and freedom.

In conclusion, when, as reported by CIDKP, the old people say 'I have never seen peace, in my whole life', they reflect a compounded, nested violence that has been ever present and is still present in the lives of communities who have survived this conflict. Direct violence, structural violence, cultural violence and gendered violence are all interconnected. For the military it has served the purpose of subjugating a community through direct and structural violence, while simultaneously and erroneously blaming those people for their own suppressed state. The issue of nested violence means that communities in conflict are overwhelmed, constantly putting out spot fires of violence, whether it is manifesting in under-resourced education, lack of healthcare, malnutrition and food shortages, rape and violence against women, or landmine attacks. The enormity and complicated levels of violence as laid out by my teacher and friend contributors requires a holistic and carefully constructed peace process that recognises that inequality is both a root cause and an outcome of violence. Failing to address structural and cultural violence, as well as direct violence, will continue to deny peace to those who have lived through the conflict.

## **5.2 Negative peace is a risk**

Overall, there was a concern raised by my contributors that negative peace is therefore a risk as the perception is that the peace process is concerned only with addressing direct violence, rather than a positive peace that also addresses structural and cultural violence. There are two dangers in the current peace process identified in this research: the danger of the peace process succeeding – but succeeding with a negative peace outcome, rather than a positive peace outcome; and the danger of the peace process failing completely, ending in a 'victor's peace' or reverting to war. The concerns shared by my teachers and friends are numerous — that the philosophy underpinning the peace process is not the 'correct' philosophy for promoting peace; that the peace process currently is not inclusive of community groups or women; that there has not been enough attention paid to trust building and transparency; and that there is a focus on unity rather than justice.

---

The following quote by teacher and friend Nang Ceh highlights some of the concerns expressed by my CBO contributors regarding the formal peace process:

*In each negotiation meeting, it is all set by the government. The military want this group to transform themselves into a political party and join the parliament. In the seven procedures, first is cease fire, second is joining the parliament. This is a very bad way to move in the peace process. Development cannot come before the political settlement. They hope that the development can bring peace. But this is dangerous because who will own the land, who will get the reserve and who will be destroyed? Who will decide? The Burmese government talk to international donors and talk about what they want so it is not the decision of the local people. This builds more conflicts.*

*It would be better if there was a genuine desire to have peace in Burma. This is very lacking. How can we move forward? That is why every single step should have equal way to decide and equal participation. There must be some action if Burma army continues to attack the villagers. Nobody says anything and they continue to fight. So, who can say something about this? Everyone just keeps silent about this and this cannot bring real peace and success. First of all, we should genuinely want to see peace in Burma. This attitude should be present first then we can talk about how we want this process to go. No, the formal peace process is not working. – Nang Ceh, SSSNY*

Nang Ceh expresses the frustration felt about the power imbalance in the peace process in terms of setting agendas, there is an inability for ethnic people to fully engage in the process and move the agenda past the military and governments objectives, to an agenda that has been deemed important by ethnic minority groups and deals with substantive issues of land and resource management, ending military violence and bringing perpetrators to account. A cease-fire or even a peace agreement alone will not end issues of structural and cultural violence. Structural violence can still exist in situations where there is no direct violence present, and when structural violence is not overcome this is a *negative* peace with no overt violence yet continued inequalities, exclusion and disenfranchisement. Though direct violence has reduced, there still exists the structure for violent and unjust consequences, accordingly the peace process needs to be aware of negative peace outcomes. True *positive* peace requires a societal transformation that will transcend the conditions that limit human potential. Positive peace does not 'involve a compromise on the potential emancipatory and empathetic nature of peace, [and is] rooted in accommodation, reconciliation, emancipation, autonomy, social justice and a sense of liberation' (Richmond 2015, p. 60).

In trying to assess the foundations of the 21st Century Panglong process, significant terminology keeps repeating: rule of law, democratic transition, building strong institutions and unity. These are signifiers that the formal peace process is following a liberal approach to peacebuilding. Following

the ascension of the NLD to government in 2015, Aung San Suu Kyi clearly stated her intention to lead the formal peace process and is quoted as stating: 'Only with the rule of law can other things succeed, for example peace. Some argue that peace should be the top priority, not the rule of law. But without the rule of law, peace will not last long ... The rule of law, peace and the stability of the country were interconnected and the concern and responsibility of every single citizen' (Zaw 2018). The United Nations in Myanmar (n.d.) also states that institution building is top of its priorities: 'Recognising that Myanmar's Peace Process is linked to its democratic transition, the UN works with union, state and local governments to bolster their democratic governances and build strong institutions.' Senior General Min Aung Hlaing (commander-in-chief of the Myanmar Armed Forces) agrees and is quoted as saying '[a] Union based on democracy and federal system with rule of law can be formed, so the existing laws need to be followed' (Thar 2017). However, this focus on state-building rather than reconciliation has been detrimental to trust building with contributors noting that the peace process is focused on security instead of reconciliation and transformation. There is no analysis regarding if the existing laws are just, inclusive and able to create a fair and equal society:

*In Burma we have more and more people talking about human security and national security and now business is a part of the discussion... Rule of law is an issue. ... I think the whole rules and law are still a tension. If you go for the protest or if you are media you can still get arrested or fined, lots of people are still getting arrested. – Theramu Mee, MTC*

Theramu Mee reinforces that in this new democratic period people are still subject to colonial era laws, such as the arrest and jailing of journalists convicted of breaching the colonial era *Official Secret Act* (ABC 2018), and other activists arrested for protests against the government.

Rule of law can therefore be an unjust concept if the laws are unjust. Little has been done in the new-democratic environment to address the laws that were put in place during Burma's colonial times or under the military junta. Therefore, in this instance 'rule of law' is not a foundation of peace. The liberal peacebuilding approach in Myanmar, which prioritises 'good governance' and state-building, means the focus of post conflict aid programs is on the promotion of democracy, market-based economic reforms and a range of other institutions to support state-building and institutional strengthening. However, many feel that Burma/Myanmar is not a failing or weak state that needs to be strengthened (South 2018) — it is just lacking in political will.

*I don't feel that the Burmese army has any political will - they don't have the will to resolve it. Because they don't see the ethnic groups as equal. The ethnic groups they don't feel like equal part of the process. The Burmese army just says 'you come back – we will forgive you'.*

*But some people who are powerful – especially in the business even some from ethnic – they don't like unity. If people unite, they can't do their business they can't get away with things and people know that. Those in power know to discriminate and cause division between the ethnic and religious groups. So this is a very hard time. Unity is important but it is hard to keep the unity. – Theramu Mee, MTC*

Unity is hardly an attractive proposal to minority groups and marginalised people. Unity in this instance seems like a threat to their communities, their language, culture and history. Those who are opposed to or sceptical of this liberal peace or security focus in this context are seen as 'spoilers'. The main scholarly critique applied to those supporting neo-liberal peace-building is that they may create parallel power structures and have sociocultural norms contrary to the values put forward by the state and the 'rule of law' approach (Chandler 2015; Pureza and Cravo 2009 ). However, the resistance to a rule of law approach may be valid as 'the law is often co-opted and misused by those in power to pursue their own interests, eroding trust in the state and its legal institutions' (Interpeace 2016, p. 2).

In this case, the building of parallel power structures could also be viewed as a valid response to the structural violence inflicted on vulnerable populations while in a civil war and can be valued as an empowerment or resilience approach. If the state sees all minority people as 'enemy of the people', as the Tatmadaw did during the Four Cuts policy, then it could be seen as understandable that non-government organisations will respond by replacing denied basic needs with their own education, health and civil society structure – structures which simplistic calls for unity would demand be abandoned. Liberal peacebuilding is critiqued for its insufficient appreciation of the tensions between various goals and outcomes of peacebuilding, an insufficient commitment of resources, unresolved tensions between the military and non-military participants, insufficient local ownership and inclusion in the process, and a lack of political will to complete the process (Tziarras 2012, pp. 4-5).

Theramu Kee outlined how strengthening the state and institution building can seem like a threat to minority peoples:

*The international community, they say they support peace. Yet there is still fighting between the ethnic armed group and the government. So, when they come and support peace, we feel like they support only one side and not both sides. If you want to build peace, you have to be equal treatment and equal support.*

*They only support Government's side. So, they become stronger, the government side. Like financial support, you give only them technical support, everything. Mostly, to the institution building they only do institution, not ethnic group, but look at the conditions of the communities, they need to know that the ethnic groups have been fighting for 60 years, it's not for nothing. The ethnic groups, they have their structure as well, they have education. That needs to be strengthened in order for them to sit in equal table, to have a dialogue. I think when the international committee talk about institution building, they only do one side. One side and support one side. A lot of time they also have their own interest, I think business interest so working of course they want to support. – Theramu Kee, KWO*

Theramu Kee is speaking about the dangers of prioritising economic development and state-building before ensuring political settlements and a sustainable peace agreement is made. However well-intentioned, development cannot bring peace in Burma/Myanmar when added to the goal of prioritising state-building, development programs tend to be associated with government-led development and rehabilitation projects (South 2018). However, Myanmar is not a failing or weak state that needs to be strengthened, it is a former authoritarian state currently in a state of recovery from decades of military rule. There is a transformation necessary — but it is not from weakness to strength — it is from authoritarian to compassionate, from a monistic-centred government to a pluralistic society. Theramu Dee speaks further of the distrust community groups have of the motives of the peace process, and the problem with focusing on state-building rather than equality:

*But they have put on a lot of money in this support, the Burma peace centre which is the people, a lot of people regard them as a representative of the government, they are the spokesperson of the Burmese government. And they put on a lot of money there. But I think a lot of ethnic people don't like those people who are working with them because they look down on the ethnic group, treating them as not equal. And at the end, the government gave Norwegian Government the contract to do the telecommunications. They might even get more contracts for doing all of them, these kinds of things. So, this is what we see. I think like other countries, their government when they engaged with the Burmese government even though it's a human rights issue. At the end, they get the companies set up there. So, for us we see they're supporting one side. One party of the conflict, making them stronger while weakening the other ethnic groups and Burma. – Theramu Dee, KWO*

While vulnerable peoples deserve security, there are two approaches to human security, one is an institutional approach, the other an emancipatory approach. The institutional approach considers the strengthening or creation of liberal institutions to protect human security as paramount and where peace — liberal peace — is made up of ‘a combination of democratization, economic liberalization, neoliberal development, human rights and the rule of law’ (Richmond 2007, p. 462). This is narrowly focused on basic physical security, the construction of effective institutions of

governance, and the importing of human security into post conflict development settings. It is a top-down approach which takes human security to be 'dependent upon security and strong states and international intervention by hegemonic states that establish the necessary institutions in order to provide for very basic forms of human security – namely physical security' (Richmond 2007, p. 460, 461). An emancipatory approach, by contrast, would focus on trust building and the participation of local communities in their own human security, 'it would be rooted in accommodation, reconciliation, emancipation, autonomy, social justice and a sense of liberation' (Richmond 2015, p. 60). Saw Aar, from the Karen Environment and Social Action Network (KESAN), outlines the mistrust that has been generated by the peace process in Burma/Myanmar because of the focus on state-building and economic development without accountability trust-building with civil society:

*If you look at the government's peace negotiating process, if ceasefire, the government is pressuring groups to sign the national ceasefire agreement. The question is what do ethnic groups want and what does the government want, why sign the national ceasefire? It is clear that the ethnic groups want political dialogue and the government doesn't want that, they want all the investments in the ethnic controlled areas without any opponents. They want a lot of money to support their Tatmadaw, they want money to support their corrupted administrations, money, money, and the international community is ready to support the government. The way they support the government is not right. Their approach and project is not right, they only focus on the financial, economic arrangements and not on what is for the benefit of the people, what the people need.... The EU they give a lot of money to Burma to support this, millions to the Burmese government, to support all these poverty issues. But the people are still very poor and I don't see any systematic programs that are for the people.... A major issue is the transparency issue and accountability and another major issue is that the international community should work directly with civil society instead of the government because we know the government is very corrupted. – Saw Aar, KESAN*

One of the major weaknesses of the liberal peacebuilding model is that in focusing on generating an appearance of democracy, without addressing root cause issues, it institutionalises and exacerbates already existing problems. This is particularly so in Burma/Myanmar where the people have been struggling against an autocratic monistic state, meaning that strengthening these power structures is a risk to peace. Without resolving the problems in the 2008 Constitution, democracy in Burma/Myanmar is handicapped by the military. Without resolving issues of resources management, federation or the de-centralisation of the state then the root causes of conflict remain unresolved. The promotion of democracy above all else fails to acknowledge that 'if liberal democracy in its effort to succeed out of "political necessity" fails to serve its purpose, that is to be "inclusive and create a multi-ethnic society" while embodying the complexities of its people, then it essentially fails to resolve the conflict' (Tziarras 2012, p. 10). The ethnic minority peoples historically were not

fighting for democracy — they were fighting for political inclusiveness and power sharing, including autonomy — so a solution that focuses on democracy building will not resolve this root cause issue.

Direct, structural and cultural violence at the national level persist in Burma/Myanmar where there has been no troop withdrawal from ethnic states. As Chandler (2015, p. 31) notes, '[t]he persistence of authoritarian legacies in post-authoritarian democracies may be explained in terms of a combination of socially, culturally, and institutionally induced set of attitudes, perceptions, motivations and constraints – that is from traditions or institutions of the past as well as from present struggles within formally democratic arrangements'. Without changing these attitudes, perceptions, motivations and constraints, the result of the liberal peacebuilding approach is that its main tenets — democracy, rule of law, state-building and economic advancement — may produce little benefit for marginalised and minority people. For minority people, self-determination, cultural identity and language are as essential to their human security as rule of law, as discussed by Theramu Kee (below). There is a danger of the peace process failing if people feel that state security is a one-sided matter and does not include a multi-ethnic society.

*Cross-border aid is the most effective to reach the most vulnerable people in the areas and cost effective and you could do work with less control by the government or you can be more effective and achieve more of your aim and support the people who are in need. And also, I think security issue is not the right concern. I think the local people they do not trust people who are coming from the Rangoon organisation. ... This is to do with self-determination, cultures, identities, culture appropriate, respecting people's identities. These are all important. – Theramu Kee, KWO*

This risk demonstrates a gap between peacebuilding rhetoric and peacebuilding processes. When there is a gap between the local and the state, or international community, this may be used to maintain authority, and the result can be an undermining of local consent (Richmond 2007). The liberal peace approach often, and certainly in the case of Burma/Myanmar, funnels resources into strengthening state capacity: training police, improving the operation and independence of the judiciary, increasing state level coordination and information sharing, and developing the strength of legal regimes in terms of democracy and human rights (Chandler 2015, p. 30). But this is not the only way to achieve change in a fragile state. What can be overlooked is the more pluralistic, inclusive and culturally sensitive approach, which requires trust building, local understanding and community support. Ethnic political party leadership have outlined from the beginning that their political demands are for significant autonomy in matters of internal administration, as promised in the

Panglong agreement (South 2016). Failure to address these autonomy, power sharing and resource management demands is a failure to address the root cause of the conflict as discussed by Saw Baw:

*Yes, they don't have peace either. Peace might mean different things to different people or to different situations... We do have less problems or restrictions. We have access to community where we have been. But this is not like a sustainable situation. Now, everything depends back on the peace process. Now we got in touch with this person, we get in touch with that person; we can travel here and there during this peace process or during this cease fire. If that's what's going on, this peace talk, and the cease fire talk, it's maybe the situation or the environment that we are experiencing might become more sustainable and people might think more of peace. ... Many times you ask, 'How long will this last? Will it reverse?' Something like that. So, you're just trying to grab the opportunity that is given out so you try to go to areas where you've never been, something like that. There are also some people who are holding onto the positions that I won't do until I trust. – Saw Baw, CIDKP*

Saw Baw is questioning the future and sustainability of the peace process reflecting a lived ethnic experience which foretells that ceasefires do not last (Myint 2015). Trust is an important factor as, generally, levels of public trust are higher in democratic societies and, as a result, society is less autocratic and less xenophobic (Zimelis 2012, p. 18). Conversely, more authoritarian societies are more autocratic and less trusting. Burma/Myanmar is still in transition from an authoritarian governing system to a democratic governing system and countries that are new democracies or democratising on average have lower levels of trust (Zimelis 2012, p. 24). Authoritarianism has eroded trust for decades and there has been little done to rebuild trust in this transitional period:

*Because it seems that people right now feel complicated, they don't know what is what. Just find peace but they-- actually they feel something change but not really understand the process and I know if they can feel this change. And another thing is to build trust between the people and the government because after 50 or 60 years of conflict, the civil war, the government cheated the people or the ethnic people many times so they came to stop and even like the cease fire process they still think that there will be fighting because they experience and see with their own eyes the cease fire during the peace process. The government send more troops, ammunition and military supplies to their bases in the ethnic areas. So, one villager went to see if the cease fire, this process will go to their land, to their home. – Saw Eay, Burma Issues*

As Saw Eay states, during this process of peacebuilding and ceasefire there has been a building up of Tatmadaw forces in ethnic states as a state-building exercise where the state demands to be the one and only armed force in Burma/Myanmar. However, the presence of Tatmadaw troops in ethnic regions is linked to human rights violations and resource seizing (Mirante 2017). There can be a shallowness to top-down processes of international peacebuilding and state-building where, due to

a country's laws and statutes, peace cannot be created (Chandler 2015) but indeed must be experienced by 'every person' and inclusive of civil society.

In whose hands is the peace process? Is it in the hands of the local, those communities most affected by the conflict? Liberal peace can become a hegemonic process and there is a danger that, without a process of inclusiveness that concentrates on building trust in ethnic and minority communities, the centralisation of support and funding from international actors can actually create what Richmond (2007, p. 470) terms a 'privatisation of peace' with the subsequent farming out of peace activities to private actors masking 'a tendency for bottom-up peacebuilding to represent international rather than local consensus and to overwhelm the voices of local actors involved in the civil society efforts regarding the liberal peace'. Failing to listen and to include civil society has been a trust destroying undertaking, as explained below:

*They were trying to be inclusive; I mean the ethnic leaders were. But there are many challenges for them to do that. Also, there are many... Some people want to be inclusive, some don't so there is some kind of argument between them. .... They understand civil society role differently. They respect the roles differently.*

*The civil society can do a lot of things for peace process and for Karen community. They try their best as a civil society. We give suggestion, produce statement, endorsement letter, meeting, consultation meeting and they were trying to do the support to be on going. I mean this is currently the role they're playing, the civil society. It is important, for example as a human rights groups, we give our field information to them, what is happening on the ground. Were there changes on the ground or not? So, it is important. As a health issue, the educational, we play a different part. It's not affected in the peace process part but don't know how they understand their role and respect.*

*They said that the civil society have a role to participate but not respect that yet. Civil society are not at the table. We have a role behind the seat but not on the table. – Saw Aey, KHRG*

The recognition of the interdependence gap as outlined by Lederach (1999, p. 30) suggests a strong connection between sustainability of a peace program and the ability to have an inclusive process paying attention to both the horizontal *and* vertical. However, in this instance the peace process has concentrated more of its resources and capacity building on the horizontal and ignoring the vertical axis, leaving significant insufficiencies in the structure of the peace process to be sustained. Saw Weh, from the Back Pack Health Worker Team, highlights how both inclusiveness and trust building are fundamental to relationship building and coordination; without these elements the chances for sustainable peace are weakened.

*No, only the government side and ethnic armed group are talking so it's not inclusive for the peace process. Some part of the ethnic leader understands that here we are doing for a revolution a long time. In our community, the people are already believing and trusting us and we are fighting for a long time. The community may be exhausted that is why we start with the government in any peace process. The people might agree and believe in it. But on the other hand, for the ethnic also they have the technical person and economic person. They could not change any constitution or law so they want to suggest to the ethnic leader but that is a little bit difficult. The ethnic leader is not willing to accept that thing. In their mind, we have to wait for a long time so we have to do it quick. For the government, internationally what is legal, what kind of is appropriate in the community, the international should communicate with the government with that thing. At the same time, the Myanmar community should also support with that thing. The government should accept community feedback.... They do a little, but not enough. They are talking about the peace process but if you live at home at the poor area, the businessmen make coal mining. So, they should do economic policy. They should also have mining policy and health policy and education should also change a lot. The ethnic side, not the armed leader, they are so scared that their identity will be lost. We should make one country so that's what makes the conflict. They should agree more. – Saw Weh, BPHWT*

Focusing on the horizontal relationships between the Tatmadaw, government and ethnic armed organisations has failed to include the vertical relationships with civil society groups that may be able to positively influence the peace process. This stems from a failure to see all involved in the peace process as equal. There is a viewpoint that what is being asked is for ethnic leadership to simply have to give up on their struggle and political demands in order to engage with the peace process, as explained by Saw Aey:

*To be honest I don't know that, if the formal peace process is the best way to achieve peace. I don't know how to answer because you think it also have challenges. To my idea, building peace is not a trick. It's honest and a commitment that we really would make peace in the country. This kind of commitment, we could do it honestly, it's not a trick. To me, I think it's not in the discussion in the negotiations. Most people are conscious about gaining rewards. They try to think about the meaning of the word which is also why they do not trust each other yet. And they have to be honest.*

*To get to peace in Burma... How to say it, like negotiations, talking is the best way. Fighting cannot solve the problem and them only win, if they have to fight, they have to fight until the end. If the government want to uproot all the ethnic groups, they should do it with no ethnic armed group anymore. If they cannot do that, the negotiation on the table, the sharing of needs and wants, together in a discussion then how can I accept your proposal? Negotiations are the best way to get peace in Burma, I think. Negotiations also, I think, honest and transparency will play a big difference. Unless they are honest to each other, the peace process will take longer. – Saw Aey, KHRG*

Transparency is a key indicator of trust and inclusiveness. Having a human rights focus in an area where human rights violations have been rampant during the conflict should be an important element in moving the peace process forward (Schirch 2002). However, in this context human rights values are not central to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong peace process, nor to market systems that focus on economic progress, nor to political decisions. It is clear in Burma/Myanmar that 'powerful value frameworks that ignore people and their rights in the pursuit of profit and material goods, the domination of one identity group over another and maintaining the status quo (including the state structure, class structures etc)' (Schirch 2002, p. 8) are being allowed to compete with, and even override, a human rights value framework. The drivers of the peace process in Burma/Myanmar are ignoring their 'responsibility to articulate their values in contrast to prevailing paradigms that ignore or trivialise the essential role human rights plays in preventing deadly conflict' (Schirch 2002, p. 8).

As emerges from my contributors, there needs to be a recognition of the strength that comes from diversity, that women are an important part of the peace process, and failing to include women is failing to understand that women's lives are impacted by conflict and struggle. Women clearly have a stake in peace having been intricately connected to the conflict as it threatened their lives, the lives of their children and families, their livelihoods and their physical security. The assumption that women and men perceive security in the same manner itself needs to be challenged, as research on women's security highlights there are numerous obstacles in the post-conflict transitional political environment to meaningful security for women:

Such obstacles include: the lack of a secure physical environment, making it dangerous for women to function in any meaningful sense in the public sphere for fear of harm; particular vulnerability to sex-based violence unchecked by the formal end of hostilities or the change-over in regime; allied with a lack of political acknowledgement giving credence to a wider and more embracing notion of security beyond a narrow militaristic and state-oriented approach (Ni Aoláin 2009, p. 1063).

It needs to be recognised that 'peacebuilding is an organic system that requires relationships and coordination of multiple activities, multiple roles, at multiple levels. No one activity will be able to deliver and sustain peace on its own' (Lederach 1999, p. 30). As explained by Theramu Kee, there are a multitude of civil society voices especially women who need to be included:

*Let's say like a nationwide cease fire talk. Cease fire is where the peace process started so for KWO we advocate for women participation so we say women participation should be at the*

*beginning so it is very important for women to be a part of that. It becomes a tension and this is what we will be talking about like a military thing and also a politics thing.*

*I think it's becoming more tension since 2012 when the process started from the beginning when we have the women leaders, it's easier like we are involved in the consultation and workshop with KNU. But after that we are not able to participate in their consultation or strategy planning or anything. And for the KNU, because they are mostly men, they only think about military matters related to the men, not the women or the other civil society and sometimes when you talk about you are represent the women, the community, they think they are representing all and it's like sometimes when you talk to them it's like we are not representing the community. It's like you know the community better than us? But what they don't understand, they don't recognise is different communities, each group representing different voices. And that is important to listen. You have the government, you have different civil society, you have the union group so they have different voices. For those in the leadership position representing their groups, sometimes it creates a tension.*

*But I think there are things that the decision body that couldn't do, they are not able to reach and they are not able to hear that's why we have different civil societies to voice them. I think changing their mindset and attitude is very difficult at this time still the men hold. I think everywhere. – Theramu Kee, KWO*

The peace process is currently limited, in official capacity to Government and military representatives (both the Tatmadaw and Ethnic Armed Organisations), therefore civil society including CBOs are not present, excepting occasions where they may be advisors or observers. This creates a tension over representation of the community, and indeed the definition of the community, as community includes women and other people unconnected to the military. Hence limiting the process to government and military results in tensions as it is not truly representing the community.

As my contributors included several women's organisations, the lack of inclusiveness in the process was a subject keenly addressed by all, including the focus on military-to-military talks, and in particular the failure to include women as genuine participants, as explained by Theramu Weh;

*Yes, but they said that when we talked to them about women in the peace process, they said that it is not time for women because it is this military to military issue. And they said that when there is political dialogue then women can be included in their community. The majority represent and attend are mostly men. Then if the women place is not preserved, then it's not easy and again when we talk about women representative which means the women concerned, women right, women issues need to be raised and need to be put into agreement. Otherwise, once the agreement is made then you cannot make change. Since you already signed then it would be left out. This is why we, even though they cannot have our*

*representative but at least they raised what, we have raised to them the concern. When we talk about women representative, it doesn't mean that they can choose any women they want. It needs to be the women that can represent women and also, they have a gender perspective and they can understand women issues and they can also represent us. But right now, it's very, very difficult. We formed the peace mission, WLB, we met with the ethnic group two times already but the first time was very difficult and the second time it was like they were recognizing it a bit that we have, that they're not as harassed as before. ... So, which means that they understand and kind of aware of what we're doing and what we have been trying. We say that we're talking about women's participation. It doesn't mean we want power; we want to be part of this nation; we want to help build this nation. It is also our responsibility and we are doing our part to try to bring this peace and try to bring this nation. – Theramu Weh, WLB*

The common narrative of war portrays women as victims only (Narang and Saini 2013, p. 1115), this takes away the agency of women and women's organisations and has the effect of leaving women sidelined and voiceless in the rebuilding of their country and society. Women's experiences as victims of violence and active participants in peace making, even if this is largely informal, needs to be recognised when negotiating peace (Mlinarević et al. 2015). Women's contributions to peace can be discounted or ignored because 'they often take unconventional forms, occur outside formal peace processes or are just considered extensions of women's existing roles' (Narang and Saini 2013). According to Mlinarević et al. (2015, p. 35-36) over the past 20 years most of the failures of peace agreements can be traced to two things: 'a flawed peace agreement, the purpose of which was to end the armed conflict but which did not contain the necessary elements for creating sustainable peace, and secondly, the fact that women and civil society had no part in negotiating that peace'. If the purpose of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference is to build a positive and sustainable peace the opinion of, my teacher and friend contributors it is essential to have women and civil society present in the negotiators as participants and contributors, not simply observers.

Issues of transparency, representation make the peace process problematic, however, a bigger problem impends, the lived experience for people in this conflict is one of ceasefires and hopes dashed and ceasefires broken. Trust has been eroded as there has not been a withdrawal of Tatmadaw troops from ethnic states and as explained by Theramu Kee below, there is a legitimate fear that a military victory will be the pursued, that that peace in this scenario will be a one-sided victory:

*For villagers our land and orchard is being taken away by the business people or the military and so things are not improving but if you look at in Rangoon and the big cities there are more freedom People can travel and can speak freer and more spaces*

*but I think in our areas, in many of the Karen areas, they have not improved because of the reduction of the direct fighting, people can travel and feel less scared. But it doesn't mean that there is no more fighting. From time to time there is still fighting and villagers are still afraid in some areas, depends on the areas where you live, some areas worse. People are still hiding their food items and stuff, they're ready if there is an attack because they see more [Tatmadaw] military or enforcement in the area. Like armies have not withdrawn in their camps and they're sending more troops. Actually, they may suffer more because of these changes of more business coming to my areas.*

*So no one is really analysing the whole conflict situations and making the best effort. When you look at The Burman PSI, the peace support initiative, support is delivered through the Burma side, they have put on a lot of money in this support, the Burman peace centre. A lot of people regard them as a representative of the government. They are government apologists, they are the spokesperson of the Burmese government. There is no equality.*

*So for us we see they are [international community] supporting one side. One party of the conflict, making them stronger while weakening the other ethnic groups and Burma. So a lot of people are worried about things might happen in Sri Lanka where you know the Tamil Tiger was defeated by the Sri Lanka government. That's what they call a winner-loser defeated peace. It could happen here. – Theramu Kee, KWO*

How to shift the paradigm to a 'win-win' solution? My contributors made it clear to me that all desire peace, for their communities and their country. However, there should be no expectations that they will not represent their communities' best interests in terms of trying to secure the political demands needed to build a more equitable future in Burma/Myanmar. There is bewilderment at the idea of civil society and CBOs being considered 'hawks' in the formal peace process. Natural scepticism of the process, or reluctance to rush into signing an agreement without fully negotiating the political demands or root causes of the war, could be viewed as a prudent strategy to ensure the peace process has purchase in the local community and the possibility for sustained peace, rather than an affront to the process. There is a danger that this peace process does not have a transformative goal and, therefore, there is a danger of it being shallow and short lived.

*What the Burmese government want political settlement for later. However, the government cannot agree to discuss federalism. There is a discussion now and there are some donors who want to see peace in Burma. They all ask why these ethnic groups have problems in signing the cease fire. There has been no political discussion about this.*

*But of course, they are pushing us to sign the nationwide ceasefire but there is no political discussion or agreement and once it is signed there will be no further discussion or*

*agreement. The government says – sign this and we can talk after. But we know that if we sign there will be no later. The unlawful association act 17-1 means you can arrest people associated with the unlawful association so they can arrest the civilian if they believe they are linked to unlawful group (who is defined by the military) ... they can arrest. It leaves people powerless.*

*The armed groups say they can only talk about their area only and that the political issue needs to be talked with all the people, the political groups. There is no equal position in terms of the bargaining power. And ethnic military are blamed for not talking to government. But this current situation doesn't work because there is a ceasefire and then followed with a military attack. Even if there were political issues on the agenda – not only ceasefire – what right do the [ethnic] military groups have to decide for all of the people? How can they – they don't have the right to decide the future of ethnic people and the whole people. There needs to be a change of the 2008 constitution to have a real equal power of the states and the ethnic people. – Nang Ceh, SSSNY*

As argued here by Nang Ceh any resistance to signing a ceasefire agreement is not a resistance to peace, it is a resistance to maintaining structural inequalities and nested violence as the status quo. Any transformation from conflict to peace depends as much on the method used as the outcome if a positive sustainable peace is sought, as '[m]ethods for ending violent conflict have an impact on post conflict political configurations (such as majority rule, carving up territorial divisions, ethnic or racial hegemony through control of military and state institutions)' (Jeong 2005, p. 23). Degrees of tolerance for opposition is a key factor in a working democracy, and in positive peace there is a need for reconstruction, reconciliation and transformation in order for civilians displaced by war and violence to have a place in a newly constructed peace. Saw Eay, for example, outlines the uneven power structures that exist even in the peace process;

*Cease fire is just cease fire but there are many economic problems or other forms of human right violations without arms. Like land confiscation, which makes people feel unsecure. ... I mean like the ordinary people choose to support their community even if they are the 'loser' but for the business they will choose the winner, the winner only. Governments working but military is working separately as their military leaders order, so can we trust this government? Or we have to trust the military? The constitution works to sending the military every day. – Saw Eay, Burma Issues*

It is not guaranteed that peace will be inclusive, positively focused and sustainable, as the current paradigm operates in a power imbalance. Peace for some could be the 'victor's peace' which comes from a military victory and is based upon domination. Institutional peace puts value on the normative process of law and order, constitutional peace depends on the values of democracy, which is decided by majority rule — not an attractive prospect if you are a minority people. Whereas

civil peace is developed from direct action, from citizens and civil society, and human rights (Richmond 2007, p. 462). Empowerment, resilience and resistance are inclusive, as is dissent, to a free and peaceful society;

*I think in the international, they might see it's neutral because they try to be neutral. But it's very clear because the ethnic are ones who are always not in a very good situation. If you weigh them, the government, it's not balanced. Also, for the international, they only recognise the government, the Burmese government and a lot of the international are going inside Burma for development aid they go inside Burma. A lot of money from internationals for the peace process goes to the Burmese government, it doesn't come to the ethnic group. So, once they are in power and they have all the control, who has the most power?...*

*It's very clear, we say that if people really want to invest in Burma like they want a long sustaining development, sustaining investment then you need to focus more in bringing a sustainable peace, like a genuine peace. Otherwise, it will only be temporary and it will be broken. So, people are already tired of work and even the community, they want peace to be sustainable and genuine and of course the building of ethnic leadership, that's political goal. That's what we have been asking for a long time but right now it seems there is a lot of pressure on the ethnic group. People are, instead of bringing peace, they are more interested in investing and gaining from Burma, they work to invest even if there is a ceasefire only. –  
Theramu Weh, WLB*

Theramu Weh highlights the instability in a peace constructed of 'power over', neo-colonialist, liberal peace ideals. She highlights that there is an inherent risk in failing to address power imbalance – the failure of the peace process. The role of civil society is inhibited by the authoritarian regime even in a post-conflict setting, where civil society organisations are still seen as 'threats' (Jeong 2005). Even social programs, such as women's empowerment and inclusion, health and education to reverse past discriminatory practices and inequality, and labour unions to combat workplace inequalities and discrimination, are seen as threats to a country still recovering from authoritarianism. That protest has continued to be quashed in Burma/Myanmar indicates a fundamental lack of change and a rigidity in understanding the frustration behind dissent. As Schirch (2002, p. 5) argues, it is not some kind of inherent aggression in humanity that causes most conflict, but rather 'frustration or denial of human needs and human rights leads to conflictual behaviour and violence' and, conversely, the ability to 'stratify human needs and to live with human rights leads to constructive conflict behaviour and a just peace'. There is a need for a paradigm shift to an inclusive peace process that recognises the strength in all forms of power sharing, in federation but also in understanding people power, civil society and community-based groups. Failure to rush into an agreement should not be considered as being a 'spoiler' but should be considered to be prudent when hesitation is to ensure that the peace process is inclusive, respects local agency, concentrates

on trust building and justice and has a positive peace outcome, as this is the best chance for sustainable peace. The fragility of this peace process cannot be underestimated, as Nang Ceh explains:

*In 2010, when the [democratic] Burmese government was formed, the ethnic groups who refused were attacked. But in 2011, they started to call cease fire with these groups, hoping this would be a better solution for the peace process. In my opinion, I think there has been nothing implemented underground and fighting continues in the south [of Shan State]. The government didn't withdraw troops and they still increased in the ethnic areas and have mobilised their artillery. Whenever we raise this, the government said the Burmese military do not listen to them so they have no power over them. Clearly, it is the military who are governing the country.*

*The government say they are managing the peace process, so they are blaming the military for violent outbreaks. Compared to the past, the fighting has decreased after the cease fire. However, the government cannot agree on federalism.*

*What the Burmese government want political settlement for later. They all ask why these ethnic groups have problems in signing the cease fire. There has been no political discussion about this. The ethnic groups are trying to negotiate and they also want to fight. People are living in fear. They [the government] can still arrest anyone because they are linked to different groups. – Nang Ceh, SSSNY*

The concern is that there is an emphasis on a liberal peacebuilding model that supports strengthening government and has security, law and order at its core. The fundamental failing of the values of trust building, inclusiveness, horizontal peacebuilding structures and human rights is of concern to the contributors to this study, yet their concerns are being overlooked in favour of the values and priorities of international influencers<sup>30</sup> and a focus on national unity. Unity may seem like a powerful unifier — but not when it trumps equality. Equality is central to this peace process and a focus on unity rather than equality will underlie any negative peace outcome, or indeed failure of the peace process. This research reveals that ethnic minority people do not see themselves as being treated with equality in terms of: their voices; their decision making and inclusiveness in the process; their autonomy and rights to control their natural resources; and those systems that impact their people and community, such as education, welfare and healthcare. Inequality is a key driver of this conflict and without an equality focus there is a risk that any peace gained will not be sustainable

---

<sup>30</sup> International influencers such as United Nations (UN) Independent International Fact Finding Missions; other relevant UN agencies, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the US Department of State, as well as 'donor countries' with aid programs in Burma/Myanmar, such as Australia, USA, Japan, the European Union and other European countries.

and indeed that, the peace process may even fail or that negative peace, a system without direct violence but with deep structural inequalities, will be the outcome.

### 5.3 Peace is not development and development is not peace

My contributors revealed that the people of Burma/Myanmar have suffered through decades of civil war and military authoritarian control, and the burden of both the war and the policies that resulted in structural violence has fallen unjustly on those already marginalised and made them poorer and more vulnerable. Further, it is possible for an economic development agenda to exacerbate structural inequalities if the methodology is not conflict sensitive. If the economic development is imposed, if development structures enforce a cultural hegemony or creates a dependency on aid, if there is a failure to include the local civil society, and if development is used to further disenfranchise, or deprive them of their land or resources, then the risks are that a negative peace is formed as structural inequalities worsen. As explained by Theramu Dee:

*The aid programs run by community organisations are sustainable and cost-effective. And also, sustainability meaning building up people, cost effective also, it costs less to local people than to have people from outside international staff come in and do the work. And also, because they know the situation. Only when the community is empowered and then they become the owner. The International NGOs take ownership of the project or the process and it's not sustainable, that is why we don't want them to be more dependent and then we have people come in and everybody depends on the aid and then once the aid withdraws everyone will fall apart, and they're all fighting. And also, we are very concerned with the right implementation because when they leave, the community they don't know how to continue with the activities. And also, it does not respect to the community's structure, they just go and duplicate and they do implementation, they just ask the local leader to implement for them. So, it's more load for the community leaders. At the same time, they have to do for their village and be responsible. Also when NGOs come in and ask them to do things also is they have to do. And also sometimes the culture also is damaged, identities because of the language, for example nursery schools, even if donor is not international NGO but directly implemented, if they're not sensitive about what is happening in the area like they think they are doing the right thing the international NGO build the government capacities and pay through the government and that's why the teacher's salary is very high, better than the local and then but also using the curriculum from Burmese side which means destroying the community. They have been fighting for 60 years for the government to respect our language, culture and identities. This is very important in Burma, people, ethnic and identity and so that the curriculum, the teaching should reflect the people there but instead they are also re-enforcing the message from the textbook, designed by the central government, the teaching materials and everything. I think they are not aware of this, it's more dangerous. – Theramu Dee, KWO*

Cultural hegemony and issues of top-down development, as explained by Theramu Dee, are problematic as they do not value the local existing civil society structures. There are concerns that conflict sensitive approaches are not being followed in the rush for development or a 'peace dividend' as a part of the peace process. Richmond (2007, p. 461) links this desire for a reward from the peace process to neoliberal capitalist views and notes how that view then reduces the scope of desired human security needs and constructs them to be within the context of democratisation and the rule of law. Furthermore, there is a danger in human rights, free trade, globalised markets and neoliberal economic development being strongly characterised by an institutional approach (Richmond 2007, p. 461). When the actors associated with human security are foreign state donors, state donor-funded nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations (IOs), international agencies, international financial institutions (IFIs) and regional organisations, human security is presented as a universal set of very basic security needs constructed within a liberal state. (Richmond 2007, p. 461). This in turn sidelines communities and CBOs who have a more holistic and emancipatory viewpoint of human security, who link it to the reflection and critique of power, the ability to participate in social justice, and the important human security needs of culture, language and identity.

If this is constrained by the cultural hegemony that positions the needs of the powerful over the less powerful then a liberal peace approach to development lacks inclusiveness. Richmond (2007, p. 461) further explains that '[t]he definitions, associated rights, needs, and limits of human security are therefore constructed according to an external liberal consensus with the automatic assumption that what translates into a merging of military security and humanitarian provisions conforms to local expectations and needs, while serving as a universal liberal normative regime.' It is this normative regime that is problematic for a minority people who have constructed their own systems of health care support, education, rights-based community leadership and empowerment programs. These parallel systems were born of necessity, but still they value ethnic cultural identity, language and leadership at their root. This devaluing of the local is problematic, as Theramu Lar explains:

*They're doing what they call the development. For example, they [INGO] build the school, they build the hospital, they do the health program, the community or civil group here is doing it already. They want to do malaria or health program, but ethnic groups, CBOs already do this. They [international organisations] did not believe that the community had the ability, they did not believe that they are educated, and that they have the knowledge for that. They only believe themselves that they have the money, the education, the parts needed to develop. It's not part of what the community needs and why the community refuse*

*the offer for that is they didn't care about that. They just blame the community. They do without consulting with... without proper consulting with the community.*

*So KTWG, even though we are a Karen group, the civil group, what we are doing is because we are trying to build the community themselves, trying to understand the community and we go along with them at the same time support them, educate them. – Theramu Lar, KTWG*

One of the side effects of an over reliance on international intervention, rather than locally based grassroots community peace-building, is that the provision of the basic needs of vulnerable populations has been privatised. As most non-state actors must operate within the 'confines of dominant institutions and regimes of the state to preserve their very existence', this inherently 'reduces their roles in the negotiation and renegotiation of the peacebuilding consensus. ... as subservient to that of the states.' (Richmond 2007, p. 466). There is a domino effect whereby international organisations need to strike an agreement (MOU) with the government for access, thereby confining their programs to the governance or approval of the Myanmar government, and then those civil societies who seek access to funding and program assistance must strike an agreement with the UN body or INGO and, thereby, further confine *their* program to the governance or approval of the INGO, UN or international funding body. In this structure there is little room for community-led civil society and programs that bolster local resiliency. Practical approaches of resilience seek to mitigate this 'problematic and hierarchical binary' (Chandler 2015, p. 30) by removing the focus on policy actors and focusing instead on practices of resilient local communities to 'generate the policy goals of intervention through community development itself' (Chandler 2015, p. 30). This creates competition in an environment that was not competitive before. It also creates a pressure where under-resourced, stressed communities need to risk their cultural identity by capitulating to the state in order to get support, as Theramu Kee explains:

*You know for us, we don't want a competition because there is so much needs in Burma that organisations should target different groups and different areas. Then strengthen what is already there. That is what always our policy because we never go into Rangoon [Yangon] and do the work. For example, we never go to, areas of others because these aren't our areas. We're based in the rural areas and our target is to make sure women there have assistance. It is where we're going to work.*

*We also want the other organisations to do the same. We don't want competition I think a lot of time. The competition comes because of the donor because the money is there. When the money is for women protection, everybody wants to do the women issues. If disabilities, everyone will rush to disabilities. When it is eastern Burma, conflict area, everyone wants to go there so this is the issue. So this is the problem. Even peace they want to focus what is*

*Burma and the community is becoming. When the money goes and more organisations go like that.*

*They don't support the existing structure or recognise what is already there, the skills, the people, the resources are already there, even though their principles were gone many times. Nobody talks to us about women or any issues. They don't come and talk to us about the refugees return and they don't come and talk about development in the Karen state but we already have plans and do the discussion. And also, they don't see the organisation is already existing. They [INGO] didn't cooperate, they didn't consult with the group, they're just NGO most of the time they just go and set up a program. We are against that for sustainability. –  
Theramu Kee, KWO*

A liberal peace development agenda links development to democratisation, where a characteristic of this development is the 'emergence of democratization as a key objective in which civil society could be stabilized in a sustainable manner and human security could be guaranteed ... what this indicated was that any form of intervention in a conflict, whether state, IO, or NGO has become implicitly contingent upon the actor's contribution to democratization process' (Richmond 2007, p. 469). The entry of communities from the conflict zone into the global economy becomes forced — programs founded in local resiliency supplied or supported by CBOs are pushed aside for liberal constructions, determined by government or international agencies. The linking of the aid, and the provision of aid, to governance agendas by this domino effect of concessions — reluctant or otherwise — through these agreements between NGOs and UN and government agencies, means that civil society has become 'intricately entwined with official actors and transitional administrations through conditions relating to the constructions of the liberal peace by donor's vis-à-vis NGOs and their target populations .... this relationship has acted as form of cultural suppression' (Richmond 2007, p. 470).

As stated by Theramu Lar, it is the *method* of development programs that is of utmost importance:

*They are not close to the community that is why they are different. They do not understand how to educate them. They know the need but the way to do it is different from them [INGOs]. Also, they [INGOs] view the community, the people, they look down on them so that is very difficult. But the international is worse because they don't meet the community. It's not your village, it's not your people, it's not your whatever. They are not close to them and their living standard is different from how they are living. They know there is a need in the villages, they know that they are in a poor place, right?*

*The KTWG approach is, we learn many things and then we have to refresh ourselves. We have to see the community that we are working to see development, strengthen them or giving them the ability to understand what they need. You cannot rush that. You have to know the background; you have to know the history because the community do not*

*have the... First, they are affected by the war, by the war communities learn to not trust the people. And then the education is a little bit low so how you have to educate them is a bit slow but you have to do it in a very nice way with a positive attitude, build the communities and leadership.* – Theramu Lar, KTWG

Focusing on *outcomes* over method has the potential not only to fail to create positive peace but indeed has the potential to further the conflict or create a negative peace where issues of inequality and structural violence are not addressed. There is a danger for a cultural hegemony to be at play, where the communities are seen as placid victims of the violence, and the efforts they have made to both survive the violence and provide services for those most in need and impacted by the violence, are completely cast aside for the perceived ‘supremacy’ of international influencers. This contrast can, and is, characterised by a clash of ‘the international’ and ‘the local’ but it is actually a clash of conceptual frameworks and ideology: one that attempts to transform society in a bottom-up manner via community strengthening, resilience and empowerment, versus one that seeks to transform society via top-down mechanisms, legal processes, liberal ideology, state imposed conditions and a rule of law context.

There are potentially two issues when failing to take a conflict sensitive approach, the first is building only a limited capacity in the grassroots, the second is that community capacity can be *destroyed* in the targeted conflict environments (Richmond 2007, p. 477). There is a need to understand and recognise the resilience of local organisations and communities. The insistence by international actors to be seen as ‘neutral’ in a political sense is disingenuous when they bring the cultural baggage of liberal ideology, and culturally hegemonic resources and ‘expertise’ (Richmond 2007, p. 472). International peacebuilding interventions can subjugate community-based interventions by ‘neglecting the traditional, indigenous’ (Tziarras 2012, p. 6-7) and rejecting local resilience and knowledge. The civil war conflict in Burma/Myanmar reflects a long local history of poor governance and state accumulation such as human rights violations and ‘looting, rent-seeking, and illegitimate trade. Understanding, in its local context, the economic and political rationale of elites engaging in conflict can be an important prerequisite for defining remedial strategies’ (Saferworld 2004, p. 10). Benevolent aid or development programs can be critiqued or seen as self-serving by international influencers as ‘international actors are firmly opposed to more direct global redistribution of wealth and opportunities and any recognition that difference is a viable political force’ (Richmond 2015). The result of local frameworks being denied is negative peace (Richmond 2015, p. 59).

*They have to have respect of the local, not duplicated, strengthening the community, respecting local resources. It's in the Do No Harm principle but they don't do it. They don't follow. It's like a culture, but this way it will harm to the community.*

*Their reason is they associate us with the ethnic armed group so they won't support us meaning they are harming the community. Because some of the consultant says the people who claim themselves the experts say that supporting the refugee will prolong the conflict. We have a different opinion to the International NGOs about the meaning of do no harm.*

*Also, neutrality. I feel that impartiality is mostly interpreted as supporting the government because in Burma without the government approval, agreement or following their policy is not able to do their implementation. Maybe after they're doing their implementation, they have to send their report to the government. Is that neutral? No, that's not neutral. –*

Theramu Kee, KWO

Theramu Kee and other contributors repeatedly stated that international influencers and peacebuilders from a 'sending' or donor country need to respect the rights of receiving communities to self-determination, to their structures, leadership and participation in all peace-building processes to avoid continuing 'the process of humiliation and belittlement that people suffering from conflict already feel' (Schirch 2002, p. 10). Recognition of local agency and CBOs as already having a capacity to meet the needs of their communities and to build structures for services, like health, education, political empowerment, helps to counteract the program of structural violence that they have been subjected to. These are both peace-building efforts and ways to support human rights and empowerment.

Compared to international organisations, local organisations who have built their knowledge on the experience of living through the conflict and creating programs that assisted their communities to survive conflict, have both a better understanding of the conflict, and better access to the communities. Ensuring that any intervention is conflict sensitive and endeavours to work with local CBOs can help ensure that peace-building operations do not aggravate existing tensions. When development and aid take on a conflict sensitive approach, resolving the sources of inequality and discrimination becomes necessary, in addition to addressing the political economy of conflict (Saferworld 2004, p. 6). Because there is a link between conflict and inequality, it is necessary to address the underlying causes of chronic poverty and inequality. This can only be rectified if power imbalances are addressed, not limited to the power imbalance of marginalised people to the state, but including communities and CBOs and state supported internationally-led development interventions.

On the issues of neutrality of non-state actors, and of international development ‘taking sides’, the contributors to this project have many concerns. There is a tension that is created with the liberal peace approach of state and institution building — this is the issue of neutrality. Although neutrality is a humanitarian principle (OCHA 2012), it is one that can be contentious in conflict for, as was famously stated by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, ‘[i]f you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality’ (Younge 2009). In the case of Burma/Myanmar, the insistence that the government needs support and strengthening means there is an ideological misinterpretation of who is the elephant and who is the mouse.

*For international, I can say that they are not understanding, they think it is right to work with the Government. Organisations, they open themselves inside Burma that will affect the border groups a lot. It means that as the funding or all the donor or international agencies will go to organisations based inside. Like as they said there is peace or cease fire already so there is announcement on that so the international believe that they have to go through the government. So, it's a little bit difficult for the border group to access the funds. Because the government has the policy, everyone has to register. And then they register. Also, the donor, the international also only accept the group who are registered.*

*The issue is choosing sides, choosing the Government way. There will be no peace. It will be winning over us but what we are concerned and what we are talking about is the community, we don't know will be collapsed again? They do harm because what I see now is they are hungry for Burma. All the international groups are hungry for Burma – Theramu Lar, KTWG*

There is a fundamental misunderstanding held by international groups about the concept of neutrality. While some international influencers want to work with the Government of Myanmar on institution building, and others believe that the Myanmar military can be transformed through training and aid work — believing that ‘neutrality’ and ‘impartiality’ justifies such actions — it does call into question the accepted meanings and understandings of neutrality and impartiality. While it is understood that these terms are important in a conflict in dissuading international actors from supporting side A or side B, and providing or funding weapons and funds to the perpetrators of violence and conflict, the extension of these ideas to *all* interactions with those made vulnerable by the conflict and violence fails to acknowledge the impact of the actions of the powerful over the powerless. Humanitarian aid organisations should avoid neutrality and always make clear their bias — which should be on the side of the vulnerable. Those suffering inequalities and structural violence do not benefit from neutrality, and failing to side with the vulnerable and those most affected by direct or structural violence shows in fact the *absence* of neutrality. As Paulo Freire (2000) states

'[w]ashing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.'

*Do no harm or do more harm. Because they [INGO] didn't inform the community and also this one is they said is 'do no harm' but the way they do it's like creating problem among the community in the organisation who are implementing the community and they will provide to the community where they will have more relation than the other. And also, the restriction from the government or the MOU which says 'work in this place not that place'.*

*The other thing is because we already have an existing staff or health worker working in that area and when they come, they also have some of the staff and also, they want to pick some from this community. Some competition. Some they don't work with CBO and they want NGO because they can get more salary. Then the CBO, we lose our human resources.*

*Neutrality it depends on their definition, neutrality for them. What we think is, I think Burma is opening up and then we can do a lot and we should support but they don't-- maybe they know but they want to try many restrictions even though they cannot reach their conflict area or the remote area. – Nang Nai, SWAN*

Nang Nai, from the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN), highlights the problems with state sanctioned aid programs that claim neutrality. This approach is at best disingenuous and at worst has the potential to stoke conflict. Neutrality and impartiality are key humanitarian principles. These principles are designed to ensure humanitarian aid does not discriminate based on race, religion, nationality, class, gender or political beliefs, and ensuring humanitarian aid does not 'take sides' in hostilities (OCHA 2012). Furthermore, these principles require that humanitarian aid is based on need by 'giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress' (OCHA 2012). Another requirement is that humanitarian responses must be autonomous from political objectives and also the objectives of the military (OCHA 2012). It is clear from these principles that at the core of aid and humanitarian action there should be a distinct understanding that the needs of the vulnerable (refugees, IDPs, marginalised groups) are to be prioritised over the needs of the powerful (the government and military). INGOs and foreign state donors, however, are working with both the government and via the military often to the detriment of local actors as Theramu Weh attests:

*They [international actors] are trying to influence the political parties I think my personal thinking, maybe they're thinking that they want to pressure the Burmese government to change the political situation and to change the way to democratic government not the military government. They are just thinking that they are helping Burma to change political situation, but in reality, they are supporting the government and not supporting the community so...*

*Yeah, they have their own interest. Burma is still under development country, so many things they can invest there, can make money for their own country, company to invest and to do some development, helping Burma or helping themselves, their thinking is both way they can benefit, both.*

*Usually the international community are just helping themselves, I think. International community, they are coming, they are helping themselves, they rent, secure a house. A lot of dollars, and a lot of money, they drink coffee, they are here they rent to the meeting room, many meeting every meeting time they spend a lot of money, they have their own salary, a lot of money for themselves only how about the rural area? Who will donate? Only border group developing in that area and they don't want to support that border group they said they will fund only inside. – Theramu Weh, WLB*

As Paulo Freire (1972, p. 19) states, 'All education is political' and similarly it must be acknowledged that development cannot exist in a neutral space, it is both political and politicised. To apply Conflict Sensitive Development principles<sup>31</sup> there must be an understanding of the consequence of the development and how outcomes, even if they are unplanned, can impact negatively on the peace process. Here Theramu Lar articulates the tension that is created by failing to take a conflict sensitive approach to development:

*But the NGO also who are working there, they face the problem. They know the problem. For example, if you register and if you are working for them and doing MOU with the government, you have to comply with the government, like you are paying for them, funding the program they should fund. If you have MOU you cannot go to the black area [conflict zone], the area where we are working. So, the government decides the area you can work and you cannot work so there is also effect.*

– Theramu Lar, KTWG

In practice, however, aid is not neutral, especially in times of conflict. Aid has both the ability to cause harm or strengthen the capacity for peace, and the administration of that aid in a conflict sensitive manner is critical. Understanding that the aid itself, aid funding, aid requirements,

---

<sup>31</sup> Conflict-sensitive development principles include: Work alongside partners in conflict-affected countries and reinforce local capacities for peace in order to maximize meaningful local participation and ownership; • Be guided by analyses of the socio-economic and political situation; • Encourage coordination among the engaged actors, based on their comparative advantages; • Use constructive engagement and creative approaches that provide incentives for peace; • Focus aid on sustainable activities; avoid promising aid that cannot be delivered or sustained. • Act on costly lessons to do good and avoid harm; • Be transparent and communicate intentions; • Preserve an even-handed commitment to development goals; • Widen and deepen dialogue with partners; • Work for the respect of human rights; • Involve women and youth in peace processes; • Work in a responsive, flexible and timely manner; • Be guided by long-term perspectives and maintain long-term commitment (Lund 2004).

monitoring requirements and/or administration can cause long-lasting conflict if it either actually benefits, or has the perception of benefiting, the powerful over the vulnerable. It needs to be realised that all aid programs involve the transfer of resources (food, shelter, water, health care, training, etc.) into a resource-scarce environment, and that when people are in conflict:

these resources represent power and wealth and they become an element of the conflict. Some people attempt to control and use aid resources to support their side of the conflict and to weaken the other side (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium n.d.).

If international aid organisations, INGOs, or development agencies allow their programs to be influenced or manipulated to benefit those in power, such as the government or military, then this can heighten or prolong conflict. Failing to understand the political consequences of development and aid can be seen as an act of complicity, as Anderson (1999, p. 7) states '[NGOs] must be clearly on the side of those who are poor and marginalised, those against whose societies discriminate, and their aid must support systemic change toward justice rather than simply keep people alive to continue to live in situations of injustice'. Signing an MOU with the government is necessary in Burma/Myanmar, however, the conditions of an MOU can include: government minders accompanying monitoring visits, restrictions on both the areas where one can work and also the activities one can work on, as explained below, by Nang Nai:

*For the donor, for the International government, they have the influence on the [Burmese] government. Government to government, they have the influence but they don't use that power to pressure the Burmese government. Mostly, the Western government came for the investments. If we do this for you, you have to provide this for us. Not stop or resolve the political issue but potentially more conflict in the community.*

*Now it creates more conflict. The INGO, follow the working system or the constitution, the INGO or UN will have an MOU with the government and they can implement for them. So, the state government don't know, the CBO don't know, the community don't know and then they will come and operate their own projects. That's not empowerment. – Nang Nai, SWAN*

Particularly in the case of Burma/Myanmar, where the military still operate key ministries and positions in parliament, and where the Tatmadaw operates under the freedom of impunity, the state can be 'an instrument of discrimination and private enrichment in the hands of a powerful elite' (Saferworld 2004, p. 6). A rights-based approach concerns itself with the poverty that results from inequality and the denial of rights from those in power, recognising that '[i]n violent conflicts, the rights of ordinary people are systematically infringed by the warring parties as well as by all those taking advantage of the conflict to promote their own economic and political interests. The rights-based response aims at enabling people to achieve their rights. This is likely to undermine the

power structure on which conflict has been built' (Saferworld 2004, p. 5). A rights-based approach needs to be conflict sensitive and support accountability, participation, inclusion and supporting local capacities (Saferworld 2004, p. 5). Saw Aar explains how this is lacking in Burma/Myanmar:

*When it comes to actual implementation of the project, they are not following the Do No Harm principle. So, well, I mean, it is very hard sometimes for us and international communities to you know be accountable for the project because of their system, such as their policy for the country. We are expecting the international community to be accountable for what they do, the money that they give to the communities.*

*Yeah, so if you look at organisations as independent, there are a few big organisations like those civil societies, and they are the one that taking all the money from big donors. The Government, they lost the policy, they are not really protecting the people. So, when you through the legal process of MOUs. Then you are supporting this government. I think it's not really fair. Through the eyes of legalisation, they are supporting the government.*

*Look at all these international NGOs, international donors. They should be speaking to a lot of working people, generally advocating and pressuring the government to reform this land and reform the country. – Saw Aar, KESAN*

To be conflict sensitive, inequality and root cause issues needs to be addressed both horizontally, addressing the interdependence gap as outlined by Lederach (1999, p. 28), and vertically, via grassroots, civil society based both externally on the Thai-Burma border and internally within Burma/Myanmar, through to government and, in the case of Burma/Myanmar, the military (Saferworld 2004).

Humanitarian assistance is not apolitical and there is a fundamental tension between humanitarianism and imperialism — which still exists in the modern context (Richmond 2007, p. 473). For Burma/Myanmar, the issue is both one of a form of neo-colonialism that has come from the centralised system of government established under military junta rule, and the cultural hegemony that has stemmed from the imperialistic nature of liberal peace. As Stewart (2002, p. 344) says '[i]nclusive government is not simply a matter of democracy as it is possible that a majority-based democracy can lead to oppression of minorities', rather it is about societal transformation, working with civil society and marginalised, vulnerable groups in order to ensure that peace is an inclusive process which addresses structural violence in its humanitarian approach.

The politicisation of the money spent on peace-building operations can also be seen in the justification of such spending as being beneficial in the long term, or as Tziarras (2012, p. 8) states

‘contributing in the state/peace-building operations based on the principles of liberalism, suggests that the new-born/rebuilt states carry a certain legacy and influence from its “creators”; this in turn allow the international community – which is at large the western community – to serve their interests more easily’. The lack of neutrality, and the imposition of liberal ideology in development can in fact lead to conflict. If a root cause issue of the conflict is the management and profiteering of natural resources then development of infrastructure such as oil drilling, dams and mines carries as much risk of conflict as it does prospects of revenues. As Tziarras (2012, p. 8) notes, ‘the selective nature of peacebuilding operations and interventions that take place in countries rich in natural resources, with a geopolitical or geostrategic importance does not seem to be accidental’.

Burma/Myanmar is a resource rich country and these resources are largely located in ethnic states. A failure of the peace process to address the issues of federalisation, autonomy and resource management, in a rush to stop direct violence and failure to address structural violence, leaves open the possibility of further displacement (due to mega development projects such as dams and mines) and further disenfranchisement. As Saw Aar from the environment group KESAN explains:

*[w]hen we talk about natural resources, we think that the ownership, the control, the management and the decision making. So, when we talk about ownership, who owns this, the people? The government? Or the state? When we talk about control, who talks about natural resources in a specific way? And the management of natural resources in ethnic states who has the right to manage? And I want to talk about a little more of policy level, who has the right to make this decision to extract natural resources? That's the key issue. How many people make all decision for anyone in the country to accept the change to cut the forest, to export timber, to build dams, to mine resources? So that's not fair. Currently, the people have no right to be involved in the decision-making process and then when we talk about natural resources management, we're trying to build in the community the forest, the water management and conservation. All the international corporation want to grab water.*

*Yeah, if they grab land, they grab water as well. And they talk about water rights. They pollute the water until they become very sick and they don't want any responsibility. So now the government is working together with the World Bank and throughout the ethnic states. They integrate their water protection management program but it looks really wonderful. Yet, in the other group of conference are giving concessions to cut the forest and watershed areas so these two are totally contradicting to each other. – Saw Aar, KESAN*

It appears almost impossible to engage in development activities while this environment is under such extreme stress and not understand that this engagement is political. Lack of understanding in this area equates to a lack of awareness about the potential or unintended outcomes and the possibility for contributing to the failure of the peace process.

## 5.4 Conclusion

Although this chapter was primarily an exploration of the themes of violence, trust and neutrality, it is clear that it was also an analysis of power — in this case a power imbalance between those who have been in power historically (the Tatmadaw) and those who are in power currently (the Government and the Tatmadaw), as well as the added pressure of those, international influencers who are challenging the power of local community organisations or negating that power and contributing to structural violence through a focus on state-building measures.

It is also clear that methodology matters. Peace in Burma/Myanmar can neither be achieved via the barrel of a gun, nor will it be created via preventing direct violence alone, both in the peace process and in aid and development. A liberal peacebuilding approach and a liberal economic agenda, both of which focus on strengthening state-based institutions, is misguided in the eyes of the contributors to this research. Burma/Myanmar is not a weak or failing state, it is a state transitioning from decades of authoritarian rule where the state has presided over human rights abuses and nested violence ensuring that people who are subjugated and oppressed become further vulnerable to death by disease or malnutrition, and to exploitation. Indeed, there is an argument that the state needs to be softened, to become open to systemic change, to focus on trust building and the dilution of power, and develop an emphasis on equality.

The responses of my contributors invite an examination of power — power and its continued domination over Burma/Myanmar's marginalised and vulnerable communities in both the peace process and development. The focus of the peace process is on unity, however, a focus on unity without the extension of equality is a bleak offer for those long oppressed, for it is simply an offer to comply and capitulate to a state that has shown very little care for the ethnic minority peoples. Can peace be built on an empty commitment to unity? Unity is a desirable outcome, but without the substance of equality it seems hollow, and certainly unstable. The focus on an outcome-based solution also seems to lack substance, for as Gandhi said 'there is no way to peace, peace is the way' or, in other words, the methods used as part of the peace process determine the peace, peace is not an outcome disconnected from the methods used to achieve it. Furthermore, it is an examination of important elements such as transitional justice, structural change and removing systemic structural

violence issues and how failing to address these issues is not simply an oversight in the peace process, but indeed an obstacle to the prospects of Burma/Myanmar achieving positive peace.

This chapter explored the responses my teacher and friend contributors gave me about violence, the peace process and international aid and development. These responses can essentially be analysed as 'the problems'. In the next chapter of analysis, the discussion becomes focused on 'the solutions' or possibility of a socially just positive peace that could be built or expanded by the work of CBOs at the local level, and the aspects that could change the peace process from being at risk of either failing or having a negative peace outcome to succeeding with a sustainable positive peace outcome.



Children in Mae La refugee camp, Thailand, 2012. Photo credit: Zoe Bedford

## Chapter 6: Building On What Is Already There

*'I think the peace process is long term goal because the structure in Burma currently is not permitting the people to freely participate in peace.'* – Nang Ceh, SSSNY

The analysis in this chapter focuses on the interviews held with CBO contributors, teachers and friends, regarding the positive pathways to peace and discussing the programs and systems that are already in place to combat the nested levels of direct and structural violence experienced by the communities they represent. The systems and networks already in place, begun during the decades of civil war, can be linked to local resilience, solidarity networks and a culture of peace. As such this chapter continues to discuss the response to the first research sub-question 'In what ways might the peace process limit the prospects of a positive peace outcome?' and then focuses on responding to the second research sub-question 'What is the potential for community-based organisations to contribute to a positive peace?'

Discussions include what is absent from the formal peace process include reflections on peace with justice, issues of neo-colonialism and decolonisation as well as the root causes of the conflict and how they might be resolved. A further exercise conducted in the interviews for this research was an exercise of peace visioning, where contributors were asked to describe what peace would look like for them and also for the communities they work closely with. The discussions at this point were primarily about the societal transformation necessary to build peace.

What the analysis shows is that CBOs have been participating in peacebuilding for decades before the formal peace process began. This manifests in different ways, from using humanitarian and other programs to counteract the harmful reality of direct and structural violence inflicted on their communities, to leadership programs and feminist programs that disrupt systems of oppression, to peace praxis (the application of peace theory in practice) and community-based peace programs. This work is linked to the concepts of bottom-up peacebuilding or emancipatory peacebuilding, as explained in this chapter.

The CBOs articulated clearly that it is *inequality* that lies at the root of the civil war and ongoing violence, and that the only pathway to peace is to resolve this root cause and the political demands of the ethnic groups via dialogue — that this would make it possible to build a new future, one that focuses on equality and access, and allows local communities to exercise ownership over their language, their leaders and their dignity. A reoccurring theme emerges that places equality centrally, as the keystone to a peaceful future.

This chapter explains how CBOs offer an alternative peacebuilding mechanism grounded in local agency and resilience, and concludes that, if an empowerment peace process or a resilience peace process were adopted, CBO partners and civil society would be inherently valuable to the peace process because of their unparalleled access to communities in the conflict zones who in turn have been most affected by the decades of civil war.

## **6.1 Community praxis and peace**

CBOs on the Thai-Burma border are familiar with peace praxis. They have the tangible experience of working to counteract structural violence for their communities. They are aware of the power of local agency and recognise that the communities they represent are not passive victims during the conflict. They have developed solidarity networks both with complementary organisations on the Thai-Burma border and beyond, and, significantly, they have put into practice a culture of peace. As Theramu Lar explains below;

*Peace is... The meaning of peace... it will mean many different things. What KTWG does is a kind of peace. I mean bringing the peace in life, in education ... So, what the other people are talking about is they call peace, well, that kind of peace confused the community. Even if they're confused, sometimes the topic they [INGO] call peace but they do different way. They*

*do development, for example, the funding is about peace, right? But is it peace? To make the development or they do some projects in their area. Is it peace?*

*What they do in the community is they didn't consult. They consult with the leader but not with the community. And what they do complicates the things that we are doing, with the health, with the education. Also, the community is confused, creates conflict, yes, its conflict. So is it peace?*

*What KTWG does, we don't call it peace. We call it education. We call education but the way that we do this to keep the peace in the community, because we develop the community themselves like a self-determination. Their own school, their own struggle, they have to work with their own school. We supported them but not all. They also have to support school and then they have to know that they are owners of that school.*

*The way, the method, is important. If you want to do peace in any kinds of activities that bring peace, you have to consider the way you bring peace or it brings conflict. Somehow the topic of peace, its aim is great but the implementation groups have a different opinion or attitude. It's hard. Yes. Peace is the way, the method. – Theramu Lar, KTWG*

If the question is 'what is peace' then the answer that Theramu Lar gives is that peace is about building up local leadership, providing programs that make primary school education available to thousands of children in the conflict zones. KTWG programs emphasise the importance of mother tongue educational instruction, even if this is counter to the policy of the government. Theramu Lar is highlighting the difference between KTWG's programs, which work with the community to build leadership and resilience, and an international NGOs approach, which focuses on outcomes rather than empowering local communities. In short, peace, as Theramu Lar spoke of, is grounded in the local and built on resilience, and includes a necessary defiance of neo-colonialist power structures.

This peace praxis can be supported in a formal peace process if the peace process is one that values local agency, community problem solving, and builds a resilience or empowerment methodology as the base for the peace process. Resilience and empowerment methodologies can 'remove the intervener from external intervention and make local capacities, practices and understandings the means and ends of the intervention' (Chandler 2015, p. 48). Such a methodology can make peacebuilding initiatives more context specific, more locally owned, and, therefore, increase the probability of sustainable positive peace. A resilience or empowerment emphasis 'offers an operational strategy for making peacebuilding more assertive about building peace via transformative processes as opposed to being solely a response to fragility' (Interpeace 2016, p. 1). This community-level peace praxis has been in operation on the Thai-Burma border through CBOs

working together to establish local solidarity networks, working to counteract the devastating effects of structural violence on their communities, problem solving collaboratively, and trying to model a culture of peace in their organisations and communities.

*We have other programs like development program. Our development program is not based on material, just only community development. With the community development, what we have done is conduct community assessment. Before, we organise some more projects in our village. We make a community assessment, after the assessment, we organise a team and we prioritise and meet and organise the project and after that, we organise for non-working mom project. The village comes together and organises that. This is based on the community awareness. We not organise a big project like building school or building a bridge. We empower people to organise and work together to find out their real situation in their community.*

*When they come together, they share information, they can share their challenges in their community and share information. We also organise training for them like project management, empowerment-- we organise the village projects. Before we organise the project, the village leader would select a leader and organise like the Burmese government. But now these villagers, they select their leader, like a local based democracy – Saw Pey, KORD*

Saw Pey's, from Karen Office for Relief and Development, statement demonstrates that CBOs on the Thai-Burma border have developed a problem-solving and resilience methodology out of necessity in response to the nested violence their communities have suffered. Many CBOs do not frame their work as peace work and do not include the aim of conflict prevention as a core aim, yet it is often an unintended outcome of development projects because of their inclusive design. In a period of history where non-combatant civilians are the target of war — through forced displacement, massacres, rape as a weapon of war, environmental destruction, denial of services to those in conflict areas and economic disintegration causing systemic poverty (Richmond 2007) — CBOs are compelled to work to create an environment that overcomes fear and division, and to work with communities to strengthen and empower them to find alternatives to violence (both direct and structural). It is in this way that peacebuilding becomes a part of programs. In this regard, Richmond (2007, p. 13) notes that '[a]lthough CSOs do not have the legal political or military power of states, they have the power to persuade, to propose solutions rooted in their analysis of the problems and to influence by example and by the integrity of their moral voice'. As Theramu Mee explains it is the very reason the Mae Tao Clinic was begun, and many teacher and friend contributors tell of similar origins:

*As soon as we arrived to the border in 1989 we learned about the complexity of the conflict on the border between the ethnic groups and the central Burmese government, and among*

*the new displaced new arrived people. There was difference of opinion, political opinion, so there was a lot of distrust and cultural arguments going on. But we learned that the most immediate needs for humanitarian assistance was not only to provide emergency services but to train people, community members, displaced people themselves, because we are very few medical Drs and medical students because there are a lot of people who are affected by the conflict and need access to healthcare. Also, among those there are teaches and other social workers, so understanding within the context, the complex situation the healthcare and the broader social network needs to be strengthened to make people stronger themselves. We need to actively participate and providing the lead effort as well as continuing to learn together to work with our community and other displaced people.*

*So, through this way we access more community and then other border ethnic community, we promote and provide healthcare to this population. We know these people, this displaced population has not been receiving health care from the government and there are very few health services provided by the ethnic community leaders there were some medical services but just curative health service only, at the time, so we need to expand to preventative care, to provide primary health care network and train more health volunteers. We noticed that at the time most of the medics were working with the ethnic armed groups – and were mostly male medics. So, the women, in the village, when they deliver baby were only receiving assistance from untrained traditional midwife. Also, when we travel, we see that many women actively involved in healthcare, education and childcare services, in terms of relief and humanitarian assistance we notice women are participating and engaging playing active the role and men are usually involved in security. So, we identify that in healthcare, education and social work we need to promote more women participate and get more women involved in management and leadership role. We identified that it is not only about emergency medical assistance we need to work comprehensively and take a whole of community approach. – Theramu Mee, MTC*

Theramu Mee is describing how a border-based CBO acts to provide healthcare, but also to subvert and challenge gender norms, and work with all ethnic groups to build trusts and form bonds — directly challenging the Tatmadaw's divide and conquer strategy. Furthermore, a CBO based in the community can act when other INGO or UN agencies are restricted by protocols, mandates, policy and MOUs with the state, and when the state itself is the one targeting the community and has little or no political will to pursue a resolution.

On the Thai-Burma border, CBOs have been built by the communities to assist in responding to the worst effects of structural violence, providing health care, education assistance, aid and welfare assistance and supporting community leadership and empowerment. CBOs also can play an important role in overcoming social tensions and conflict such as racism, sexism, xenophobia and

discrimination. Thai-Burma border CBOs are inclusive and work towards a culture of peace. This can assist to create a pragmatic peace and, as:

[p]eacemaking goes far beyond reaching a political agreement between the main parties, often it is necessary to make peace between those who live side by side and have nowhere else to go. Even when national level peace processes are stalled or non-existent local communities can act to address the issues that generate conflict and escalate violence locally (Barnes 2005, pp. 19-20).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the horizontal structure of the peace process fails to acknowledge the legitimacy, in terms of peace and security processes, of civil society in general and CBOs in particular. With a vertically integrated, bottom-up approach to peacebuilding, individuals and communities are empowered to negotiate and develop a human security that is focused on emancipation from oppression, domination and hegemony, as well as one that is fitted to their needs to respond to political, social, economic and structural challenges. Acknowledging the roles of CBOs in peacebuilding is worthless if it is not also accompanied by the necessary supports needed by CBOs to continue their work.

From the interviews with my teacher and friends it is clear that local agency is a community's ability to be resilient even under the extreme pressure of civil war and structural violence. The role of CBOs in these conflict-affected communities is to empower and support local agency for the survival of communities. Under the extreme pressure of civil war, communities in conflict who are suffering the effects of structural and nested violence can be seen as 'the problem' as they are communities often with great needs. Those who are displaced need essential care such as shelter, food and healthcare, irrespective of whether they are refugees or internally displaced people. However, a peacebuilding approach that is bottom-up rather than top-down, free from cultural hegemony, and hierarchy (Chandler 2015) will be able to see communities who are organised and resilient, who have met their own needs throughout the conflict (as best they can) with the assistance of CBOs. These organisations have problem-solving resources and operate in a transparent, accountable manner with communities that they are close to and have an empowering relationship with. As Saw Eay explains, there is a power in community, even communities most impacted by violence:

*The reason why Burma Issues began is, we started after 1998 uprising. We focus on people who have no connection to the outside world. So, our aim is to empower them, to work with them, not to build and conduct the changes ourselves but to assist and empower the community. So here we are working through education, documentation and planning, in creating activities.*

*We believe that if we train the community but don't understand how to work with the community then they'll just use their skills for other things. So, we train them and help them understand and give them the skills. Our core belief is the power that comes from the people. They can change because in the rural and ethnic areas, people suffer or suffer from many difficulties. That's just a fact that they have skills, knowledge, and original knowledge. Even if they do not read and write. They never go to school. Rationally or through their experience, they gain knowledge and skills to overcome the problem, to resist. They have power. They believe in themselves and their own knowledge becomes a problem for those in power. So, this is the main ideology-- to give, to empower them together because the problem is that in the ethnic areas in Burma people are presumed to be linked to the fighting or civil war.*

*There are many isolated communities. They have no connection but in their own community, it is important when they come together and work so that they can share their knowledge. Even if the military use their weapons or power, they cannot eliminate or they cannot take away the power of the people. But the problem is, when the people if under the conflict for many years, they feel powerless and they start thinking -- is their oppression is the will of God? -- This is a culture of oppression. They are not educated then a person doesn't know that you have power in your community to make change. So that's why we like to develop programmes the community can organise. Start meeting with people, let them tell their story, their feeling, their vision and what change they want to see.*

*A lot of people like this because sometimes outsiders ask, 'Are these people victims?' They look at these people as victims, but actually these people are struggling for change. – Saw Eay, Burma Issues*

These are communities who have resisted violence, who have felt the impact of civil war and who are now resilient and empowered. If a resilience peace or empowerment peace model were used in this formal peace process then the outcomes could be improved and have more potential for a positive and sustainable peace. This is because resilience peace approaches understand the importance of local agency, that to have a sustainable peace there needs to be significant transformation and investment in local capacity building and empowerment, and that this is essential to overcome poverty, gender inequalities, educational decline, and unemployment (Jeong 2005, p. 28). Resilience assessments performed alongside conflict analysis can result in peacebuilding initiatives being 'more context-specific, more locally-owned and therefore more impactful' (Interpeace 2016, p. 1).

A resilience orientation provides a strategy for making peacebuilding more explicit in the goal of building peace via transformative processes instead of reacting to the perceived fragility of the situation (Interpeace 2016, p. 1). In this situation on the Thai-Burma border CBOs have high capacity

in assisting communities during times of conflict along with unparalleled access to communities in conflict. There is a risk of negative peace in a formal peace process that focuses on institution strengthening rather than the resilient power of the people and local agency, whereas informal methodologies, founded in locally trusted CBOs, have already had a positive effect. As Nang Ceh states here, community-based programs have already demonstrated the resilience of people at the grass roots level and programs that empower and use the energy of local agency rooted in the desire of the communities themselves to make a positive peace:

*This is our mission statement: to educate youth to be effectively working to build social and political change in Burma because they can be a person that can make a change in their life and in their communities. I think we can say that before we began in 2001, first of all there is no place that you can come together to talk about the problems that they are facing like no ID's, education and what they can do to improve communities.*

*So, there is no place that you can come and develop a change, even to come and meet and change what is happening in Burma. It would be difficult; firstly, there would be no space where you can come together. Secondly, there is no place that the community can say that, 'If we want these young people to get leadership skills and understand this social and political issues, there is a school they can go to.' They [the graduates] can hope that after they come back, they can do more in the community.*

*Over 400 youth already have been to the program and it's clearly shown the impact in different areas to deliver the social justice content and methodology that we can deliver here. I think particularly that not only is the history the path that cannot be taught inside Burma, but also the new issue that youth are connected to the current world issue and Burma still didn't know that. I think that is what the community is really looking forward to, understanding how to change themselves. – Nang Ceh, SSSNY*

A 'resilience' approach does not start from the position of 'an external subject equipped with superior interventionalist knowledge or instrumental goals' (Chandler 2015, p. 31), but instead works by understanding 'the concrete context in which social practices and every day tactics produce problematic consequences' (Chandler 2015, p. 31) and seeking solutions to these problems. As communities that have been strengthened via a realisation of their own resilience understand, it is by their *own* local agency that they were able to survive the conflict and can now play an important role in peacebuilding. For women, this peacebuilding role began from a time before the formal peace process, as Theramu Weh explains:

*We actually, we started working since 2001 before the peace process. But there is building peace within the community, within the family with the violence. We've had this before the peace process started. At the beginning we are more focus with the peacebuilding within the community, within the family, conflict resolution, non-violence communication then after*

*that they went back to the community, hold their discussion how to live peacefully within the communities. That's what we've been doing since 2001 but since 2012 because the real peace process started and there was hardly any women. This means there is more time for us to more focus on this and we came out with a statement, the member organisation came out with a statement, we start training women leaders. Yes, it's just for women, with issues like conflict resolution, how to live peacefully and non-violence communication and after the training they went back to their community.*

*From member organisation, after that they went back to their own areas. Some are in the rural area, some are from the inside Burma. That's why it's better to get understanding with the peacebuilding within the community first. But it's like the real ceasefire in the peace process and we feel now it's more important to inform the community on what's going on with the peace process because otherwise if they are not aware of what's happening and if their voice will not be heard, then it would be more a problem. – Theramu Weh, WLB*

Theramu Weh is suggesting that a diversity of voices would give a strength to the peace process, especially as women are rarely included in the tripartite talks between government, Tatmadaw and ethnic armed organisations. Although women are sometimes asked to attend as voiceless observers, the peace talks lack the vertical interaction and strength that CBOs can give. To achieve positive and sustainable peace, there must be an inclusive process that allows for CBOs and communities to have an active role, or perhaps take the lead, in ensuring that any peace activity has a conflict sensitive approach and the goal of equality as its foundation. As Richmond (2007, p. 463) states, '[n]eglecting social and economic development contributes to an inadvertent return to the origin of the conflict. Disarmament and Demobilisation efforts alone will not decrease the danger of re-escalation'. This, however, should not be viewed as yielding power to communities who were made vulnerable by the conflict, but instead it is about *recognising* the empowerment and resilience that *already exists*, and acknowledging who were the organisations responsible for building and supporting this empowerment, resilience and local agency with problem solving resources. There is a danger of international interventions forming a hierarchy of knowledge and support (Chandler 2015, p. 36) which only serves as a barrier to sustainable positive peace.

The ability to see the connections between health care and human rights violations, exchange information, assist each other with data gathering and work in a collaborative and cooperative environment is part of the daily experience of CBOs on the Thai-Burma border. It is clear to CBOs that their struggle is not isolated, and is indeed connected with the struggles of multiple ethnic groups and struggles of difference — for, as Dr Cynthia Muang of the Mae Tao Clinic said, 'when a woman presents at the MTC with pregnancy complications this is not just a health issue, it is also a

human rights issue, a women's rights issue, it is an issue of denial of access – to health care services, but then when the baby is born it is the issue of child protection and their right to statehood'.<sup>32</sup> The interconnectedness of the problem requires an interconnected solution. Trust building and building connections or solidarity networks between CBOs and other civil society via locally-based aid and development programs has been at the core of CBO methodology, as explained by Saw Pey:

*CBO groups, they meet other ethnic people and they can share information and they also-- we have information from other CBOs and also they get idea from other ethnic groups. It just benefits them to use information when they are starting a program in the community. Yes, they have a contact and later they have a contact with each other and become close. We work together.*

*We are community worker who come to make people closer and share information. That's the plan in this program. We need the ethnic people to trust each other, to know their situation and want to help each other. I think this is a peace process to make ethnic people coming from around Burma and come closer. This is also nice – Saw Pey, KORD*

It is necessary to understand the root cause of a conflict in order to develop an appropriate response. Local agency and capacity building have focused on a strengths-based approach or asset-based analysis to understand how to support a community's resilience and overcome hardship. The opposite approach, one based on fragility rather than strengths, tends to overshadow the capacities and processes which are present, as 'even in the most challenging situations, there are individuals and communities acting to counter the effects and causes of conflict. Failure to take stock of these efforts can and often does undermine the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions, warranting criticism that programs and policies are too generic and not sufficiently context specific' (Interpeace 2016, p. 1). As explained in Chapter 4, Burma/Myanmar has a history of authoritarianism and violence but, by necessity, this has also produced a history of resistance to that violence.

Both inequality and colonialism are part of the cause of the civil war conflict in Burma/Myanmar. The conflict is 'deeply entrenched in endogenous dynamics of power and exclusion' (Interpeace 2016, p. 1). There is a tendency to underestimate the local, the community; however, in the case of ethnic minority peoples in Burma/Myanmar, this would be risky as groups are well organised and enjoy high levels of communication, contact and solidarity. Solidarity networks are 'an important resource that affirms their identity as a group and provides a sense of belonging. Moreover, the

---

<sup>32</sup> Personal communication, 6 November 2013.

networks they form also contribute to their social capital, providing them with access to resources such as education and healthcare which they may not otherwise access through public institutions' (Interpeace 2016, p. 2), as is the case in Burma/Myanmar's ethnic minority areas. As Theramu Leh states:

*That is also bringing the ethnic together ... What I see is that the program tends to understand that that is the need of the community. Then the needs of every community in the ethnic area is the same, the problem is the same. Then also the parts they have to develop or support for the community. They come together to get the training and also at the same time they evaluate their work so they learn from each other from different ethnic, different area, different school.*

*What we see in the education in Burma is it's very poor and especially for the ethnic, the education is poor and because of the war, poverty. So KTWG believes that every child has to get education. So, we have the same feeling as the Karen children suffered other Ethnic people also suffered for the same thing. So, we are encouraged us also to do the same part, it's to support the ethnic.*

*Because of the war, the ethnic group is also split sometimes so it's really hard to bring it together, it's really important to. To get the unity together, spread them together. Another thing I can see is that when you are together as an ethnic, it would be wiser and be stronger.*  
– Theramu Leh, KTWG

Strengthening a community's capacity to overcome structural violence and violent shocks is a sustainable approach to peacebuilding. Emphasising the strength and capacity of local communities in 'prevention planning and early warning ... the concept of resilience is gaining sway in the peacebuilding community... where the end result [is] the ability of a community to opt out of or prevent the escalation of violence – [therefore] is the most effective measure of peacebuilding work' (United States Institute of Peace n.d., p. 1). There is scholarly critique of top-down liberal peacebuilding methodology, in that it can weaken a community's ability to be resilient and it undermines both capacity and empowerment at both the local community and even at a national level (Funk 2012; Pureza and Cravo 2009; Richmond 2007), whereas community-based programs and knowledge of the local environment is a key variable for conflict prevention and recovery (United States Institute of Peace n.d., pp. 1-2). Alternative approaches which focus on community building, leadership, empowerment and build on solidarity networks focus less on an outcome of peace and more on the method of building peace. The solidarity networks of CBOs on the Thai-Burma border are strong, as outlined by Saw Weh:

*Karen state we implement together with other organisation and some partners who we work with. We share information in Karen state we work together with Karen human right groups.*

*Also, we share human rights violation information. They came here to train some parts to us, how to take care of human rights violation, which one we should not do, how to document the violations, like that.*

*I think everything is related so we cannot do only just our health team, everything. And also, we have to partner everywhere. Our health staff working in the field, for example, not only the government but even our health staff can collect information about the human rights violation. – Saw Weh, BPHWT*

Saw Weh talks of working together across sectors and ethnic groups, this methodology is viewed as an essential part of community work. Resilience and empowerment methods of peacebuilding value a bottom-up approach and respect for local agency and solidarity networks. This approach helps to overcome the binaries of cultural hegemony by understanding that communities in conflict, who have suffered the effects of both direct and structural violence, do not dream of more conflict but, rather, are invested in peace outcomes. This matches with the view of Chandler (2015, p. 28) who states that resilience-informed outcomes are ‘built upon constructivist and new institutionalist critiques of the formal and abstract nature of liberal modernist understandings of universal constitutional and legal rights frameworks but has avoided the liberal peace policy impasse of essentialising sociocultural difference and thereby becoming caught between... universalism and cultural relativism’. This methodology could offer an alternative approach to peace, one that has the potential for positive peace:

*We also work with other sectors that working on different issues, we have a common strategy, common voice when it comes to advocacy. But we also follow with other reports, we work together. Even other organisations that are working on the issues, the difference that we have, we leave it behind, we work together to move forward. – Theramu Weh, WLB*

However, this methodology is time intensive, a resourcing challenge for many understaffed and underfunded CBOs on the Thai Burma Border, yet as Theramu Weh states they prioritise solidarity networks and cooperation. Another criticism of the resilience approach is that local solidarity networks and communities, who are empowered and resilient, can be suspicious of outside intervention and the approach does little to overcome an entrenched mistrust in the state (Interpeace 2016). On the contrary, this should not necessarily be seen as, a negative effect of having resilient communities with strong solidarity networks; it should rather be understood as an effect of a protracted conflict with a history of failed ceasefires and temporal violence towards citizens (Reychler 2015, p. 29). These solidarity networks are built for the dual purpose of exposing the violence endured by communities under conflict, and working together to resist and collaborate to assist these same communities. As Theramu Kee discusses, there is a strength to cooperation:

*The benefit of other community-based organisation because you work and you know you have alliance. It's like morally also being encouraging. But also, you work together, it's more effective as well. At the community level, the human rights group always work with the women. Environment groups also when they do the advocacy work, they always involve the women — it's more effective.*

*More understanding the situation, what is the background so we become closer in helping each other. Stronger voice also in terms of advocacy work. We want to do the raising issues to the Karen leadership or to the international community when you do it together, then it's stronger. Then you can have the same messages. – Theramu Kee, KWO*

As discussed in Chapter 4, during the conflict, the Tatmadaw used a divide and conquer strategy to try to ensure that ethnic groups would not only be fighting the state, but also fighting each other. The solidarity networks, cooperation, and integrated approach that have been taken by CBO leadership in ensuring that their programs are not competing with each other, are inclusive and understand the conflict and violence in a holistic manner, provide a path for the peacebuilding process in Burma/Myanmar to follow. A critique of this environment is that organisations under stress from low donorship, high community needs and working in a stressful environment can 'give' too much. Workers can be stressed or burnt out by low wages and high demands. Frequent meetings to attend to maintain the spirit of collaboration and the culture of peace, coupled with frequent travel for advocacy and community outreach and monitoring visits, can burden workers who are stressed and time poor given the needs of their programs. To achieve a successful peacebuilding outcome then there should be a focus on what has already worked at a local level and on the communities and leadership that have demonstrated an ability for localised peacebuilding under the stress of conflict.

CBOs on the Thai-Burma border have important elements that cannot be artificially created: relationship-building, trust and behaviour modelling. As defined by the United Nations, a 'Culture of Peace' is a 'set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations' (United Nations 1997). This culture of peace is demonstrated in the praxis, the methodology for how organisations work both with each other and with their communities. Border-based CBOs value accountability, transparency, representation (decided democratically), non-discrimination, inclusion and empowering local leadership and communities.

Nang Cah discusses how gender and a mix of ethnic groups are designed into their programs. She also discusses the reasons why SSSNY collaborates with other CBO groups and the resourcing challenges:

*SSSNY recruited from various ethnic groups because we believe that like other groups, other ethnic groups experience the same problems and so when we recruited the students, we also put priority on women and gender balance. We're also trying to have ethnic representation it is also a trust issue... The school also think about both ethnic proportion and different areas of locations and different organisation, various backgrounds, ensuring women and gender issues have priority.*

*[We collaborate on] advocacy or education. Because other ethnic groups, Karen and the like, have similar and different experiences that's why we have to come together and share the situation and I think that's number one. When we can share, we feel empowered and learn more that other people are also suffering the same under the military regime. It gives us the chance to think about what to do more and things that we can step forward and be a better change in the policy level and policy development in order to support and implement to all ethnic groups. I think that is the most important part.*

*I think it's not competing [with other ethnic groups]. I think it is an urgent need for the people who fled. This is for the immediate need that we have to respond to the crisis, especially during the war time. First, we need to respond to the conflicts like supporting the people, like food aid and basic support like health and medicine. And to build the capacity like education for these people. Urgent need to advocate for stop of war, urgent need to advocate for Thailand to not push the refugees back and to educate the Thai administration to allow the kids to go to school. All are very urgent needs, at the same time we also know and are still connected to the conflict inside Burma. There are no other groups that can access these conflict zones. We are trying to work in the conflict area to help and address the problems in Burma. So, using the same strategies in the conflict area so I think this funding is very urgent. There are some changes in the members of the parliament but what we have to know in this conflict is that the Burma military still maintain in the land and building up military who are confiscating lands which hinder the people from returning home. There is war. The conflict is still there. – Nang Ceh, SSSNY*

To find a way towards a sustainable peace, a balance is required between 'a focus on sources of fragility and a shared appreciation of existing capacities that can provide the way forward for a durable peace' (Interpeace 2016, p. 3). Theramu Mee discusses that empowering and training local leadership is effective and also a methodology for community empowerment and trust building:

*Firstly, for the principal of delivering humanitarian assistance in health, education and child protection – this is our work. So, to train the local people is the most effective and sustainable way.*

*And then in 1997 when the Burmese army attacked to the many villages, we thought we needed many health workers in the local villagers – and we established the Back-Pack Health Worker Team and so they train health workers from the community – it is the most effective and sustainable way.*

*They are very resilient because they are from the community and their families are there – even though they are in the conflict zone. They provide the services. With the minimal resources this is the most effective way – they know the language and culture and it give opportunity to continue to upgrade their knowledge and skill and they network and learn from each other and other community health workers. They also share cultural sensitivity and cultural exchange and learn the context as well. They are the people who link directly with the communities and they know the people’s concerns and then can have the leadership in the community. – Theramu Mee, MTC*

A critical mass for peacebuilding leadership is outlined as essential to sustainable peace by Reychler (2015, p. 21), who also adds that the characteristics for an integrative environment for sustainable peace are ‘cooperation, the development of a ‘we-ness’ feelings of multiple loyalties, reconciliation, trust, social capital and the dismantlement of sentimental walls’.

To transfer from a historically violent culture to sustainable peace there needs to be importance placed on processes by which societies can collectively and peacefully repair trust and relationships, while addressing the root cause factors and structural violence that enabled the conflict to emerge in the first place. CBOs on the Thai-Burma border have already been engaging in peace praxis, demonstrated by problem solving, resilience and empowerment, respecting and strengthening local agency, and building a culture of peace via cooperation and solidarity networks. They have taken a holistic approach to the conflict, where they can see the relationship between direct violence and structural violence, where they can see that working in a non-competitive manner, collaborating, building trust and relationships with communities is essential in community work. Most of this community work is not explicitly labelled as peace work, but it is the work that is needed to overcome the structural violence imposed on vulnerable people in the conflict — health care, environment advocacy, women’s programs, education etc. This is the work that has sustained and strengthened vulnerable communities during the conflict and, as an unintended outcome, the manner in which this work is implemented — in a strengths and rights-based approach focusing on building local leadership and capacity with non-discrimination — at its core has potential peacebuilding outcomes.

## 6.2 Could a paradigm shift make a positive peace possible?

Contributors to this research have suggested that a peace process that is operating with the goal of unity, is inappropriate if it means simply inviting combatants and communities to re-join a violent state. The contributors to this research were clear that a paradigm shift is therefore needed — away from liberal peace, institution strengthening, law and order and security to a transformative paradigm, one where equality is central, and where inclusiveness and trust building are at the foundation. This would be a paradigm shift away from a focus on a unitary state, to one with a culture of peace, rejecting violence in all its forms and addressing root causes of the conflict.

My teacher and friend contributors were forthcoming in discussing what were the elements missing from the peace process, namely peace with justice, decolonisation, addressing the root cause of the conflict. One root cause issue is federalism. Though the Panglong Agreement was made in 1947, the renegeing of this agreement created a fissure in the relationship between the government and ethnic minority peoples. The Panglong Agreement first offered the ethnic nationalities ‘full autonomy on internal affairs’ (Walton 2008, p. 908) and agreed upon the concept of a federal union (Fink 2009, p. 17). Under the Agreement and the 1947 Constitution, state/ethnic regions would have ‘their own state councils, whose members would also serve in the union government’s parliament, and one head of each state would automatically be a member of the union cabinet’ (Fink 2009, p. 17). It also promised a federal union and equality for ethnic nationality signatories, including large amounts of autonomy, independent legislature, judiciary and administrative powers. However, this agreement has never been honoured and the contested issues of equality between the majority Burman and the minority ethnic peoples — autonomy, independence and federalism — are still at the core of the country’s decade’s long civil war. Root cause issues in the civil war conflict in Burma/Myanmar can be summarised as neo-colonialism, a failure to pursue federalism, and a lack of inclusiveness and inequality as described in this quote from Nang Nai:

*Cease fire cannot make peace because the problem in Burma is not holding armies accountable. Solving the political problem will not only come from making ceasefire. It also should be a dialogue; this is what the ethnic groups want. What is the problem that needs to be solved?... The political problem. That’s why in one day they sign cease fire, at the same time there is fighting in the areas so cease fire does not mean peace... Ethnic people want equality... It is about federalism and decentralisation. Without that, is there really peace? Because for the ethnic part, we are asking for federalism from the Burmese Government but they don’t accept federalism – Nang Nai, SWAN*

As Nang Nai states the ethnic minority peoples are committed to the political goals of equality and federalism. Jeong (2005, p. 98) states that federalism is 'a method to mitigate conflicts by rearranging relationships between the central state and sub-national communities' and that it requires the enhancement of regional autonomy via 'granting certain levels of legislative, judicial, and executive power'. A federal system could allow for each region to choose and teach its local language as well as the national language. Regions in a federal system could determine their own administrative structures, have authority over taxation to generate revenue, and even have separate police forces. Federalism would provide an answer to ethnic rights as there is a degree of guaranteed regional political authority and representation. Another reason federalism is favoured is because 'through decentralisation of government functions, a political system with dispersion of power reduces the fear of domination by one group in an ethnically diverse country' (Jeong 2005, p. 99). Federalism is the method suggested and favoured by the ethnic groups and political parties to overcome decades of centralised rule which has seen a failure in the social contract between government and people. Federalism is designed to accommodate opposing group interests and prevent the reoccurrence of violence (Jeong 2005, p. 94).

As Daw Jeh further states, federalism and resolving the political demands of the ethnic minority peoples are essential for reconciliation, which in turn is necessary for a peace that goes beyond a ceasefire:

*OK. I am no expert in peace but my understanding is that cease fire agreement is only one part, from the whole process, so we have to get to be able to have peace which is not only from the armed men to stop fighting but also national reconciliation. Before this time, there are a lot of conflict from the ethnic armed groups and the Burmese army groups, the army who was also the political body, many conflicts that people have anger and hatred among each other.*

*So, we have to apologise to each other if we are wrong... there needs to be public apologies, and we need to be given compensation then of course to the survival, we need to be given compensation because in the past 60 years, under military government control. Now the government is civilian government but they have no back bones, they also are not pure civilian government and we cannot say let's forget about the conflict in the past, that is we need — an apology to the civilian by the government, to the public. And also for peace in Burma it is not appropriate with the centralisation of the governing body because we have many different states and all the ethnic people so we really need to come together and agree on the federalisation and equality for the minority people also can have equality and then discuss rights and management of natural resources, all this kind of thing we needs to be discussed, carefully so in that time everybody will agree and be satisfied. Then at that time there will be peace in my mind — Daw Jeh, KWAT*

Although it may seem that the division in Burma/Myanmar is one of cultural, religious or geographical divides — and it is true that historical divisions exist — many define the root cause as the failure of the social contract, the breakdown of the relationship between the government and the people. There is thus a need for a paradigm shift away from centralist government and autocratic rule, to a system that disperses power and gives citizens, and ethnic minority people more power.

Where stability is based on a hypothetical contract between the state and the people, and where the acceptance of state authority is based on its ability to deliver services and provide sustainable economic conditions such as incomes, employment, trade and markets (Stewart 2002, p. 343), a state which fails to provide this stability, and where people are forced into poverty, displacement and vulnerability, has failed the social contract between itself and the people. Such a failure is understood to be a cause of conflict (Stewart 2002, p. 343). With studies showing that the incidence of conflict is ‘higher among countries with low per capita incomes, life expectancies, and economic growth’ (Stewart 2002, p. 344), it is easy to see that *inequalities* in those same measures could also cause significant conflict. Creating an enabling environment for peace would require policies that reduce inequalities and support transformation to an inclusive and pluralistic government from a political, economic and social perspective. As argued by Nang Ceh this is not only about signing a peace agreement, but it is about changing the relationship between the government and the people:

*I think the peace process is long term goal because the structure in Burma currently is not permitting the people to freely participate in peace. If they suspect people working with this organisation, they suppress them. The people do not feel they are at peace. That is why we are empowering the people to mobilise more... I think peace is not only about any agreement. In Burma, there are many things signed but nothing is happening. People really know that there is nothing in the implementation. Signing will not mean we are peaceful people. - Nang Ceh, SSSNY*

It is a powerful statement that ‘Burma is not permitting the people to freely participate in peace’ due to the focus on law and order issues and horizontal nature of the peace process being limited to government, military (Tatmadaw) and military (ethnic armed organisations). A further issue keeping people from participation in peace is the inequalities faced by those in conflict zones. This is not limited to economic inequalities, but also to the distribution and exercise of political power. There is a need to redress these inequalities by allowing for a process that is transformative and bottom-up in its structure, as suggested by Tziarras (2012, p. 10) a peace model that ‘combines bottom-up and

top-down change and development should be considered, in order to include the domestic cultural, ideological, social and political particularities of given cases and thus address the underlying causes of each problem'. Federalism or decentralisation of power could address the difficult issues of resource management, as discussed here by Saw Aar:

*Peace should be for the people, the national ceasefire agreement, what do we want from peace, meaning the people should be involved in peace. The people of Burma they only want stability, political stability, economic, social stability, everyone wants to have the life of not worrying about healthcare or education for your children.*

*But we don't want the kind of peace that will benefit only a small group of people. There is corruption money coming from getting the concession to extract the resources, mining and forest cutting down, this will only make a few people rich. This is not the peace we want. If the current leadership of the EAO and the government want to have a true peace agreement they need to prioritise talking about the land, and land ownership and protection. Without this they will never get the support of the people.*

*We need a proper administration to manage this – because land is for everybody. Land is very problematic, the EAOs need to have a good land policy, for the negotiations. If they don't achieve a good land policy out of these discussions then the conflict will continue*

*In the policy framework there are two parts, part one, the first part is ceasefire and code of conduct and stabilising peace and prioritising economics, this is the priority of the Tatmadaw and government.*

*But the second part is about land control and management, economic, land, education and everything – the political dialogue. So now the ethnic armed groups they demand a national equality, federalism and self-determination – the government do not want to talk about self-determination, because they don't believe in the federal system, they think that there is a risk that Burma will break apart. Some type of power distribution – but the government does not enjoy this, they want to defer all the political talks. Bu when it was sent to the government they said no – we cannot talk about this later, it cannot be discussed now.*

*We need to talk about peace, there should be no limit, no time limit. This peace process, otherwise it seems like the government does not want peace, they only want ceasefire agreement, will only make this kind of agreement because they will not negotiate the political agreement, if they really want peace they would accept the federalism and self-determination, but they say they will not do this – because they actually don't care, they don't care if peace is achieved. – Saw Aar, KESAN*

Given that much of Burma/Myanmar's natural resources are found in the ethnic states, the management and decision-making around natural resources could be resolved via a pluralistic power sharing model, such as federation, which would necessarily require a division in resource allocation with management transferred to local authorities in order to reduce the struggle at a federal level. Such decentralisation and federalism would reduce the asymmetrical relationship between federal and state powers and the people. For a sustainable positive peace, an inclusive government that

favours the devolution of centralised power structures and resolving root cause issues would mark a significant paradigm shift in the peace process. However, without this paradigm shift these simmering resource conflict issues may cause a breakdown in peace.

Indeed, it could be argued that this would lead to one of the largest paradigm shifts, from a neo-colonialist viewpoint where ethnic minority groups are to be treated as the enemy and confronted or contained, to a decolonised viewpoint where ethnic minority people are given equality to manage their state affairs. Burma/Myanmar as a country is simultaneously both *post-colonial*, having rid itself of colonial oppression after World War II under the leadership of military hero Aung San, and *neo-colonial*, where the majority peoples (the Burman people) are the governing elite and ethnic minority people are viewed as inferior to their Burman compatriots. In this environment, ethnic peoples find themselves often described as the 'problem' which needs solving. This 'problem' status is highlighted by Steinberg (2015, p. 4) who states that '[e]thnic issues, specifically the integration of the peripheral minority regions and peoples into a Burmese nation with an overarching national ethos, has been the single most important problem facing the state since its independence in 1948'. This determination to resolve the 'ethnic problem' via integration is the foundation for the modern-day neo-colonialist attitudes described by Stella Naw (2015): 'Every ethnic child is required to learn Burmese history and to study the victories and ancient triumphs of the Burman people. A brief section on ethnic people described them as petty chiefs in charge of small villages. We [ethnic people] have no history, according to the textbooks.' The continued tradition of colonial-style oppression of minority people in Burma/Myanmar has left a legacy of distrust in the ability of people to manage their own states with autonomy and have control over their education, health care systems, natural resources, taxation, and other administrative responsibilities.

The ethnic states of Burma/Myanmar are resource rich, yet presently ethnic minority people see little of the benefit from any resource extraction, as explained by Theramu Weh:

*All of the natural resources are in the ethnic areas. If there is no Burmese government the ethnic people are very rich already. We don't even need development. We don't even need support; we can survive with the natural resources we've got. But because of the military then it's controlling these and they want everything from people, the ethnic people become very poor and there is inequality. So, for the international, they should look for a long term, sustainable peace that supports the ethnic political goal, that's very important. – Theramu Weh, WLB*

If the peace process is not aligned with the issues of equality and decolonisation, then what is it aligned with? Who benefits from a peace process unwilling to be reflective and to transcend the current paradigm? A critique of power relations in peacebuilding holds that such a process maintains a cultural hegemony and also reinforces, indeed reproduces, unbalanced power structures (Pureza and Cravo 2009). A feminist critique states that ‘the disarmament of weapons is not the disarmament of minds’ (Ni Aoláin 2009, p. 1067) and the underlying social dimensions that have supported the violent civil war and the elevation of male dominated power structures are not undone or addressed by a formal disarmament process or ceasefire (Ni Aoláin 2009, p. 1067). Indeed, those seeking to challenge paternalistic structural problems are often framed as simply outsiders to the process, ‘peacebuilding and state-building praxis maintain similar patterns of structural engagement with their subjects as did colonialism. Blaming local actors for their own ills and conditionality remains a common pattern... adopted by the sovereigns of intervention, imbuing it with a neo-colonial character’ (Richmond 2015, p. 51). The more tense this relationship, the more probable that peacebuilding is masking existing power structures, including neo-colonial oppression, and the result will be negative peace (Richmond 2015, p. 53). Conversely, the more that difference is accepted and inequalities addressed, and the more space made available for resilience, and even resistance, the more opportunity for a positive sustainable peace to develop. This is an important issue to Theramu Lar:

*The current policy is like... for example, it's a government school but it's in the Karen majority area. For example, the government school in the Karen area. It should be able to speak Karen, the children should learn Karen language, right? But that is not what's happening. So, we wanted to be put in the policy...The policy development, for local language in schools in minority states.*

*We are talking about decentralisation. That part is related to funding. Funding with other programs also, that's what we are doing. Federalism and decentralisation at a state level, like a belief. – Theramu Lar, KTWG*

Theramu Lar speaks of the outlawing of ethnic minority language from community schools in ethnic states and the state insistence that the language of instruction and the text books being of Burman origin. Federalism would mean more than decentralising systems of government, but also in giving power and rights back to ethnic people. If this decolonialist paradigm shift would occur then teaching Karen children in Karen language would no longer be an act of resistance and would become an act of equality, as reflected by Stella Naw (2015) who writes:

They justify this to the Burman majority by projecting an image of moral, intellectual and cultural superiority, while a broad range of people in Burma—no matter whom they are or

where they came from—are routinely denied basic human rights. ... the military feels a certain threat posed by ethnic people and their fight for political equality. Because of what is, in fact, ethnic peoples' real right to autonomy and self-governance, they strike harder against minorities.

The idea of consolidating peace from below has been prevented by a top-down, state centric approach (Pureza and Cravo 2009), which fails to understand or appreciate the local agency, solidarity networks and problem-solving approaches of established community-based organisations. A neo-colonialist approach to peace demonstrates a lack of trust in people to be the architects of their own future. A paradigm shift to a decolonialist approach would allow ethnic minority people to direct the peace process, or at least have equal influence, as argued by Nang Ceh:

*How can we move forward? That is why every single step should have equal way to decide and equal participation. But also, the results need to be monitored and followed up. ... There must be some action if the Burma Army continues to attack the villagers. Nobody says anything and they continue to fight. So, who can say something about this, donors and international supporters need to say something about this. Everyone just keeps silent about this and this cannot bring real peace in Burma.*

*I worry it is just a way to use the peace process to control the ethnic groups – to finish them and keep them quiet, then there will be no more talking about federalism. This attitude should be present first then we can talk about how we want this process to go. That should be the way – rather than this 'model that they do' which is development first, talking to international donors and then coming to the ethnic areas saying 'this is what we do – development first' – Nang Ceh, SSSNY*

Rather than institutional development from the top down, the argument of my teacher and friend contributors is that what is needed is a peace approach that allows for resistance, resilience, local agency, and is not instead focused on prescription, cultural hegemony and reinforcing imbalance power structures. According to the views of my contributors, a peace process cannot build a positive peace if it is concerned with bolstering the interests of the powerful over those of the vulnerable. There needs to be a radical decolonisation in the approach which opens the process up to plurality in decision making, resistance to prescribed outcomes, and the autonomy of minority people. Peacebuilding processes cannot be allowed to become a vehicle for undermining the powerless and vulnerable in favour of the powerful and dominant. Only with a decolonised approach and radical self-reflection can the emancipatory goals of social transformation be achieved and the possibility of it devolving into a new form of social oppression can be averted (Pureza and Cravo 2009).

One obstacle in the peace process, expressed by my partner and friend contributors, is the inability of those affected by violence to attain justice. The military regime, the Tatmadaw, and others involved in human rights abuses, have managed to control the transition process in Burma/Myanmar and continue to hold onto power because of the 2008 Constitution that solidifies their place in the country's 'civilian' government. This seemingly insurmountable obstacle to peace with justice is not resolved with a law and order focused peace process as the legal structure and judiciary are still influenced by the old regime and the 'political sympathizers and supporters, uncooperative police and security forces' (Jeong 2005, p. 169), and there is a culture of impunity for allegations against the military, as explained by Theramu Weh:

*For us it is like, for issue that we are raising is the violation of women and especially the system of impunity, sexual violence that has been continually committed by the military regime. That was the issue we continue to raise and again we have to have participation in the peace process because we believe that it is important that women are part of the peace process because we have been involved in this struggle since the beginning and also when it is time to be at the peace table, there is hardly any women. Also, we're using the 1325 UN security resolution; protection, prevention, participation. Like we may have to be in every level since the start until the end and we also believe that women see things differently.*

*Right now, they [the government and Tatmadaw] are not talking about the federalisation, they are talking about democracy, equality, but what are the values, what is the meaning of democracy? They talk about peace, but what kind of peace do we want? Then for us it's like, you need to bring justice. Unless we bring justice to the victims of violence, to the survivor how can we guarantee that this peace process will bring a lasting peace? How can we guarantee? The past situations that people suffer they have trauma and, in the community, there will be violence, community to community. If we are not satisfied, we are not happy one day it shall come out. And for us it's important that we bring the perpetrator to account, and also for the victim, bring justice to the victims – the survivors. – Theramu Weh, WLB*

However, the 2008 Constitution ensured for the Tatmadaw, in perpetuity, effective control over state power and its own autonomy. The Tatmadaw's ongoing role prevents criminal charges against any individual from the junta administration for actions taken in their official capacity (Steinberg 2015, p. 4). Under a peace accord, there is an expectation by the public that the structural issues that lead to their displacement and marginalisation would be resolved, so that those who were excluded can now be included and have a new sense of control or power over their lives, and that communities will not have to live in the new era of peace with same vulnerabilities they suffered during the conflict. A failure to address issues of impunity provides no justice to those who were victims of the military during the time when the military was the state. Justice can play a foundational role in '[b]uilding trust in the new social order, ... by discrediting not only leaders but

also institutions and ideologies attributed to abuses' (Jeong 2005, p. 165). This creates a justice gap (Lederach 1999) when there is also a failure to address the structural violence causing socioeconomic injustice. Justice is thus not only to be measured by legal matters, for some justice will occur when structural violence is fully overcome and all people have the opportunity for self-actualisation, as explained by Saw Eay:

*It will take a long time, peace. It will take time, a long time. I mean justice to come in first. Justice for all. Holding people to account, but I think including. Justice is like when-- and health and education free for all. – Saw Eay, Burma Issues*

For my teacher and friend contributors, this need for justice extends to the international community who are engaging with the Myanmar Government for both mega development and community development opportunities. Justice is being overlooked as it is inconvenient, and interferes with potential profit, as Theramu Lar notes:

*Because of the money, because of the development that they wanted to develop very quickly in a very short time. But the peace process or peace or whatever their saying forgets about what you have already. What about the government, what about the Tatmadaw, about the fighting, what is happening? How can you forget this when you are affected by your relative, by yourself, you have to become a refugee with nothing because they burn your houses? Can you forget it in your life? That will be hard. But for them, because they have no heart for that, it's a waste. For them it's not their relative, not their country... I don't believe the international community is interested in justice. For me, what I'm seeing now is not like that because they see only for Burma as an economy. – Theramu Lar, KTWG*

The concept of justpeace, as discussed in Chapter 3, is built on a restorative vision of justice, one that holds offenders accountable for their crimes while meeting basic human needs (Schirch 2002, p. 4). As Schirch (2002, p. 4) notes '[i]f peace is not accompanied by distributive justice where resources and decision-making are shared, the outcome of peacebuilding efforts are unlikely to be sustainable' and it is not possible to build peace without addressing the vulnerability and marginalisation of populations. However, the barriers to justice in Burma/Myanmar are clear. Even under the new transitioning 'civilian' government, there are few fair trials, especially in sensitive cases which are considered to be related to national security, and few human rights. Burma/Myanmar watchers, such as Aguire (2018) have noticed that '[a] dangerous rule *by* law — rather than rule *of* law — mentality develops where a lack of credible investigations and accountability leads to human rights impunity [Emphasis added]'. Such impunity can only be overcome by holding human rights violators to account, or by amending the legal framework to give vulnerable and marginalised people the power to ensure that they will no longer be made vulnerable by those acting with impunity in the future.

In conclusion, the peace process currently has at its core principles of unity and law and order; however, according to my contributors, this is not an adequate foundation. A paradigm shift is needed away from unconstructive methodology and toward a more inclusive process that is ready to confront root causes and justice issues. A process that is willing to dismantle ideas or threats of a victors 'peace' or power over, and is ready to relinquish neo-colonialist practices, laws and policy in order to embrace equality and a decolonialising methodology.

Peace with justice, decolonisation, addressing federalism and other root cause issues, and finding a win-win solution are the elements suggested by my teacher and friend contributors as needed for a positive sustainable peace which are currently either missing from the 21st Century Panglong peace process or are weak in this process. This conflict is not over and it is still very much in the lived experience and memories of those vulnerable communities who are refugees, IDPs or living in the conflict zones. There has been a push to sign onto ceasefire agreements while there has been little effort made to build trust and foster an inclusive process. With historical trauma still present, rushing people into a peace agreement without first addressing root cause issues, political demands and settlements, the structural, psychological, ecological, cultural and nested violence issues and not giving the time and space needed to build relationships and trust, makes it difficult for my contributors to see this peace process as offering them the societal transformation they tell me is needed.

### **6.3 Peace visioning: The peace that we want to see**

The CBO contributors to this research are confident that peace is the desired outcome for both themselves and their communities. It is unfortunate that peace processes often appear to be dependent on a third party, either another state or an INGO, to appear as 'guardian angels... swooping down to save communities from themselves' (Galvanek 2013, p. 10). This may be based on an assumption that only those who have experienced peace can understand how peace looks or feels, and this is partly the premise of those who use a liberal peace structure with international interveners leading the charge for peace. But is it really a radical thought to believe that those who have lived in the conflict, who have been displaced by it and who have survived it by the powers of their resilience and a community culture of peace would be able to understand peace, to imagine peace, to envision a future of positive peace and sustainable peace? As Reychler (2015, p. 26) notes '[a]fter a bloody conflict, a peace process must deal with the past, the present and the future. The

three-time orientations are interdependent. It is very difficult to deal with the past successfully when the parties involved cannot imagine a better future'. Each contributor was asked directly what they viewed peace to be, and, furthermore, to not imagine themselves as people who are community leaders and have perhaps more political connections than the average villager, but rather to try to imagine peace from the perspective of a villager who has lived through the conflict. All contributors had a very clear idea of what peace would mean for their communities.

Most answers centred around three key issues: societal transformation, which means for my contributors, access to healthcare, education, economic opportunities and political engagement; equality, one thing my contributors are sure of is that equality and an equitable society is essential to peace; and thirdly contributors expressed attributes of decolonisation, radical empathy, empowerment, resilience and local agency as all being critical components of peace. All the contributors to this project were interested in the components of a sustainable positive peace and were worried about the possibility of a negative peace or an unsustainable peace process that only resulted in a short-term ceasefire.

Societal transformation was constantly referenced in relation to a future peace in Burma/Myanmar. Terms used included access to healthcare, education, economic opportunities, human rights and freedoms. There is a need for a dramatic change to structural violence issues, in people's ability to access healthcare, education and to build a life with permanency, without fear of being displaced and threats of violence. As Saw Aey describes an imagined peace;

*When there is peace that would mean two things. You [a Karen villager] can do the work that you want to do freely and peacefully, and then no one will come in and threaten you or give you trouble for what you do. No one will give trouble to your husband or family, while your husband or children do the work for your family livelihood.*

*You don't have to worry for your security. You can join KWO [or any civil society organisation], you can travel during day or night wherever you want to go.*

*Healthcare, education, livelihood. I think it's time to level access for peace. You will have peace when your family is coping and then you don't have to worry for your livelihood. That is one peace. The second peace is if your family have equal rights, equal opportunities and your children have a better educational system and your family have a better health care system. Better treatment, that's the second peace.*

*When you have this peace, you can think of more. During the conflict, you have to worry for food. When you have enough food, people think about to save money in education. Health*

*and education come in the second step. Then after this, put another step, saving and upgrade your family and living standards. Then next more and more also you become more involved in the political movement. – Saw Aey, KHRG*

Healthcare, education, a livelihood and no longer having to live in fear or flee from direct violence, the peace described by my teachers and friends are the hallmarks of a contented life with opportunities for advancement. However, this is more than the provision of services and development as is outlined in a liberal peace model. Indeed, there needs to be a paradigm shift away from the idea that ethnic minorities are the cause of their own poverty. It is not 'disunity' that has caused decades of poverty and violence, it is *policy*, implemented by the now 'defunct' military regime. The unity argument implies that disunity is to be avoided if people want to see their lives improved. Rights and freedoms are, unsurprisingly, linked to peace and again the removal of the obstacles of structural violence to allow for access to health care and education are key, as explained by Daw Seh:

*Yes. I think they [the communities] feel hope for the peace, not they don't feel yet already peace but they met with KWAT program maybe they have hope, and they chance to learn and they have more understanding the word peace and more understanding how the nation or how the one personal should get freedom or security for right, the right to move, the right to freedom, they learned it maybe they will know this knowledge you know freedom of rights to move, to talk to educated, to you know I think they will happy to learn all these issues that they never learn from Burma Government, I hope so they will at least they have exposure, their mind. – Daw Seh, KWAT*

Peace needs to include all, so gender equality and minority people's rights for self-management, autonomy and inclusion are listed as being important. Minority people have the rights to control, not only their own fate, but also to decide how community projects are implemented to deciding large scale mega development projects, as outlined by Saw Pey:

*For me real peace is to organise and have freedom of speech. Now people are not speaking up, they are unsure.*

*Now in our project area, we organise with the project committee and also, we look at gender equality, if we have seven on our committee, we include woman in there. And also, now, the KWO, a woman organisation activity, the villager-- the woman villager also work there with KWO also, its part to empower-- The woman also work, they are not biased.*

*Only our people are unsure-- if they get enough food, this is peace. Now they don't have financial support, every year they have programs, they often have natural disaster. If they can move freely and get enough food, this is the way their life improves.*

*Mega development is for the wealthy people, it is not peace. Some of the development affects our community and the community. That is not peace.*

*Constructing roads is the responsibility of the government but before they set out the project, they have to consult with the local people and share the information how the project will benefit the community.*

*Now, every day they warn us about being careful to how to send our children to school, how to run their household. If one day if the real peace come, also the villager can manage their family, they can share the responsibility who will do what-- who is going to do what.*

*Health and education it is necessary that community organisation is involved. We have a community organisation even though the government provide this kind of support, they have to work together with the community organisation. The staff who are working will not neglect the community. – Saw Pey, KORD*

The right to be consulted, to organise, to resist government programs, are as important as freedom of speech and women's empowerment, this is a holistic view of peace, and it includes dissent. This is a radical shift away from a neo-colonialist view point, which sees minorities peoples as insurgents or fringe dwellers who need to be managed and controlled, to a decolonial viewpoint that recognises the people of Burma/Myanmar as equals, and as having a role in the country's future. The radical notion comes from policies that would allow for decentralisation, federation and localised power sharing. Decolonisation translates to challenging power structures and requires those in established power structures to trust in their citizens. Decolonisation can occur where radical empathy is the leading force and equality is the measure, where resilience and empowerment are the guiding principles, as understood by Theramu Lar:

*Peace is like a... peace is something you have to build by yourself, right, in community. What needs to happen is for the community to have more, to build themselves living in a peaceful way or in a good way is also like a, you have to fill up the peace that they have or strengthen them, the peace that they have, the peace that they live in. They are living with their cultural way or they are in many parts that they live.*

*For me, it's difficult to know when it will be peace. Now if you live in the community where there is no fighting, you feel that, 'Oh, my life is ok... I can relax.' That is kind of peace that you will feel a little bit. Then when you have more opportunities, education is better, the school is better, you feel that your life is getting better. You can say that the future is fine.*

*But there is no fighting and you feel, 'Oh, my life is a little better so there is peace.' You can go farming, you can go freely and you feel that there is peace, there is a little bit freedom for*

*that. But when your life has not changed, your fear has not changed yet. It stayed there so it's not peace yet. – Theramu Lar, KTWG*

Decolonisation is not a static process. To decolonise it must be accepted that change is a fundamental truth. It must challenge patriarchal structures and established norms, including norms of economic liberalisation and ecological authoritarianism that values natural resources only for their extractive value. There needs to be space in the peace process for radical and holistic change. Without this radical paradigm shift those in power seek only to maintain status quo, and a peace that is not inclusive of feminism, environmental and social transformation will be an incomplete peace, a negative peace, a fragile peace.

*Yes, ceasefire made and broken, you know what happened to the environment? The people? The forest gone; the people fight for peace. And then they have no place. We want a peace that can really support a livelihood of the people...So that is what we mean by peace.*

*And gender equality, if you look at the traditional system of Karen, mainly male dominated community. But in some areas, traditionally they are trying to give women a role, different roles but what they are trying to do, men are always dominated. So, we are trying to put more also the gender issues in communities. If you look at KESAN, we have equal kind of numbers of the males and females in the office. And that is what is needed, we try to introduce the policy it is clearly stated you need to properly represent women in the project. We try to empower women to come up with their own leadership in the communities we also see that sort of importance. Wildlife is another area that we look at because it is related to all the sustenance of the livelihood. When we talk about diversity of the forest, we talk about the forest, we also talk about the livelihood. So, they are all linked to each other, we cannot separate it. So, we protect the forest, we protect the wildlife, we use wildlife as part of the program, as a tool to also protect the forest.*

*In the same time, we do a lot of campaigns on the forest policy, environment policy. Being able to do that we would need a lot of trust. That's something you need to grow because some of them lost trust in the people from the ethnic groups and the government.*

*The policy that can sustain the life of the community in the current state especially. So, we are now trying to advocate to the other ethnics to come up with their own policies. Because if you look at the policies now the focus is on investment, like economic reform, economic growth- without balancing the environment... So, it is very hard if you want to change the whole system. – Saw Aar, KESAN*

As Saw Aar reflects, there is little desire from minority peoples to simply join the current system. Rather, there is a desire to change the whole system. Local agency, resilience, empowerment — these transformative peace process would allow for local communities and civil society to be the

drivers of change in the peace process. There is an essential need expressed by my teacher and friend contributors for people to have control not only of the peace process but their lives and communities going forward. For sustainable peace it is essential that people are empowered to be a part of the process, to manage the process to challenge the existing power structures and ensure their rights are realised. Peace means many things to many people, but, as Sai Mey, from Shan Youth Power, expresses, peace is speaking out and challenging power:

*From the perspective of the villager, peace means first thing is no fight. First thing is no fight and second thing is no fighting between the armed group, no fighting between the communities so sometimes armies not fighting each other, but people fighting each other. It's still not in my opinion peace, so peace without fighting, a physical thing.*

*Second thing is the peace in the managing process. Challenging the power system like some people have, rights to speak up about the things that they believe. ... One thing is physically no war, No fighting. Second thing is they help the organisation or the group that provide networks. Peace has a lot of meaning and if you ask for one, peace really mean that physically, emotionally, socially. For Burma right now, peace means stop fighting. – Sai Mey, SYP*

Overwhelmingly people felt that the pathway to a sustainable peace lies in equality — that peace cannot be achieved, or will be short lived, if it is simply enforcing a system that protects the status quo where those in power retain their power as elites and as majority peoples, and where those who are marginalised continue to remain on the periphery. Peace is sometimes expressed as equality in the democratic process, as Sai Hey, from the Shan Human Rights Foundation, outlines:

*In my opinion, the equality is part of the democracy, so we also fight to get the equality to have this one kind of -- to promote the democracy. To become a real democracy. – Sai Hey, SHRF*

However, democratic transition is only part of peace. Mostly from my contributors there is an expression of desire for genuine transformation. A paradigm shift to an equitable society, which would include respect, self-determination and autonomy, peace is interconnected with ethnic identity — the ability to speak in their own language, to flourish and grounded in equality, as outlined by Theramu Kee:

*Peace is where people feel comfortable in the societies, they feel secure and they can do things freely without fearing other people dominate them and that they can express themselves freely in their culture. Their language is respected.*

*Peace is when I don't see the military who are wearing uniform are close to the village or walking around or when there isn't any of the armed group who are already in the grounds.*

*And when I don't, when people come and do something, they talk to me, they don't do business that destroy anything. But if they do so I can go somewhere to complain to report on them and I don't have to be afraid of mechanism. There is a law that would protect me. There is a mechanism, a rule of law that would protect me. I don't know what is rule of law but I know that if I do something, if something happens to me, I can go somewhere to report the case and I will be protected and I will be treated fairly, that I will be able to speak in my language and talk to and travel freely and I would be able to have the opportunity if I want to do, develop my work, my capacity. If I want to join the organisation, I do it freely. I think there is peace. Right now, no. People still don't have a choice. You do the farming because you don't have other choice, right. And then you still have to feed the soldiers walking around.*

*Many things are not accessible, and some of them you have to pay high, healthcare everything. Peace is access to education not only for the children but also adult when they want to be able to develop their vocational skills, livelihood, something like that. I think the fear is a very important. People live in fear for long time until they feel secure then there won't be peace. Even as we live here, where we go, we still have a lot of fears.*

*Underlying cause is equality —that we want to be respected by the Burmese government and also self-determination. People are able to make decisions about their own affairs and federalism, self-determination and equality — those are the things unless we get this one. It's just a pause to the fighting. It can resume at any time and right now cease fire we don't even have any legal documents that we enforce the military from either side to follow ... and we as a civil society could monitor and hold those parties accountable. So, it's still a pause to conflict but it won't solve the conflict. – Theramu Kee, KWO*

Equality also means equality under the law and the removal of impunity. The ability for any citizen to achieve justice, even against a high-ranking officer or a member of the powerful elite. Peace is directly related to justice and must overcome the wrongs of the past to build trust and reconcile past injustices. There is a concern that a failure to address justice issues will result in continued conflict and will be detrimental to the idea of a positive sustainable peace, as Theramu Weh argues:

*For women, we talk about just peace as I've said before, we need to bring the perpetrator accountable and also justice to the victim for reconciliation or compensation. Because 60 years of civil war, a lot of people have been suffering and people have to live in fear and live in pain a lot of hatred among community to community, family to family, the armed group and the community, those that they need to consider very seriously. Otherwise, you cannot bring peace if people will have to continue living in fear and won't be able to speak out or say and express how they feel and forgive each other. Otherwise, they will break and explode one day. That has been for a long time and it's something that we need to consider if we talk about peace.*

*Cease fire is not peace because our social security needs to be guaranteed. This is our basic rights, our guarantee. And of course, justice for the victims. – Theramu Weh, WLB*

With the current lack of equality and access to justice and real freedoms, there is a concern that the current process is simply a 'negotiation to surrender' and will not result in the necessary societal transformation. Peace here is a resolution of the political demands and root causes of the conflict and is connected to action. Inaction, inequality and a failure to redress structural violence will not result in a sustainable positive peace. For Nang Ceh, peace is in the action, rather than the promise of change:

*I think equality. What Burma wants is only power, they want us to surrender our power. What the ethnic groups are saying is that the political issues must be discussed by all people and not only being forced to sign on the agreement. What Burma wants to show is that all people have agreed on the issue, but not all people are given the same rights. These ethnic groups look very stupid in the eyes of the local people if they sign when nothing changes and they lose trust from the people. There has been pressure on them to sign and what right to they have to decide on the future of the people?*

*I think not for long term yet because the structure in Burma currently is not permitting the people to freely participate in peace. If they suspect people working with this organisation, they suppress them. The people do not feel they are at peace. That is why we are empowering the people to mobilise more. – Nang Ceh, SSSNY*

CBO leaders and the communities they represent deeply desire peace. Any reluctance to sign a ceasefire agreement is based on concern that this will be the beginning *and end* of the peace process. They are concerned that the change desired will not be forthcoming because all that will be established is a fragile or negative peace. Their community work during the conflict has been based on resilience and strength, and their current rejection or concerns about the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong conference peace process is simply that it is not offering enough. They believe it does not offer enough change and transformation, is not inclusive enough, and does not offer enough stability and permanence. Clearly peace is described as an improved life with freedom of movement, political engagement, practical changes such as healthcare, education and economic opportunities, but at the core are the larger freedoms of shifting power structures, gaining autonomy, and equality. My teacher and friend contributors have built their programs and the capacity of their constituent communities throughout the conflict, and now have a desire to do the hard work required to create an environment that enables rights, freedoms and equality, and sees a society transformed.

## 6.4 Conclusion

For peacebuilding it is necessary to consider the kind of peace that is envisioned by those who are vulnerable and marginalised in this conflict. These are community leaders, community minded people who are invested in a sustainable and lasting peace, one that involves the diligence of true societal transformation. Accordingly, it is not nearly enough to simply negotiate with the oppressors without changing the system of oppression. It is understandable that communities are 'critical of and committed to the elimination of coercive power-over privilege systems of domination' (Warren and Cady 1994, p. 6). As Saw Aar (KESAN) states '*it is very hard if you want to change the whole system.*'

My teacher and friend contributors were forthcoming in discussing what were the elements missing from the peace process: addressing the root causes, peace with justice, and decolonisation. Currently, the peace process is operating under the model of unity, however, this is not the goal of my teacher and friend contributors who seek equality. Unity, and even democracy, are seen as only serving those in power who wish to continue their elite majority dominance over minority people. From a political perspective, inclusive government is not a simple matter of democracy as a majority-based democracy can still lead to oppression of minorities (Stewart 2002, p. 344). It is not a simple matter of ceasefires — those have come before, only to be broken. It is a matter of transformation, and indeed failing to address these issues can form obstacles to a sustainable positive peace. Transformation of a society renewed by a dedication to equality, by radical empathy, by changing entrenched power structures, by reducing horizontal inequalities, and by focusing on sustainable positive peace. The liberal peace model currently in operation gives little indication about how strengthening the state and a law and order approach will benefit those communities who seek justice — justice within the legal framework and within the framework of social and economic justice.

In response to the research sub question 'What is the potential for community-based organisations to contribute to positive peace?', this chapter has shown how peace praxis can be built on local agency, resilience and empowerment. For the majority of the civil war it has been built informally by those in the margins who have organised to challenge the prevailing power structures — challenging structural violence with their community programs by organising and challenging power by raising the voices and concerns of ordinary citizens. A fair society is built when those in the margins, those with dissenting views, and those in opposition are not seen as the *enemy* of the people, but only as *the people*. A fair society is not built on control.



Koung Jor refugee camp, 2012. Photo credit: Zoe Bedford

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

*'My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together'*  
– Desmond Tutu

This thesis asked the question: *Is Peace Possible in Burma? A Study of Community-Based Organisations on the Thai-Burma border and the challenges of building positive peace*. The answer from the CBO contributors to this research was that they certainly wanted to believe it to be possible, but they also identified the many obstacles still in the pathway. They expressed frustration with the peace process and international actors because they felt that they were being sidelined, that they were not consulted, that the processes lacked transparency and hence the net result was a breaking, rather than building, of trust. There is indeed a challenge to build positive peace in Burma/Myanmar. The risk of negative peace or the collapse of the peace process is dangerously close. However, the possibility for peace is still present. This research has discussed the changes that are needed to recognise and empower people who have a peace praxis capacity participation in the peace process.

### 7.1 Methodology affects our understanding

The methodology used, matters in both the approach to aid and development and the approach to peacebuilding. If a feminist approach is taken — an approach which values hearing people, learning from them, believing them and then acting on what they tell you — the development or

peacebuilding activities will be part of a decolonialising paradigm shift to a position where people are heard, believed, and respected to make their own decisions and manage their own affairs.

This is repeated in the analysis when the contributors are discussing both the peace process and aid and development and insist that the methodology is a problem. In answer to the first research sub-question; 'In what ways might the peace process limit the prospects of a positive peace outcome?', they identify a failure to address systemic issues of violence, dominant power structures and address issues of justice in fact acts as obstacles to a sustainable positive peace which increases the risk of creating a hollow peace or the possibility of a negative peace outcome. For while all parties are striving for the same or a similar outcome (for instance, a health vaccination program or a ceasefire) the methodology can be an inhibitor to this outcome being achieved. This is because the power dynamics are un-resolved or problematic, because there is no aspect of listening, hearing people and then acting on what they say.

That this research was based on feminist research methodology principles has been a strength, as there are parallels to draw between the research and the situation that is being researched. While this research prioritised listening to the marginalised and for their voices to inform action, this approach is not reflected in the peace process. For example, one goal of the IPA method of data analysis used in this thesis is to 'enter another's world and to discover the wisdom, possibilities and understandings therein' (Matua and Van Der Wal 2015, p. 25). Yet due to the patriarchal and lingering authoritarian nature of those leading the peace process, there has been little room for equality, discovery and positive possibilities. While feminist research strives to enhance the interests of marginalised people, proposing the transformation of an oppressive social system (Liamputtong 2007), the agendas of the peace process in Burma/Myanmar are set by those in power, pathways are devised and constricted and there is little flexibility in the approach.

The exclusion of women from the peace process is not a patriarchal exception of Burmese/Myanmar culture; it is representative of the norm. From the top-down, centralised approach of the government, to the ranks of command in the Tatmadaw military units, women, minorities and the vulnerable routinely face exclusion from decision-making roles in society. Contributors to this research spoke of the neo-colonialist approach of those in positions of authority. Representing the men and women from marginalised communities, they are being overlooked in this process despite their decades of experience and close relationship with villagers and communities directly impacted by the violence and who would directly benefit from peace.

The feminist research methodology approach of listening and believing your contributors is sometimes deemed to be a radical approach, yet for change to genuinely occur there must be a willingness to change the approach. An alternative interpretation of this research could be that CBO contributors are anti-development, or that they are hurting from the withdrawal of support to those in refugee camps and IDP camps, that they are resentful, scared and insecure about the changes they are facing to their programs, organisations and communities. Indeed, in some ways this is true, CBO contributors are concerned about these changes, they are concerned that worthy programs are being lost and that communities are being rushed into change and disenfranchised by the process. They are concerned about the risk of the peace process failing or producing a result that further disempowers and marginalises vulnerable people. They want to see changes consistent with furthering a positive peace outcome — and while there is still room to negotiate, for programs that empower rather than destroy small communities and their leadership. While CBO contributors are pro-peace, they are not in favour of giving up hard won gains. There is a fear that this is an ‘all or nothing’ negotiation and that if the terms are mismanaged then there will be no further re-negotiations, no chance to win further freedoms or autonomy in the future. CBO contributors are frustrated about this peace process which is both a high stakes game and one from which they are being excluded and sidelined.

## **7.2 Reflexivity**

Having worked in a few different aid and development settings, I was incredibly impressed with the amount of collaboration and cooperation found among CBOs and civil society on the Thai-Burma border — this is a rare find. However, such an environment can have some downsides too, such as staff that are overworked due to the sheer volume of needs, and underpaid due to the small budget of community-based programs. There is low value placed on the individual and a high value placed on community relationships. It is a community environment continually threatened to be overwhelmed by the amount of stress it has encountered. This is, of course, by design. It is a design of this conflict to overwhelm ‘the enemy’ and impair them with multiple issues — issues that are multiplied by the nested violence model. When I worked for APHEDA, we supported a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program called DARE. DARE worked in the refugee camps, and one question I asked was ‘How are refugees able to support their addictions?’. The answer was that drugs and alcohol are very cheap to procure, again, by design. It was in the best interests of the powerful to

ensure that 'the enemy' would 'self destruct' in this manner and that the community would be affected by both the drug abuse and have to divert resources and effort into rehabilitation methods.

Working in this environment and on this research project has made me question not only the aid and development sector, but also the academic sector. Community workers would express concern, only to be told that they are too biased and too close to the issue. There is a hierarchy placed on who can raise issues and lobby for change, and in this hierarchy the community, and CBOs working at the frontlines, seem to be placed very low and are dismissed easily with claims of bias and a 'lack of objectivity'.

This research is sympathetic, both to the situation and those working for change and to the workers of the CBOs. I can't apologise for this. It is not an exaggeration to say I have been changed by this environment and by how I perceive injustice. For it is not only the military junta and the Tatmadaw who carry out injustices on marginalised people. It can also be those in more caring sectors, aid, development and even peacebuilding, who sideline and dismiss the concerns of vulnerable communities with their programs mired in cultural hegemony, their interpretations of 'neutrality' and their 'lack of bias' that somehow allows them to justify working with those in power and maintaining unjust power structures instead of making space for the concerns of the vulnerable, and assisting them to bring about change.

### **7.3 The peace that is envisioned**

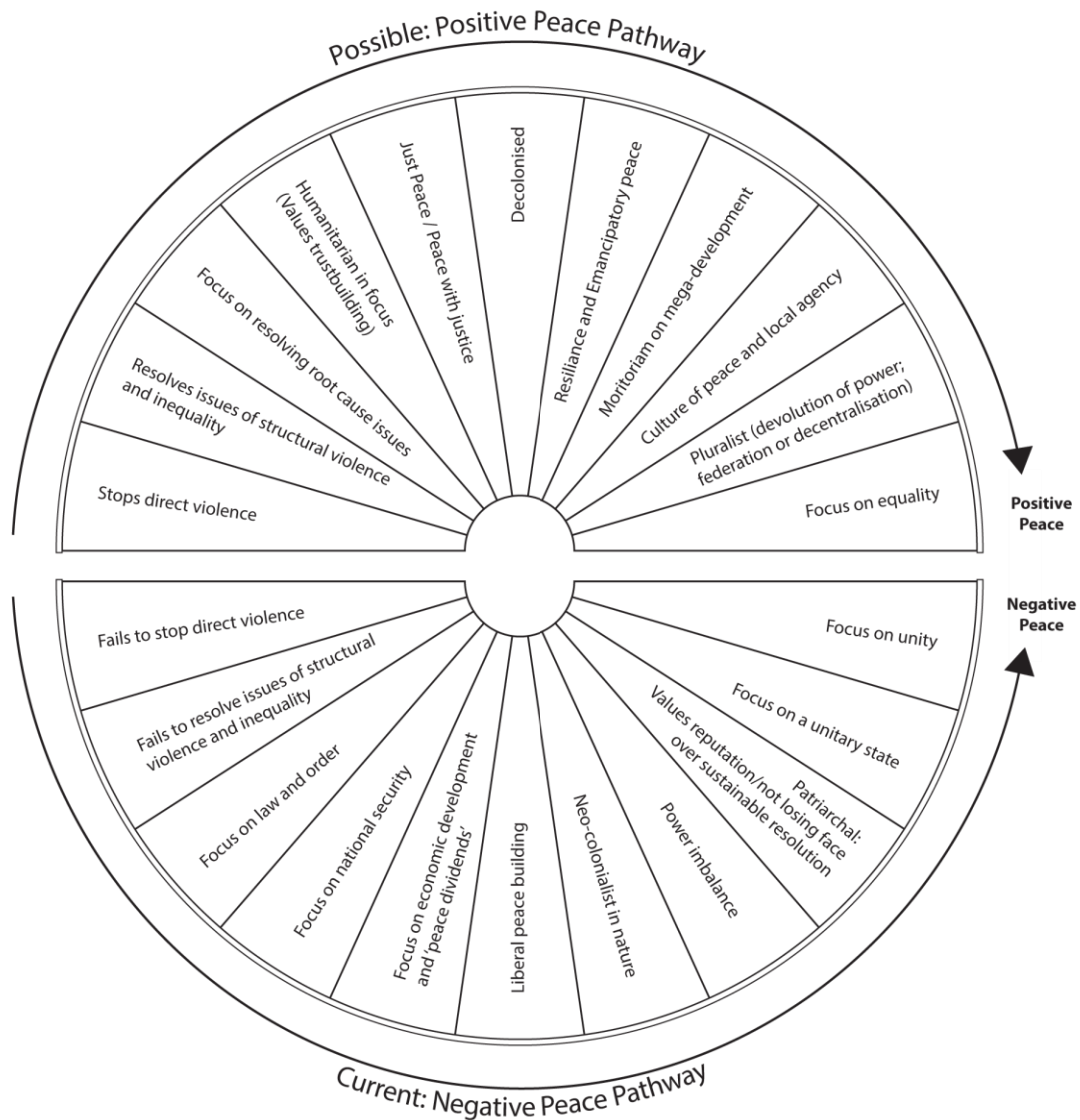
The words used by my CBO contributors to envision peace in Burma/Myanmar — equality, societal transformation, freedom, no violence, justice, participation — are consistent with a call for federation. Federation was often raised by the contributors to this research. For many it was seen as the answer to the problems in Burma. Federation would mean that the ethnic minority states could both remain in the structure of Burma/Myanmar and be able to have independence in relation to their internal affairs, or at least some degree of autonomy. This approach was seen as having the potential to resolve much of the root causes of the conflict.

As discussed in this thesis, during the conflict, services such as education, health and environmental have been managed for many years by the ethnic minority peoples, by CBOs and also by the service sector of ethnic armed organisations (not included in this research) when the state has not been providing these services. Providing these services has developed an assurance among those villagers

in conflict zones that the services being built are community managed, supported, respected, based on local leadership and appropriately respectful of ethnic language and culture. There has been a practice of community care, managed autonomously during the conflict — and this practice is in jeopardy of being closed or co-opted into government or INGO-run services during the post conflict period. Ironically in this transitional post autocratic period, due to ideas of state strengthening, the peace process is removing support services that vulnerable communities trust and replacing them with interventions that serve to disenfranchise these vulnerable and marginalised people.

In answer to research sub-question two ‘What is the potential for community-based organisations to contribute to positive peace?’, my teacher and friend contributors outline the ways their work has been based in strengthening communities and collaboration, building leadership, and dismantling oppressive practices and combating structural violence. Indeed, these CBOs would be well placed to lead peace programs *especially in the communities with whom they already have strong relationships and programs*, and they have a genuine potential to contribute to a socially just positive peace, as they are focused not on the outcome of achieving peace at any cost, but on a methodology of empowerment and resilience which has created a culture of peace within their sphere of influence. A lack of sensitivity to the method and process of development could mean that communities would be disenfranchised by the process and become further alienated from the prospect of ‘unity’ — a concept so desired by those in government.

The diagram below (Figure 7.1) outlines the approach currently being utilised by the formal peace process, on the negative peace pathway, one that places obstacles in the pathway of genuine positive peace and then, the alternate approach that could be possible if there were recognition of the inequalities and power imbalances that exist in this conflict, along with an effort to transform the process into one that seeks a radical societal transformation based on an analysis of the power inequalities, on the positive peace pathway. This alternative is seen as radical enough to embrace the possibility for a community-led and local socially just peace that resolves root cause issues and support a radical transformation of society, rather than continuation down a difficult pathway focusing on liberal peace, strengthening of state-based power and failure to resolve the issues of nested violence.



**Figure 7.1:** Positive Peace Pathways vs. Negative Peace Pathways. Source: Zoë Bedford.

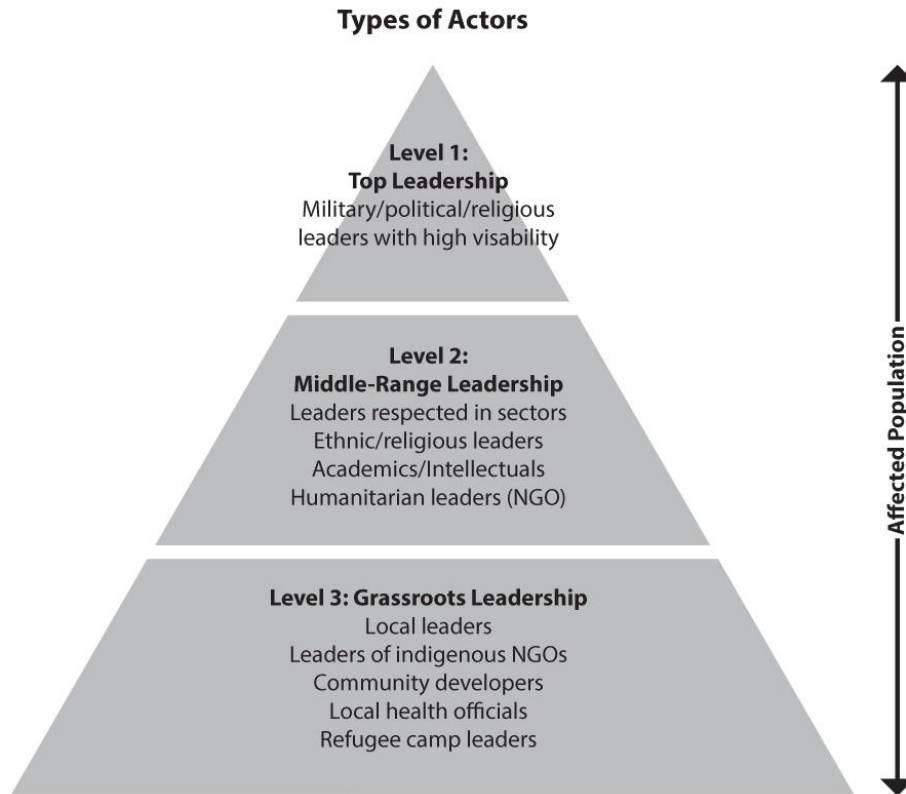
Is it possible to envision equitable peace? The teacher and friend contributors to this research outlined how they saw such a possibility, focusing on the need to: value the many over the few who are powerful; be an inversion of power; be a process where the principles of empowerment would be encouraged; and to be a society transformed. The equitable peace values they highlighted included: trust building, grassroots leadership, resilience, a culture of peace, local agency, justice and decolonisation. Feminist principles could guide this process as it is a struggle for equality for all. For as Saw Aar (KESAN) states *'it is very hard if you want to change the whole system.'*

CBOs are well situated to lead this process at the grassroots level and to advocate for necessary change and challenge power structures. At the grassroots, working directly with vulnerable and

marginalised communities is where CBOs have demonstrated their peace praxis skills. Building on local agency, resilience and empowering local communities and leadership, designing programs informally for and with those in the margins, as well as challenging nested violence, undermining its effect and raising the voices and concerns of ordinary citizens are also crucial to the process. Equality will be evident when those in the margins, those with dissenting views, and those in opposition are not seen as the *enemy* of the people, but only as *the people*.

#### **7.4 What next?**

This research was limited by design to interviews with CBOs on the Thai-Burma border. There are other actors involved in both the peace process and in the lives of vulnerable communities based in the conflict zones or as internally displaced peoples or refugees. These are ethnic armed organisation and the social service wings of their political divisions; there are also government and non-government donors and aid programs; religious leaders from Buddhist, Christian and Muslim denominations; along with camp leaders, community leaders, government officials and so on. Further insights into the challenges and potential of the peace process could be gained by conducting research with these other actors. As the peace process currently is tightly restricted to the very top tier of Lederach's peacebuilding pyramid, focusing on representatives from the Myanmar Government, the Tatmadaw, and ethnic armed organisations, it would be helpful to include other actors further down the peacebuilding pyramid such as local leaders, refugee camp leaders, health officials, and other grassroots CBOs, as well as ordinary villagers at the grassroots level.



**Figure 7.2:** Lederach’s peacebuilding pyramid. Derived from Lederach (2013, p. 39).

Following from this study, it would be valuable to research different peacebuilding models and methodologies, in particular how the peace process could become more inclusive, focusing on the vertical aspect of Lederach’s peacebuilding pyramid, connecting these levels, rather than remaining in the horizontal.

This study also suggests that more research into political peacebuilding measures would be valuable. CBO contributors in this research called for the withdrawal of Tatmadaw troops from ethnic minority states, as their continued presence and indeed growth in some areas has been seen as contradictory to the goals of the peacebuilding processes.

Another practical political measure would be a moratorium on mega development projects such as mines, dams and resource extraction from the resource rich ethnic minority states until there the peace process is finalised and control and management of these resources for the future is agreed to in a transparent and equitable manner.

A further political peacebuilding measure that would warrant research is the prospect of peace talks unconstrained from the 2008 Constitution. How would it differ to the current model, which has been discussed in this research as being too constrictive and limiting in terms of issues of rule of law, the devolution of a centralised power structure and the possibility of federation? Would uncoupling the peace process from the restrictions of the 2008 Constitution open up the possibility for a positive peace?

## **7.5 Conclusion**

There has been a shift in perceptions about Burma/Myanmar since the 2010 election from authoritarian regime to 'brave new world', the promise of a transition to disciplined democracy was being realised. However, much of the goodwill of the time has been eroded with the ethnic minority groups of the country, as very little has been achieved to progress the peace process into a satisfactory, sustainable peace outcome. International attitudes have continued to be positive in the hope that the establishment of preliminary ceasefire agreements will result in a genuine peace process and a cessation of human rights violations and oppression for the ordinary people of Burma/Myanmar and on this matter, there has been some hope expressed by the CBO contributors to this research. However, the root causes of conflict need to be fully addressed in order to ensure sustainable peace for communities. In the context of ongoing militarisation and impunity, villagers continue to face a range of human rights violations increasingly related to economic development, nested violence issues remain unaddressed, and peace with justice is largely ignored as a goal and outcome which remain obstacles to the possibility of a sustained positive peace.

Burma/Myanmar is a country whose past has defined its future. Unable to escape the patterns formed in the pre-colonial times of the 'mandala' power structure — where power was centralised and trust was only held in the hands of the highest leaders and their cronies — in the post-colonial environment Burma/Myanmar slipped back into the patriarchal patterns utilised during its own colonial period, resulting in authoritarianism, oppression and civil war. Other patterns created under colonial times, such as the extraction of Burma/Myanmar's wealth for the interests of the oligarchy and private business, the connection of the government with the military, and perception of the greatest threat to Burma/Myanmar as being 'internal security' rather than an external border threat, have had devastating consequences for Burma/Myanmar's future.

At all junctures in Burma/Myanmar's history there existed the choice of *inclusion* of ethnic minority people — through federation, democracy, or in the opening up of country for a greater sharing of power and wealth with its people — yet, until 2010, and more recently in 2015, the powers within Burma/Myanmar each time have opted for the opposite. The military junta, and indeed their predecessors in the colonial and pre-colonial times, have pursued policies that have been *exclusionary*, that centralise power and wealth, and that treat many of the country's citizens as the enemy. The 2008 Constitution has ensured that the powerful grip of the Tatmadaw is stamped on the government for the foreseeable future. This Constitution is thus seen as an inhibitor to peace as it creates an obstacle to pathways for justice and it maintains the patriarchal power structures that have produced nested violence and civil war for decades.

Burma/Myanmar's ethnic minority peoples have been seeking a place in the country's power structure, to have greater autonomy via federation in order to have control over their ethnic states, with the ability to make choices over language, education, healthcare, religious freedom, resource management and security. This research has therefore argued that the issue of power in the Burma/Myanmar peace process also needs to be confronted, whether it is an international-led peacebuilding program creating cultural hegemony which restricts or erodes the space for local agency and community-based development, the military further restricting conditions of the peace process having already constitutionally constrained the process, or the government of Burma/Myanmar failing to pursue plurality and autonomy going forward.

The power over methodologies endured by ordinary people during the authoritarian regime are yet to be dismantled. Communities are faced with the cultural hegemony of international agencies and a liberal peace process prioritising state-building and unity. The peace process is currently lacking in transparency and is exclusively a horizontal entity reserved for the Government, the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed organisations. For the ordinary person, this does little to assure them of a peaceful future, as these entities are arguably the power structures who originated the direct, structural and cultural violence they have suffered in the first place.

It is also clear that methodology matters, both in the peace process and in aid and development. A liberal peacebuilding approach and a liberal economic agenda, both of which focus on strengthening state-based institutions, are based on the assumption that Burma/Myanmar is a weak or failing state, rather than seeing it as a state transitioning from decades of strong authoritarian rule presiding over human rights abuses and nested violence. The transition and the possibility of

embracing locally-led community programs can thus be seen as one that leads the country away from the use and abuse of power through oppression, to one that is built on transparency, inclusion, decolonisation and equality as the means and goals of the peace process.

Anything less than a radical restructure of Burma/Myanmar, away from entrenched power structures that favour the few over the many, will not result in the kind of transformation to a peaceful future envisioned by my contributors. A significant risk to the people of Burma/Myanmar is that this transformation will not occur, that entrenched and historical power structures will remain, that xenophobic attitudes, neo-colonialist and patriarchal views of ethnic minority people will continue. As a result, despite the peace process, Burma/Myanmar is at risk of continuing the patterns of its past history of violence, poverty, exclusion, oppression and war.

My teacher and friend contributors were forthcoming in discussing what were the elements missing from the peace process: peace with justice, decolonisation, addressing root causes/federation and finding equality. Currently, the peace process is operating under the model of unity; however, this is not the goal of my teacher and friend contributors who seek equality. Unity, and even democracy, are seen as serving only those in power who wish to continue their elite majority dominance over minority peoples. For the peace process to be wedded to liberal peace ideas is to risk an insecure peace, or a negative peace or the failure of the peace process. The liberal peace model currently in operation gives little indication about how strengthening the state and a law and order approach will benefit those communities who seek justice — justice within the legal framework and within the framework of social and economic justice. Other peacebuilding models such as emancipatory peace, resilience peace and conflict sensitive development would have a better chance for positive peace as they would have more chance of supporting the grassroots efforts of civil society and CBOs rather than undermining their work and disenfranchising marginalised communities.

This thesis concludes that a failure to re-dress the traditional cultural patriarchy and entrenched power structures in Burma/Myanmar will undermine the potential for a transformative peace process in which women and ethnic minorities are included as partners and beneficiaries. It argues that the road to positive peace has already been started before the national conflict is resolved through the work of CBOs based on the Thai-Burma border. The commitment to feminism, equality, justice and peacebuilding by the organisations of the teacher and friend contributors to this research has resulted in collaboration in a multi-ethnic and multi-sectoral way for both aid delivery and

activism. They are pursuing a cessation of direct violence, but more than this, the structural change necessary for a sustainable positive peace.

Positive peace requires listening to the marginalised and vulnerable, hearing them, believing them, recognising the complexity of, and then acting on, their peace vision. Those most directly affected by the conflict and associated nested violence, have been demonstrating their local agency and resilience. And yet, their efforts for grassroots empowerment have been threatened by the formal peace process. There is a risk that vulnerable communities will instead be disempowered and further marginalised by the top-down, liberal peace project. A focus instead on *equality* over unity and on transforming the prevailing power structures could create an enabling environment for positive peace in Burma/Myanmar. This requires no less than a decolonisation of the mind through a genuine commitment to conscientization and the process of transformation from violence and inequality to a positive and inclusive peace. It is clear that people are asking for equality — and they need to be heard. Because if equality is genuinely achieved — then there is nothing left to fight for.

# APPENDIX 1

Interviewee List					
Organisation name	Acronym	Pseudonym	Gender	Approx. age	Date
Back Pack Health Worker Team	BPHWT	Saw Weh	M	Early 40's	16/08/2014
Burma Issues	BI	Saw Eay	M	Early 40's	23/08/2014
Committee of Internally Displaced Karen People	CIDKP	Saw Bey	M	Late 30's	24/08/2014
Kachin Women's Association Thailand	KWAT	Daw Seh	F	Early 50's	8/08/2014
		Daw Jeh	F	Late 20's	
Karen Environmental and Social Action Network	KESAN	Saw Aar	M	Late 30's	28/08/2014
Karen Human Rights Group	KHRG	Saw Aey	M	Early 40's	21/08/2014
Karen Teacher Working Group	KTWG	Theramu Lar	F	Mid 40's	20/08/2014
Karen Women Organisation	KWO	Theramu Kee	F	Late 20's	18/08/2014
		Theramu Dee	F	Early 40's	
Karen Office for Relief and Development	KORD	Saw Pey	M	Early 40's	20/08/2014
Mae Tao Clinic	MTC	Theramu Mee	F	Mid 50's	13/08/2014
School for Shan State Nationalities Youth	SSSNY	Nang Ceh	F	Early 30's	5/08/2014
Shan Human Rights Foundation	SHRF	Sai Hey	M	Early 30's	27/08/2014
Shan Women's Action Network	SWAN	Nang Nai	F	Early 40's	25/08/2014
		Nang Mai	F	Mid 30's	
Shan Youth Power	SYP	Sai Mey	M	Early 20's	26/08/2014
		Sai Mar	M	Early 20's	
		Nang Yeh	F	Early 20's	
		Nang Aeh	F	Early 20's	
Women's League of Burma	WLB	Theramu Weh	F	Early 30's	7/08/2014

### Description of Community-Based Organisations involved in this research

The organisations that contributed to this project are listed below organised by sector.

#### Health

##### Back Pack Health Worker Team

Back Pack Health Worker Team (BPHWT) are a multi-ethnic organisation that works to empower local communities to provide primary healthcare services to underserved populations in conflict affected areas of Burma/Myanmar, particularly in areas that international humanitarian organisations cannot reach. BPHWT promotes a system that relies on community-based human resources, as community members continue to increase their health knowledge and capabilities they are more able to serve as health resources for their communities, thereby reducing reliance on clinic-based and BPHWT services and ensuring communities' ability to protect public health at a grassroots level. BPHWT continually provides training, supplies, and support, but it is the local populations who become more empowered and take charge of providing healthcare for their own communities.

The BPHWT has 113 teams with 456 health workers (252 women and 204 men) and a network of 1,765 traditional birth attendants, village health volunteers, and village health workers (1,317 women and 448 men) serving a targeted population of approximately 292,741 IDPs (141,978 men and 150,763 women) and other vulnerable people in Karen, Karenni, Mon, Shan, Kachin, Chin, and Arakan States, and portions of the Pegu, Tenasserim, and Sagaing Divisions of Burma/Myanmar. The BPHWT occupies a unique position in providing primary healthcare services to displaced and vulnerable populations in Burma/Myanmar, while at the same time, building a long-term, locally-sustainable, primary healthcare infrastructure for Burma/Myanmar. BPHWT's vision "looks forward toward the day when its health workers become an integral component of a viable healthcare system in a federal union of Burma with peace, justice, and equality for all of its people." (Back Pack Health Worker Team n.d.)

### **Mae Tao Clinic**

Mae Tao Clinic (MTC) provides free health care for refugees, migrant workers, and other individuals who cross the border from Burma/Myanmar to Thailand. People of all ethnicities and religions are welcome at the MTC which now takes on approximately 150,000 cases each year on the Thai-Burma border. It is estimated that approximately half of the caseload each year is from Burmese migrant workers in Thailand and half are Burmese nationals, who cross the border from Burma/Myanmar seeking medical care that is unavailable to them in Burma/Myanmar or unaffordable due to its poor public health infrastructure (Mae Tao Clinic n.d.).

MTC services include internal medicine; paediatrics; surgery; reproductive health and obstetrics; a laboratory and blood bank; primary eye care and eye surgery; prosthetics and rehabilitation; HIV/AIDS prevention; malaria management; and TB case finding and referrals. The clinic also has many health worker training programs. Most of the health workers who graduate from these programs return to their villages inside Burma/Myanmar to provide much-needed primary health care. Other graduates choose to serve in the refugee camps in Thailand and a small number stay on at the clinic.

MTC also engages in child protection and education, The services supported by MTC are community-created and operated, with the goal of creating a strong civil society network to best protect children and foster positive youth development. MTC partners with local community-based organisations from basic logistics and supplies through policy and advocacy issues.

The objective of MTCs children's programmes is not just education. Child protection extends too and includes ensuring that basic physical needs of the children are provided in a consistent manner, including health, food and accommodation. MTCs definition of child protection extends to education, employing core curriculum as well as vocational training. Finally MTC works to provide a support of a strong framework of protection, including birth registration, child protection policy, and psychosocial support. MTC seeks to provide a holistic approach to child protection (Burma Children's Medical Fund n.d.).

## **Education**

### **School for Shan State Nationalities Youth**

The School for Shan State Nationalities Youth (SSSNY) is a multi-ethnic organisation whose members come from the different ethnic groups who reside in Shan State. SSSNY was formed by a group of youths from Burma/Myanmar's Shan State in May 2001, to provide a social justice education program for young people to become active citizens participating in social and political change in Burma/Myanmar.

SSSNY lists as its goals to empower, educate and encourage young Shan State activists of different backgrounds and ethnicities to participate effectively in the struggle for true democracy, human rights, justice and gender equality, as well as supporting educational development in and for Shan State (School for Shan State Nationalities Youth n.d.)

### **Karen Teachers Working Group**

Karen Teachers Working Group (KTWG) is a Karen organisation dedicated to teacher support, teacher training and supporting community schools in the conflict zones of Karen state. KTWG mobilizes the community to support teachers and students in school by fostering a deeper understanding of the benefits of education. KTWG strengthens school management systems, which improves support for both students and teachers and promotes local governance and ownership.

KTWG's programs are built on principles of sustainability, community ownership and empowerment, providing culturally-based, relevant programs for Karen and other indigenous people to ensure that local needs find local solutions. KTWG advocates active, student-centered classrooms which encourages problem solving, creativity and critical thinking (Karen Teachers Working Group n.d.).

### **Shan Youth Power**

Shan Youth Power is made up of Shan youths based in Thailand. SYP works with displaced Shan communities, especially migrant workers — that is people who work to survive after being unable to find shelter in a refugee camp, also known as 'working refugees'. The mission of Shan Youth Power is to persuade more young people to participate in social and democratic development through education, awareness-raising, and capacity building. SYP provides computer and English language skills training, and promotes basic education for children and youth. SYP's program includes presenting HIV/AIDS prevention information for migrant workers and IDPs and its provides basic

reproductive health training for adolescents. SYP also holds exchange meetings for Shan youth about the political and human rights situation in Burma/Myanmar (Shan Youth Power n.d.).

## **Women's Organisations**

### **Karen Womens Organisation**

Karen Womens Organisation (KWO) is an organisation formed by Karen women for the purposes of empowering Karen women. KWO is a community-based organisation working in development and relief in the refugee camps on the Thai border, with IDPs and also women inside Burma. KWO encourages an awareness of women's rights and promotes women's participation in community decision making and political processes. It has a membership of over 49,000 women.

KWO assists women in the endeavour to be free from all forms of oppression and aims to empower women through offering various capacity building trainings to teach skills, build confidence and create new opportunities so that women will be better able to solve problems. KWO works to encourage women to participate in the struggle for democracy and to achieve equality as well as working to improve the wellbeing of women and children and to increase their access to adequate health, education and welfare services. KWO believes that "women's contribution is an essential factor in the peace-building and national reconciliation processes of Burma" (Karen Women Organisation n.d.).

### **Kachin Women's Association of Thailand**

Kachin Women's Association of Thailand (KWAT) is a women's organisation founded by Kachin women working for the empowerment and advancement of Kachin women in order to improve the lives of women and children in Kachin society. KWAT aims to promote women's rights, children's rights and gender equality. KWAT opposes all forms of violence against women including human trafficking and aims to promote environmental protection and to provide health and education services. KWAT's vision is "a Kachin State where all forms of discrimination are eliminated; where all women are empowered to participate in decision making at a local, national and international level; and where all Kachin children have the opportunity to fulfil their potential." (Kachin Women's Association n.d.)

### **Women's League of Burma**

Women's League of Burma (WLB) is a multi-ethnic women's organisation. WLB aims to increase the participation of women in the struggle for democracy and human rights, promote women's participation in the national peace and reconciliation process, and enhance the role of the women of Burma/Myanmar at the national and international level.

WLB is committed to working towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women. WLB works to increase participation of women at every level of decision making in all spheres of society. WLB also works to participate effectively in the movement for peace, democracy and national reconciliation and for the "advancement of the status of women towards a peaceful and just society in Burma." (Women's League of Burma n.d.)

### **Shan Women's Action Network**

Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) is a Shan women's organisation which works for gender equality and justice for Shan women in the struggle for social and political change in Burma/Myanmar through community-based actions, research and advocacy. SWAN is a network of Shan women active in Shan State and Thailand. SWAN's objectives are to promote women's rights and the rights of children, and oppose exploitation of and violence against women and children. SWAN has committed to work with communities for peace and freedom, with a key part of SWAN's work empowering women for a better life. SWAN also focuses on raising awareness to preserve natural resources and the environment (Shan Women's Action Network n.d.).

## **Human Rights**

### **Karen Human Rights Group**

Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) is an independent, community-based organisation working to improve the human rights situation in Burma/Myanmar by amplifying the voices of villagers and supporting their strategies to gain human rights. KHRG aim to increase villagers' capability and opportunity to claim their human rights, and ensure that their voices, priorities and perspectives are able to influence decision makers. KHRG encourages other local and international groups and institutions to support villagers' self-protection strategies.

One key part of KHRG's work is focused on Village Agency. KHRG holds Village Agency Workshops which are conducted at the community level and facilitates workshops that provide a space for

villagers to share their experiences and support their self-protection strategies by gaining knowledge about international human rights standards and available national mechanisms that they can use to claim their rights. KHRG research and documentation has revealed abuses such as forced labour, forced relocation and displacement, attacks on villages, extortion, looting, arbitrary detention, torture, sexual assault and executions perpetrated extensively by the state military, but also by ethnic armed groups, companies and other actors operating in southeast Burma/Myanmar (Karen Human Rights Group n.d.).

### **Burma Issues**

Burma Issues was established in 1990 as a rights and empowerment organisation that works with vulnerable communities in the conflict zone. Burma Issues describes themselves as a “movement” rather than an organization which focuses their work on empowerment of vulnerable communities and local agency. Burma Issues works on education, documentation and planning. They have field staff, project coordinators and planning committees. They value collective decision making. They focus on a ideology where “core beliefs is the power that comes from the people. They can change ... because they have skills, knowledge, original knowledge, [even if] they do not read and write. They gain knowledge and skills to overcome the problem, to resist. They have power. This is the main ideology — to empower them. ... Even [if] the military use their weapons or power. They cannot eliminate or they cannot take away the power of the people.” (Quote from interview of the researcher with Burma Issues contributor, personal correspondence, 17/8/2014)

### **Shan Human Rights Foundation**

The Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization which was founded in 1990. The aims of SHRF are to: strive for human rights and restore justice to the victims; strive for unity, equality and cooperation; and, strive for world peace, freedom and prosperity.

SHRF monitors the human rights situation in Shan State, focusing on remote conflict-affected areas, documenting human rights violations and producing updates and reports which are sent to relevant organisations and the media, both inside Burma/Myanmar and internationally. SHRF also carries out research and periodically publishes detailed reports on specific issues related to human rights in Shan State (Shan Human Rights Foundation n.d.).

## **Environment**

### **Karen Environment and Social Action Network (KESAN)**

Karen Environment and Social Action Network (KESAN) is a community-based, non-governmental, non-profit organization that works to improve livelihood security and to gain respect for indigenous people's knowledge and rights in Karen State of Burma/Myanmar, where the violence and inequities of more than 60 years of civil war have created one of the most impoverished regions in the world. KESAN's approach to the development of sustainable rural livelihoods is based on principles of democratisation from below and 'Free, Prior and Informed Consent'. KESAN works to survey and carry out capacity building programs and facilitate dialogues to mobilize and empower local communities, leaders, organizations and policy makers who can then make better-informed development decisions (Karen Environment and Social Action Network n.d.).

## **Relief**

### **Karen Office of Relief and Development**

Karen Office of Relief and Development (KORD) was formed in 1993 as a community-led organisation to deliver emergency relief assistance and facilitate participation in planning processes amongst internally displaced Karen communities in Karen State, northern Mon State and Bago Region.

The organization's objectives are to improve the living conditions of Karen people everywhere and to promote lasting peace and prosperity. KORD focuses on providing relief to help local people in conflict areas facing food shortages. It also engages in collaborative development projects to empower communities to grow. In this way it hopes to provide a grassroots alternative to the government's exclusionary economic policies in Karen State (The Border Consortium n.d.).

**Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People**

The Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP) was formed in 1998 to raise awareness about the plight of internally displaced Karen people and to deliver humanitarian assistance in response to their needs. The organization has field staff in all townships of Karen State, as well as in parts of Tenasserim Region, northern Mon State and eastern Bago Region. Its main programme activities include the delivery of relief assistance to displaced communities who have experienced shocks to their livelihoods. CIDKP also supports a prosthesis workshop for people injured by landmines (The Border Consortium n.d.).



Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

ABN 15211513464

Mackie Building K01
University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia

Telephone +61 2 9036 9286
Facsimile +61 2 9660 0862
wendy.lambourne@sydney.edu.au
http://sydney.edu.au/arts/peace\_conflict/

Dr Wendy Lambourne, Senior Lecturer
Deputy Director & Academic Coordinator

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, .....[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: Does aid to Burma's conflict zones bring communities closer towards peace?

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

- 1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary - I am not under any obligation to consent.
4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.
5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney, or Union Aid Abroad APHEDA now or in the future.
6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to:

- Audio-recording YES [ ] NO [ ]
• Receiving Feedback YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered YES to the "Receiving Feedback" question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

**Feedback Option**

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

.....  
Signature

.....  
Please PRINT name

.....  
Date



Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

ABN 15211513464

Mackie Building K01
University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia

Telephone +61 2 9036 9286
Facsimile +61 2 9660 0862
wendy.lambourne@sydney.edu.au
http://sydney.edu.au/arts/peace\_conflict/

ဒေါက်တာ ဝယ်နီဒီ လယ်မ်ဘန်း၊ အကြီးတန်းကထိက
ဒုတိယညွှန်ကြားရေးမှူးနှင့် ပညာသင်ကြားရေးဆိုင်ရာ ညှိနှိုင်းပေးသူ

ပါဝင်ဆောင်ရွက်သူ၏ ပါဝင်ရန် သဘောတူကြောင်း ဆန္ဒပြုချက်ပုံစံ

ကျွန်ုပ် ..... (အမည်ကို ဖြည့်ပါ) သည် ဤသုတေသန စီမံကိန်းတွင်
ပါဝင်ရန် သဘောတူကြောင်း ဆန္ဒပြုပါသည်။

ခေါင်းစဉ်။ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံအတွင်း ပဋိပက္ခဖြစ်ပွားရာဒေသများသို့ပေးသော ထောက်ပံ့ငွေသည် လူမျိုးစုအဖွဲ့အစည်းများကို
ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးရရန် ပိုမိုနီးစပ်လာစေသလား။

ဤသို့ သဘောတူကြောင်း ဆန္ဒပြုရာတွင် ကျွန်ုပ်က အသိအမှတ်ပြုသည်မှာ -

- ၁. စီမံကိန်းအတွက်လိုအပ်သော လုပ်ငန်းစဉ်များနှင့် ကြာမြင့်မည့်အချိန်တို့ကို ကျွန်ုပ်အား ရှင်းပြခဲ့ပြီး ကျွန်ုပ်က
မေးမြန်းခဲ့သော စီမံကိန်းနှင့်ဆိုင်သည့်မေးခွန်းများကိုလည်း ကျွန်ုပ်ကျေနပ်လောက်အောင် ဖြေကြားခဲ့ပါသည်။
၂. ပါဝင်ဆောင်ရွက်သူ သိရှိရမည့် အချက်အလက်များ စာစောင်ကို ကျွန်ုပ်ဖတ်ရှုခဲ့ပြီးဖြစ်ကာ ထိုသို့ သိရှိရမည့်
အချက်အလက်များနှင့်ပတ်သက်၍ ၎င်း၊ ဤစီမံကိန်းတွင် ကျွန်ုပ်၏ ပါဝင်ပတ်သက်မှုကို၎င်း သုတေသနပြုသူ/များနှင့်
ဆွေးနွေးရန် ကျွန်ုပ်ကို အခွင့်အရေးပေးခဲ့ပါသည်။
၃. ဤလေ့လာချက်တွင်ပါဝင်ခြင်းမှာ လုံးဝ မိမိဆန္ဒအလျောက်သာဖြစ်ကြောင်းနှင့် - သဘောတူကြောင်းဆန္ဒပြုရန်လည်း
မည်သို့မျှ တာဝန်မရှိကြောင်း ကျွန်ုပ် နားလည် သဘောပေါက်ပါသည်။
၄. ကျွန်ုပ်ပါဝင်ဆောင်ရွက်ခြင်းကို ကြပ်ကြပ်မတ်မတ် လုံခြုံသို့သိပ်စွာ ထားရှိမည်ဖြစ်ကြောင်းကို ကျွန်ုပ် နားလည်
သဘောပေါက်ပါသည်။ လေ့လာချက်ရလဒ်များမှ မေးမြန်းစုဆောင်းရရှိသော သုတေသနဆိုင်ရာ မည်သည့်
အချက်အလက်များကိုမဆို ထုတ်ပြန်ကြေငြာကောင်း ကြေငြာမည်ဖြစ်သော်လည်း ကျွန်ုပ်ကို မည်သူမည်ဝါဟုသိစေမည့်
မည်သည့်အချက်အလက်များကိုမျှ အသုံးပြုလိမ့်မည်မဟုတ်ကြောင်း ကျွန်ုပ်နားလည်သဘောပေါက်ပါသည်။
၅. ကျွန်ုပ်အနေနှင့် သုတေသနပြုသူ(များ) သို့မဟုတ် ဆစ်ဒနီတက္ကသိုလ် သို့မဟုတ် Union Aid Abroad APHEDA
နှင့် ယခုအချိန်တွင်သော်လည်းကောင်း၊ နောင်အနာဂါတ်တွင်သော်လည်းကောင်း ကျွန်ုပ်နှင့် ဆက်ဆံရေးမထိခိုက်စေဘဲ
ဤလေ့လာချက်မှ အချိန်မရွေးနှုတ်ထွက်နိုင်သည်ကို ကျွန်ုပ်နားလည်သဘောပေါက်ပါသည်။
၆. ကျွန်ုပ်က ဆက်လက်ပြီးမဆောင်ရွက်လိုတော့လျှင် တွေ့ဆုံမေးမြန်းခြင်းကို ကျွန်ုပ် အချိန်မရွေး ရပ်တန့်နိုင်ကြောင်း၊
အသံသွင်းယူထားခြင်းကိုလည်း ပြန်ဖျက်လိုက်မည်ဖြစ်ကြောင်း၊ ထို့အပြင်ကျွန်ုပ်ပေးခဲ့သော အချက်အလက်များကိုလည်း
သုတေသနလုပ်ငန်းတွင် ထည့်သွင်းခြင်းပြုမည်မဟုတ်ကြောင်း ကျွန်ုပ်နားလည် သဘောပေါက်ပါသည်။

၇• ကျွန်ုပ်အနေနှင့်

- အသံသွင်းယူခြင်းကို သဘောတူခွင့်ပြုသည်  သဘောမတူပါ
- ပြန်လည်အသိပေးခြင်း ရယူရန် သဘောတူခွင့်ပြုသည်  သဘောမတူပါ

အကယ်၍ သင်က ပြန်လည်အသိပေးခြင်း ရယူရန် မေးခွန်းကို သဘောတူခွင့်ပြုသည် ဟု ဖြေကြားခဲ့ပါက ကျေးဇူးပြု၍ သင့် စာတိုက်လိပ်စာ၊ အီးမေးလ်လိပ်စာ စသည့် အချက်အလက်များကို ဖြည့်ပေးပါ။

**ပြန်လည်အသိပေးခြင်းပြုရန်အတွက်**

နေရပ်လိပ်စာ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

အီးမေးလ်လိပ်စာ \_\_\_\_\_

.....  
ထိုးမြဲလက်မှတ်

.....  
ကျေးဇူးပြု၍ သင့်အမည်ကို ဖြည့်ပါ

.....  
ရက်စွဲ

## Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

ABN 15211513464

Mackie Building K01  
University of Sydney  
NSW 2006 Australia

Telephone +61 2 9036 9286  
Facsimile +61 2 9660 0862  
wendy.lambourne@sydney.edu.au  
[http://sydney.edu.au/arts/peace\\_conflict/](http://sydney.edu.au/arts/peace_conflict/)

**Dr Wendy Lambourne, Senior Lecturer  
Deputy Director & Academic Coordinator**

Does aid to Burma's conflict zones bring communities closer towards peace?

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

**(1) What is the study about?**

You are invited to participate in a study of the context of aid in particular cross border aid and how that has affected communities' perceptions of inter-ethnic relations, and how it has progressed the capacity for peace in the region.

**(2) Who is carrying out the study?**

The study is being conducted by Zoë Bedford, Student and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Social Science at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Dr Wendy Lambourne, Senior Lecturer and Academic Coordinator at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

**(3) What does the study involve?**

Interviewing representatives from key Community Based organisations (CBOs) who have a history of working in the conflict zones on the Thai Burma border seeking to understand how inter-ethnic and inter-sectorial cooperation has lead to or contributed to the current capacity for peace.

This will involve;

- Audio taping interviews with representatives from the key Community based organisations
- The interviews can occur either the representatives offices or in a cafe
- The interviews will focus on the history of the aid interventions, the community responses to these aid interventions; any policy or history of inter-ethnic or inter-sectorial cooperation; any difficulties or challenges that have arisen from this approach; how this approach is continuing or has been affected by the current climate of formal peace negotiations
- The interviews will be low risk, the representative can offer their personal responses to this history – or simply their organisational history

**(4) How much time will the study take?**

The interviews will take 2 hours at most.

**(5) Can I withdraw from the study?**

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney.

Withdrawal from this study will also have no negative consequence on you or your organisations relationship with Union Aid Abroad APHEDA. I wish to assure you that this research is in no way connected to my work at APHEDA.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

**(6) Will anyone else know the results?**

This research is seeking the current and historical views of aid workers from community based organisations on the Thai Burma border. The views will be represented as the views of the organisation.

A report of the study may be submitted for publication, the research will be returned to participant CBOs as an executive summary and a full thesis will be available upon request.

**(7) Will the study benefit me?**

“We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study”

**(8) Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes, if you wish. However your confidentiality is important to me. I will not be naming you personally in the study at any time. In the research only the name of your organisation will appear.

If you would like your participation in this study to remain confidential then your participation in the study will remain between yourself, your organisation and me.

**(9) What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?**

When you have read this information, *Zoë Bedford* will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact *Zoe Bedford Student, Australia +61 804 262 576, Thailand +66 833 183 583, Sydney University.*

**(10) What if I have a complaint or any concerns?**

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or [ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au](mailto:ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au) (Email).

*Or you can contact: Dr Voravit Suwanvanichkij (Dr Vit): [vsuwanva@jhsph.edu](mailto:vsuwanva@jhsph.edu) John Hopkins Center for Global Health Faculty, Based in Chiang Mai*

**This information sheet is for you to keep**



Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

ABN 15211513464

Mackie Building K01
University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia

Telephone +61 2 9036 9286
Facsimile +61 2 9660 0862
wendy.lambourne@sydney.edu.au
http://sydney.edu.au/arts/peace\_conflict/

ဒေါက်တာ ဝယ်နီဒီ လယ်မ်ဘန်း၊ အကြီးတန်းကထိက
ဒုတိယညွှန်ကြားရေးမှူးနှင့် ပညာသင်ကြားရေးဆိုင်ရာ ညှိနှိုင်းပေးသူ

မြန်မာနိုင်ငံအတွင်း ပဋိပက္ခဖြစ်ပွားရာဒေသများသို့ပေးသော ထောက်ပံ့ငွေသည် လူမျိုးစုအဖွဲ့အစည်းများကို
ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးရရန် ပိုမိုနီးစပ်လာစေသလား။

ပါဝင်ဆောင်ရွက်သူ သိရှိရမည့် အချက်အလက်များ စာစောင်

(၁) ဤလေ့လာချက်က ဘာနှင့်ပတ်သက်သလဲ။

သီးခြား နယ်စပ်ဖြတ်ကျော် ထောက်ပံ့ငွေပေးခြင်းနှင့်ပတ်သက်ပြီး ထောက်ပံ့ငွေနှင့် ဆက်စပ် စဉ်းစားရမည့်
အကြောင်းအရာများ၊ ၎င်းက လူမျိုးနွယ်စုအချင်းချင်းဆက်ဆံရေးအပေါ် ထားရှိသော လူမျိုးစုအဖွဲ့အစည်းများ၏
သဘောထားအမြင်ကို မည်ကဲ့သို့ အကျိုးသက်ရောက်စေကြောင်းနှင့် ဒေသတွင်း ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေး ရရှိနိုင်စွမ်းကို မည်ကဲ့သို့
တိုးတက်စေခြင်းတို့ကို လေ့လာသည့် သုတေသနလုပ်ငန်းတွင် ပါဝင်ရန် သင့်အားဖိတ်ခေါ်ပါသည်။

(၂) လေ့လာချက်ကို မည်သူက ဆောင်ရွက်နေသလဲ။

လေ့လာချက်ကို ကျောင်းသူ ဇိုးဘက်ဒ်ဖတ် (Zoë Bedford) က ဆောင်ရွက်ပြီး ဆစ်ဒနီတက္ကသိုလ် (University of
Sydney) ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးနှင့် ပဋိပက္ခ လေ့လာရေးဌာန (Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies) မှ
အကြီးတန်းကထိကနှင့် ပညာသင်ကြားရေးဆိုင်ရာ ညှိနှိုင်းပေးသူ ဒေါက်တာ ဝယ်နီဒီ လယ်မ်ဘန်း (Dr Wendy
Lambourne) ၏ ကြီးကြပ်မှုအောက်တွင် လူမှုရေးသိပ္ပံဆိုင်ရာ ပါရဂူဘွဲ့ရရှိရေးအတွက် အခြေခံလုပ်ငန်း ဖြစ်ပါမည်။

(၃) လေ့လာချက်တွင် ဘာတွေပါဝင်သလဲ။

လူမျိုးနွယ်စုအချင်းချင်းနှင့် ဒေသအချင်းချင်း ပူးပေါင်း ဆောင်ရွက်မှုက လက်ရှိ ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးရရှိစွမ်းကို မည်ကဲ့သို့
ဖြစ်စေခဲ့ခြင်း သို့မဟုတ် ဖြစ်စေရန် မည်ကဲ့သို့အကျိုးပြုခဲ့ခြင်း ဆိုသည်ကို လေ့လာရန် အဓိကကျသည့် လူမှုရေးအခြေခံ
အဖွဲ့အစည်းများ (Community Based organisations) (CBOs) ထဲမှ ထိုင်းမြန်မာနယ်စပ်တွင်ရှိသော
ပဋိပက္ခဖြစ်ပွားရာဒေသများတွင် လုပ်ဆောင်သော သမိုင်းအစဉ်အလာရှိသူ ကိုယ်စားလှယ်များအား တွေ့ဆုံမေးမြန်းခြင်း
ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

ဤသို့ဆောင်ရွက်ရာတွင် -

- အဓိကကျသည့် လူမှုရေးအခြေခံ အဖွဲ့အစည်းများထဲမှ ကိုယ်စားလှယ်များအား တွေ့ဆုံမေးမြန်းခြင်းများကို
အသံသွင်းယူပါမည်။
• တွေ့ဆုံမေးမြန်းခြင်းများကို ကိုယ်စားလှယ်များ၏ ရုံးခန်းများတွင် သို့မဟုတ် လဘက်ရည်ဆိုင်တစ်ခုခုတွင်
ပြုလုပ်နိုင်ပါသည်။
• တွေ့ဆုံမေးမြန်းခြင်းများက ကြားဖြတ်ထောက်ပံ့မှုပေးခြင်းများ၏ သမိုင်းကြောင်းနှင့် ထို ကြားဖြတ်ထောက်ပံ့မှု
ပေးခြင်းများအပေါ် လူမျိုးစုအဖွဲ့အစည်းများက တုန့်ပြန်မှုများ၊ လူမျိုးနွယ်စုအချင်းချင်း သို့မဟုတ်
ဒေသအချင်းချင်း ပူးပေါင်းဆောင်ရွက်မှုဆိုင်ရာ မူဝါဒများ သို့မဟုတ် သမိုင်းကြောင်းများ၊ ဤသို့ကြိုးပမ်းရာမှ
ပေါ်ထွက်လာသော အခက်အခဲများနှင့် စိန်ခေါ်မှုများ၊ ဤသို့ကြိုးပမ်းခြင်းကို မည်သို့မည်ပုံ ဆက်လက်
ဆောင်ရွက်နေသည်များ၊ လက်ရှိ တရားဝင် ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေး ဆွေးနွေးပွဲများက ဤသို့ကြိုးပမ်းမှုအပေါ်
အကျိုးသက်ရောက်မှုများကို အာရုံစိုက် လေ့လာပါမည်။
• တွေ့ဆုံမေးမြန်းခြင်းများသည် အန္တရာယ်နည်းပါးပါသည်။ ကိုယ်စားလှယ်များအနေနှင့် ဤသမိုင်းကြောင်းအပေါ်
မိမိတို့၏ ကိုယ်ရေးကိုယ်တာအရ တုန့်ပြန်မှုများကိုသော်၎င်း - သို့မဟုတ် မိမိတို့အဖွဲ့အစည်း၏
ဖွဲ့စည်းအုပ်ချုပ်မှုအရ သမိုင်းကြောင်းကိုသာလျှင်၎င်း ပြောပြနိုင်ပါသည်။

**(၄) လေ့လာချက်က အချိန်မည်မျှ ကြာမြင့်မည်လဲ။**

တွေ့ဆုံမေးမြန်းခြင်းများသည် အများဆုံး ၂ နာရီသာ ကြာပါမည်။

**(၅) ကျွန်ုပ် ဤလေ့လာချက်က နှုတ်ထွက်နိုင်မည်လား။**

ဤလေ့လာချက်တွင်ပါဝင်ခြင်းသည် မိမိသဘောဆန္ဒအလျောက်သာဖြစ်ပါသည်။ - သင့်အနေနှင့် သဘောတူညီချက် ပေးရန်လည်း လုံးဝ တာဝန်မရှိပါ။ - သင် သဘောတူညီချက်ပေးခဲ့လျှင်လည်း - ဆစ်ဒနီတက္ကသိုလ်နှင့် ဆက်ဆံရေးကို မထိခိုက်စေရဘဲ အချိန်မရွေး နှုတ်ထွက်ခွင့်ရှိပါသည်။

ဤသုတေသနလုပ်ငန်းမှ နှုတ်ထွက်ခြင်းသည် သင့်အပေါ်၌၎င်း၊ Union Aid Abroad APHEDA နှင့် သင့်အဖွဲ့အစည်း၏ ဆက်ဆံရေးကိုသော်၎င်း မည်သည့် နောက်ဆက်တွဲ ထိခိုက်နစ်နာမှုမျိုးကိုမျှလည်း မဖြစ်စေရပါ။ ဤသုတေသနလုပ်ငန်းသည် APHEDA မှကျွန်ုပ်၏လုပ်ငန်းတာဝန်နှင့် မည်သည့်နည်းနှင့်မျှ မပတ်သက်ကြောင်းကိုလည်း ကျွန်ုပ်က သင့်ကို အာမခံချက်ပေးလိုပါသည်။

အကယ်၍သင်က ဆက်လက်ပြီး မဆောင်ရွက်လိုတော့လျှင် တွေ့ဆုံမေးမြန်းခြင်းကို သင် အချိန်မရွေး ရပ်တန့်နိုင်ပါသည်။ အသံသွင်းယူထားခြင်းကိုလည်း ပြန်ဖျက်ပေးပါမည်။ သိရသော အချက်အလက်များကိုလည်း သုတေသနလုပ်ငန်းတွင် ထည့်သွင်းခြင်း မပြုပါ။

**(၆) တွေ့ရှိချက်များကို သူတပါးက သိမည်လား။**

ဤသုတေသနလုပ်ငန်းက ထိုင်းမြန်မာနယ်စပ်ရှိ လူမျိုးစုများကိုခြေခံသည့် လူမှုအဖွဲ့အစည်းများမှ ထောက်ပံ့ရေးဆိုင်ရာ ဝန်ထမ်းများ၏ လက်ရှိနှင့် သမိုင်းကြောင်းအရ သဘောထား၊အမြင်များကို မေးမြန်း စုဆောင်းခြင်းဖြစ်ပါသည်။ ဤ သဘောထား၊အမြင်များက အဖွဲ့အစည်း၏ သဘောထား၊ အမြင်များအဖြစ် ကိုယ်စားပြုမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

ဤသုတေသနလုပ်ငန်းမှ တွေ့ရှိချက် အစီရင်ခံစာကို ဖြန့်ချိထုတ်ဝေရန် တင်ပြမည်ဖြစ်ပြီး သုတေသနပြုချက်ကိုလည်း အုပ်ချုပ်မှုလုပ်ငန်းဆိုင်ရာ အကျဉ်းချုပ်အဖြစ် CBO များမှ ပါဝင်ဆောင်ရွက်သူများအား ပြန်လည်ပေးအပ်မည်ဖြစ်ကာ စာတမ်းအပြည့်အစုံကို ရရှိလိုပါက မေတ္တာရပ်ခံ တောင်းယူခြင်းဖြင့် ရယူနိုင်ပါသည်။

**(၇) ဤလေ့လာချက်က ကျွန်ုပ်အတွက် အကျိုးအမြတ်ရရှိမည်လား။**

“ဤလေ့လာချက်မှ သင် အကျိုးအမြတ်တစုံတရာရရှိမည်ဟု ကျွန်ုပ်တို့ အာမခံချက်မပေးနိုင်ပါ။ ပေးလည်းမပေးပါ။ သို့မဟုတ် ကတိလည်းမပြုပါ။”

**(၈) ကျွန်ုပ်က ဤလေ့လာချက်အကြောင်း အခြားသူများကို ပြောပြနိုင်သလား။**

အကယ်၍ သင်ကပြောလိုလျှင် ပြောပြနိုင်ပါသည်။ သို့သော်လည်း သင့်ကြောင်းကို သူတပါးမသိစေရေးမှာ ကျွန်ုပ်အဖွဲ့ အရေးကြီးပါသည်။ သင့်အမည်ကို လေ့လာချက်တွင် မည်သည့်အချိန်တွင်မျှ ဖော်ပြခြင်းမပြုပါ။ သုတေသနလုပ်ငန်းတွင် သင့်အဖွဲ့အစည်း၏အမည်သာလျှင် ဖော်ပြထားမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

အကယ်၍ ဤလေ့လာချက်တွင် သင်ပါဝင်ခြင်းကို လျှို့ဝှက်ထားလိုပါက သင် ဤလေ့လာချက်တွင်ပါဝင်ခြင်းကို သင်၊ သင့်အဖွဲ့အစည်းနှင့် ကျွန်ုပ်သာ သိရှိကြမည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

**(၉) အကယ်၍လေ့လာချက် သို့မဟုတ် ၎င်းတွင် ကျွန်ုပ်ပါဝင်ပတ်သက်မှုအကြောင်း ပိုမိုသိလိုလျှင် မည်သို့လုပ်ရမည်လဲ။**

ဤ သိရှိရမည့်အချက်အလက်များ စာစောင်ကို သင်ဖတ်ရှုပြီးလျှင် ဇွဲဘက်ဒီဖာ့ဒ် က သင်နှင့်ဆက်လက်ဆွေးနွေးပြီး သင် မေးလိုသော မေးခွန်းများကို ဖြေကြားပါမည်။ မည်သည့်အဆင့်တွင်မဆို သင် ပိုမိုသိလိုပါက ဆစ်ဒနီတက္ကသိုလ်မှ ကျောင်းသူ ဇွဲဘက်ဒီဖာ့ဒ် ထံ [ဩစတြေးလျားနိုင်ငံ +61 804 262 576](mailto:info@zoebedford.com) သို့၎င်း၊ ထိုင်းနိုင်ငံ [+66 833 183 583](tel:+66833183583) သို့၎င်း လွတ်လပ်စွာ ဆက်သွယ်မေးမြန်းနိုင်ပါသည်။

**(၁၀) အကယ်၍ကျွန်ုပ်မှာ မကျေနပ်ချက်များ၊ စိတ်ပူပန်မှုများရှိပါက မည်သို့ဆောင်ရွက်ရမည်လဲ။**

မည်သူမဆို သုတေသနလုပ်ငန်းတစ်ခုခု၏ လုပ်ဆောင်ပုံနှင့်ပတ်သက်ပြီး စိတ်ပူပန်မှုများ သို့မဟုတ် မကျေနပ်ချက်များ ရှိပါက ဆစ်ဒနီတက္ကသိုလ်မှ လူသားများ၏ကိုယ်ကျင့်တရားဆိုင်ရာ အုပ်ချုပ်မှုဌာန မန်နေဂျာ (Manager, Human

Ethics Administration, University of Sydney) ထံ (တယ်လီဖုန်း) +61 2 8627 8176 ၊ (ဖက်စ်) +61 2 8627 8177 သို့မဟုတ် (အီးမေးလ်) [ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au](mailto:ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au) ဖြင့် ဆက်သွယ်ပြောကြားနိုင်ပါသည်။

သို့မဟုတ် သင်သည် ချင်းမိုင်တွင်အခြေပြုသော *John Hopkins Center for Global Health Faculty* မှ *Dr Voravit Suwanvanichkij (Dr Vit)* ထံသို့ [vsuwanva@jhsph.edu](mailto:vsuwanva@jhsph.edu) တွင်ဆက်သွယ်ပြောကြားနိုင်ပါသည်။

ဤ သိရှိရမည့်အချက်အလက်များ စာစောင်သည် သင် သိမ်းထားရန်အတွက် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

## Interview Questions: Does aid to Burma's conflict zones bring communities closer towards peace?

Section one: please tell me about your organisation?

- Organisation name?
- Organisation purpose?
- When did your organisation begin?
- Why did your organisation begin?
- Does your organisation have aims? Mission statement? Constitution? Code of conduct?
- How many people are in your organisation? (staff, volunteers, members)
- What is the structure of your organisation?
- How are leaders chosen (appointed? Elected?)
- Is your organisation connected to an EAO? How does your organisation work with the EAO?
- Are there any tensions between your organisation and the EAO about community representation?

Section two: please tell me about the work of your organisation?

- What is the main purpose of your work?
- Why do you do your work?
- How do you do your work?
- Where do you do your work?
- If you did not do this work what would the communities do?

Section three: please tell me about the situation for the communities your organisation works with?

- What is the situation now?
- What was it when your organisation began?
- Are things better now, worse now, different now or no different now for the communities you work with?
- How have things changed?
- Have things changed because of the work of your organisation?
- Have things changed because of the politics of Burma?

Section Three: What organisations does your organisation work with?

- Does your organisation work with organisations that have the same sectoral focus? (Health/ education/ women's empowerment?) Why?
- Does your organisation work with organisations that have different sectoral focus? Why?
- Does your organisation work with other organisations from the same ethnic group as you? Why?
- Does your organisation work with other organisations from the different ethnic groups from your organisation? Why?
- What are the benefits from working inter-sectorially?
- What are the benefits from working inter-ethnically?
- Does inter-ethnic and inter-sectoral work have an effect on the community? Why?

Section Five: Please tell me about cross border aid?

- Does your organisation do cross border aid?
- How does cross border aid work?
- Can INGO's do this work? Why is it CBO's who do the work?
- What is the importance of cross border aid?
- Do all donors support cross border aid? Why? Why not?
- What difference does cross border aid make for communities?
- What do you think the communities would do if you did not do this work?

Section six: Please tell me about peace?

- Are the communities your organisation works with experiencing peace now?
- Have the communities your organisation works with experienced peace before?
- Does your organisation do any work for peace or peace building?
- Has your organisation done a project with the 'peace' as its title?
- What does your organisation think of the formal peace process? Has your organisation been consulted in the formal peace process?
- Do you think the international community/ donors are neutral/ impartial in the peace process? Or not?
- Does your organisation believe the formal peace process is inclusive enough?
- Are there any obstacles for peace? For the communities? For organisations?
- Is the formal peace process the best way to achieve peace? Is it the only way?

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ABC 2018, 'Reuters journalists plead not guilty to Official Secrets Act charges in Myanmar court', ABC Online, 9 July, viewed 11 January 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-09/reuters-journalists-plead-not-guilty-in-myanmar-court/9958458>.
- Abdelkader, E 2017, 'The History of the Persecution of Myanmar's Rohingya', *The Conversation*, 21 September, viewed on 13 February 2018, <http://theconversation.com/the-history-of-the-persecution-of-myanmars-rohingya-84040>.
- Agence France-Presse 2017, 'Two Reuters journalists arrested in Myanmar', *The Guardian*, 14 December, viewed on 20 December 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/13/two-reuters-journalists-arrested-in-myanmar>.
- Aguire, D 2018, 'Rule by Law and Impunity Undermine Prevention of and Accountability for Human Rights Violations in Myanmar', *Tea Circle: An Oxford Forum for New Perspectives on Burma/Myanmar*, 4 June, viewed 1 September 2018, <https://teacircleoxford.com/2018/06/04/rule-by-law-and-impunity-undermine-prevention-of-and-accountability-for-human-rights-violations-in-myanmar/>.
- Ahmed, N 2013, 'The dirty fossil fuel secret behind Burma's democratic fairytale', *The Guardian*, 26 April, viewed on 18 February 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/earth-insight/2013/apr/26/fossil-fuel-secret-burma-democratic-fairytale>.
- Anderson, M 1999, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Colorado.
- Anderson, M 2001, 'Enhancing Local Capacity for Peace: Do No Harm', in L Reychler and T Paffenholz (eds.), *Peace-Building: A field guide*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, Colorado.
- Arnold, D 2013, 'Thailand's Burmese Social Movements in Exile: Labour, Migration and Democracy', in M Ford (ed.) *Social Activism in Southeast Asia*, Routledge, Abingdon.
- Asian Development Bank 2015, *CIVIL SOCIETY BRIEFS: Myanmar*, Asian Development Bank, Manila, viewed on 10 December 2017, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/154554/csb-myanmar.pdf>.
- Associated Press 2010, 'Burma refugees flee to Thailand after violent clashes', *The Guardian*, 9 November, viewed on 1 June 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/09/burma-refugees-flee-thailand-violence>.

- Aung, S 2016, 'The politics of policymaking in transitional government: A case study of the ethnic peace process in Myanmar', in Cheesman, N and Farrelly, N (eds.), *Conflict in Myanmar: War, Politics, Religion*, ISEAS Publishing—Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore.
- Aung, S 2018, 'Third session of 21st Century Panglong Conference will discuss security sector reform', *Mizzima*, 5 June 2018, viewed on 11 July 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/third-session-21st-century-panglong-conference-will-discuss-security-sector-reform>.
- Aung, Z 2015, 'From Military Patriarchy to Gender Equity: Including Women in the Democratic Transition in Burma', *Social Research*, vol. 82, no. 2, pp. 531-551.
- Bächtold, S 2017, 'An eclipse of Myanmar's civil society?', *Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung: The Green Political Foundation*, 5 July, viewed on 11 December 2017, <https://www.boell.de/en/2017/07/05/eclipse-myanmars-civil-society>.
- Back Pack Health Worker Team 2006, *Chronic Emergency: Health and Human Rights in Eastern Burma*, Backpack Health Worker Team, Mae Sot.
- Back Pack Health Worker Team 2010, *Diagnosis Critical: Health and Human Rights in Eastern Burma/Myanmar*, Back Pack Health Worker Team, viewed 15 March 2016, <http://www.backpackteam.org/wpcontent/uploads/reports/Diagnosis%20critical%20-%20Eng%20website%20version.pdf>.
- Back Pack Health Worker Team n.d., *Background*, Back Pack Health Worker Team, viewed 23 February 2014, [https://backpackteam.org/?page\\_id=31](https://backpackteam.org/?page_id=31).
- Bak, M 2019, 'Overview of corruption and anti-corruption in Myanmar', *Transparency International*, 3 June, viewed 18 June 2019, <https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/helpdesk/overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption-in-myanmar>.
- Bandow, D 2014, 'Burma Enjoys an Uneasy Peace: Time to Close Thailand's Refugee Camps?', *The American Spectator*, 15 December, viewed on 24 January 2016, [https://spectator.org/61240\\_burma-enjoys-uneasy-peace-time-close-thailands-refugee-camps/](https://spectator.org/61240_burma-enjoys-uneasy-peace-time-close-thailands-refugee-camps/).
- Bannon, I and Collier, P 2003, 'Natural Resources and Conflict: What We Can Do', in I Bannon and P Collier (eds.), *Natural Resources and Violent Conflict options and actions*, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, Washington, D.C.
- Barber, R 2009, 'The Responsibility to Protect the Survivors of Natural Disaster: Cyclone Nargis, a Case Study', *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 3–34.

- Barnes, C 2005, 'Weaving the Web: Civil Society Roles in Working with Conflict and Building Peace' in P van Tongeren, M Brenk, M Hellema and J Verhoeven (eds.), *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, Colorado.
- Beaumont, P 2018, 'Myanmar army killing civilians in escalating conflict in Kachin, warns UN', *The Guardian*, 1 May, viewed 27 June 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/may/01/myanmar-army-escalating-conflict-kachin-un-united-nations>.
- Beech, H 2016, 'Aung San Suu Kyi Seeks Elusive Peace in Burma With Panglong Summit', *Time*, 31 August, viewed 17 September 2017, <http://time.com/4473849/aung-san-suu-kyi-burma-panglong-summit/>.
- Bell, C, Campbell, C, and Ní Aoláin, F 2007, 'Transitional justice: (re)conceptualising the field', *International Journal of Law in Context*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 81-88.
- Bernath, J, and Rubli, S 2016, 'Adopting a Resistance Lens: An Exploration of Power and Legitimacy in Transitional Justice', *Conflict and Society*, vol. 2.
- Berry, L 2016, 'The research relationship in narrative enquiry', *Nurse Researcher*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 10-14.
- Beyrer, C, Suwanvanichkij, V, Mullany, L, Richards, A, Franck, N, Samuels, A, and Lee, T 2006, 'Responding to AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria, and Emerging Infectious Diseases in Burma: Dilemmas of Policy and Practice', *PLoS Medicine*, 3 (10) e393, pp. 1733-1740, accessed at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6763294\\_Responding\\_to\\_AIDS\\_Tuberculosis\\_Malaria\\_and\\_Emerging\\_Infectious\\_Diseases\\_in\\_Burma\\_Dilemmas\\_of\\_Policy\\_and\\_Practice](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6763294_Responding_to_AIDS_Tuberculosis_Malaria_and_Emerging_Infectious_Diseases_in_Burma_Dilemmas_of_Policy_and_Practice).
- Boot, W 2012, 'Can Burma become the World Rice Bowl Again?', *The Irrawaddy*, 14 August, viewed 17 September 2017, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/business/can-burma-become-world-rice-bowl-again.html>.
- Brachet, J and Wolpe, H 2005, 'Conflict-sensitive development assistance: the case of Burundi (English)'. *Social Development Papers. Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Series*, CPR No. 27, World Bank, Washington, D.C.
- Brock-Utne, B 1990, 'Listen to Women for a Change', *Peace Review*, vol. 2, no. 4, pp.205-209.
- Brooten, L 2015, 'Blind Spots in Human Rights Coverage: Framing Violence Against the Rohingya in Myanmar/Burma', *Popular Communication*, 13, pp. 132–144.
- Burma Children's Medical Fund n.d., *The Mae Tao Clinic*, Burma Children's Medical Fund, viewed 22 February 2014, <https://burmachildren.com/the-mae-tao-clinic/>.

- Burma News International 2019, *Deciphering Myanmar's Peace Process: A Reference Guide 2017-2018*, Burma News International, viewed 24 January 2020, [https://www.bnionline.net/sites/bnionline.net/files/publication\\_docs/dm\\_peace\\_process\\_a\\_reference\\_guide\\_2016.pdf](https://www.bnionline.net/sites/bnionline.net/files/publication_docs/dm_peace_process_a_reference_guide_2016.pdf).
- Callahan, MP 2004, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.
- Callahan, MP 2012, *Drivers of Political Change in Post-junta, Constitutional Burma*, USAID, Washington, D.C.
- Callahan MP 2007, *Political Authority in Burma's Ethnic Minority States: Devolution, Occupation and Coexistence*, East-West Center, Washington, D.C.
- Charney, M W 2009, *A History of Modern Burma*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Chandler, D 2015, 'Resilience and the 'everyday': Beyond the paradox of 'liberal peace', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 27-48.
- Cheesman, N 2017, 'How in Myanmar "National Races" Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 47, no. 3, pp. 461-483.
- Clancy, M 2013, 'Is reflexivity the key to minimising problems of interpretation in phenomenological research?', *Nurse Researcher*, vol. 20, no. 6, pp. 12-16.
- Conflict Sensitivity Consortium n.d., *Do No Harm*, Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, viewed 15 January 2018, <http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/do-no-harm-local-capacities-for-peace-project/>.
- Corben, R 2017, 'Myanmar Refugees in Thai Camps Face Repatriation Challenges', *Voice of America News*, 11 May, viewed on 23 August 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/a/myanmar-refugees-thai-camps-repatriation-challenges/3847329.html>.
- Cortright, D 2008, *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas*, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Council on Foreign Relations (n.d.), 'Women's Roles in Peace Processes: Myanmar', *Council on Foreign Relations*, viewed 12 August 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/interactive/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/explore-the-data>.
- Couture, A, Zaidi, A and Maticka-Tyndale, E 2012, 'Reflexive accounts: An intersectional approach to exploring the fluidity of insider/outsider status and the researcher's impact on culturally sensitive post-positivist qualitative research', *Qualitative Sociology Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 86-105.
- Dankoski, M 2000, 'What Makes Research Feminist?', *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, vol. 12, no.1, pp. 3-19

- Davis, A 1987, 'Let Us All Rise Together.' Keynote Address presented at Emory College, Atlanta, GA, 25 June, in Davis, A 1990, *Women, Culture & Politics*, Vintage Books, New York.
- Dean, K 2017, 'Myanmar: Surveillance and the Turn from Authoritarianism?', *Surveillance and Society*, vol. 15, no. 3/4, pp. 496-505.
- Decobert, A 2015, *The Politics of Aid to Burma: A Humanitarian Struggle on the Thai-Burmese Border*, Routledge, London.
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011, *Framework for working in fragile and conflict-affected states*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, viewed on 6 February 2019, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/framework-for-working-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-states>
- 'Detained journalists to be charged under colonial-era law' 2017, *The Guardian*, 28 July, viewed on 17 September 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/28/myanmar-detained-journalists-charged-colonial-era-law>.
- Dibley, T 2014, *Partnerships, Power and Peacebuilding: NGOs as Agents of Peace in Aceh and Timor-Leste*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Dolan, R 2016, 'The Problem With the 21st Century Panglong Conference', *The Diplomat*, 6 August, viewed on 15 September 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/08/the-problem-with-the-21st-century-panglong-conference/>.
- Earthrights International 2007, *Turning Treasure into Tears*, Earthrights International, Washington, D.C.
- Emont, J 2015, 'Can Myanmar's New Government Control Its Military?', *The New Yorker*, 9 November, viewed on 5 January 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/can-myanmars-new-government-control-its-military>.
- Fink, C 2009, *Living Silence in Burma: Surviving Under Military Rule*, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai.
- Finlay, L 2011, *Phenomenology for Therapists: Researching the Lived World*, Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, West Sussex.
- Flyvbjerg, B 2006, 'Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 219-245.
- Freire, P 1970, 'Cultural Action and Conscientization', *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 452-477.
- Freire, P 1973, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Seabury Press, New York.

- Freire, P 2000, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, Maryland.
- Funk, N 2012, 'Building on What's Already There; Valuing the local in Peace building', *International Journal*, vol. 67, no. 2, pp.391-408.
- Galtung, J 1969, 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 167-191.
- Galtung, J 1996, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*, SAGE Publications, London.
- Galvanek, J 2013, *Translating Peacebuilding Rationalities into Practice: Local Agency and everyday Resistance*, Berghof Foundation, Berlin.
- Ganesan, N 2014, 'The Myanmar Peace Center: Its Origins, Activities, and Aspirations', *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 127-141.
- Gadsby, H 2018, *Hannah Gadsby: Nanette*, live comedy performance, Netflix, viewed on 1 August 2018, [www.netflix.com](http://www.netflix.com).
- Gyo, M 2017, 'Humanitarian Struggle in Burma's Conflict Zones', *Journal of Special Operations Medicine*, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 95-99 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28910477>.
- Hall, W and Callery, P 2001, 'Enhancing the Rigour of Grounded Theory: Incorporating Reflexivity and Relationally', *Qualitative Health Research*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 257-272.
- Hegre, H 2014, 'Democracy and armed conflict', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 51, no.2, pp.59–172.
- Hoeffler, A 2012, 'Growth, Aid and Policies in Countries Recovering from War', *OECD Development Co-operation Working Papers*, No. 2, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- Holliday, I 2011, *Burma Redux: Global Justice and the Quest for Political Reform in Myanmar*, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai.
- Howarth, K 2014, 'Connecting the dots: Liberal peace and post-conflict violence and crime', *Progress in Development Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 261–273.
- Htwe, CM 2018, 'Natural gas export brings \$3b in this fiscal year', *Myanmar Times*, 22 March, viewed 15 January 2019, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/natural-gas-export-brings-3b-fiscal-year.html>.

- Hudson, H 2011, 'Inhabitants of Interstices? Feminist Analysis at the Intersection of Peace Studies, Critical Security and Human Security', *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 26-50.
- Hudson-Rodd, N and Nyunt, M 2001, 'Control of Land and Life in Burma', *Tenure Brief*, no. 3, April, pp. 1-8.
- Human Rights Watch 2007, 'Burma: Natural Gas Project Threatens Human Rights', *Human Rights Watch*, viewed 20 January 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/03/24/burma-natural-gas-project-threatens-human-rights>.
- Human Rights Watch 2019, *World Report 2019: Myanmar – Events of 2018*, Human Rights Watch, viewed 11 April 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/burma>.
- Hyett, N, Kenny A and Dickson-Swift V 2014, 'Methodology or method? A critical review of qualitative case study reports', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, vol. 9, no. 1, accessed: <http://www.ijqhw.net/index.php/qhw/article/view/23606/33591>.
- Ife, JW 2002, *Community development: community-based alternatives in an age of globalisation*, Pearson Education, Sydney, NSW.
- Ikeya, C 2012, *Refiguring Women, Colonialism and Modernity in Burma*, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai.
- 'In Burma, students question size of military budget' 2018, *Asian Correspondent*, 25 January, viewed on 23 February 2018, <https://asiancorrespondent.com/2018/01/burma-military-education-budget/#OFHqbcRk6SfKa05m.99>.
- International Crisis Group 2015, 'Myanmar's Peace Process: A Nationwide Ceasefire Remains Elusive', *Asia Report No. 146*, 16 September.
- International Crisis Group 2017, 'Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar', *Asia Report No. 290*, 5 September.
- International Crisis Group 2019, 'Fire and Ice: Conflict and Drugs in Myanmar's Shan State', *Asia Report No. 299*, 8 January.
- International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School 2009, *Crimes in Burma*, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA, viewed on 11 December 2016 <http://hrp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/Crimes-in-Burma.pdf>.
- Interpeace 2016, *Practice Brief: Resilience and Peacebuilding. Using Resilience to Build Peace. Frameworks for Assessing Resilience Program*, Interpeace, May, [https://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Practice\\_Brief-Resilience\\_and\\_Peacebuilding-A4-v3.pdf](https://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Practice_Brief-Resilience_and_Peacebuilding-A4-v3.pdf).

- Jackson, S 2008, 'Was Burma's cyclone predicted?', *BBC*, 6 May, viewed 17 September 2017, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7386695.stm>.
- 'Jailed for Journalism' 2017, *The Irrawaddy*, 1 August, viewed on 17 September 2017, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/jailed-for-journalism.html>.
- Jaquet, C 2014, 'Enabling environment of Civil Society in Myanmar (Burma)', *CIVICUS*, 10 January, viewed on 11 December 2017, [https://www.civicus.org/images/Enabling\\_Environment\\_Civil\\_Society\\_Myanmar\\_CIVICUS\\_IRASEC.pdf](https://www.civicus.org/images/Enabling_Environment_Civil_Society_Myanmar_CIVICUS_IRASEC.pdf).
- Jeong, H 1999, *Peace and Conflict Studies: An Introduction*, Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, UK.
- Jeong, H 2005, *Peacebuilding in Postconflict Societies: Strategy and Process*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Colorado.
- Johannessen, A-M 2007, *Women's Empowerment as a Foundation For Social Change*, viewed 23 February 2017, <http://amjohannes.wikidot.com/women-s-empowerment-as-a-foundation-for-social-change>.
- Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT) 2005, *Driven Away: Trafficking of Kachin Women on the China-Burma Border*, Kachin Women's Association Thailand, Chiang Mai, [http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/hr\\_drivenawaytraffickingkachinwomenburma\\_kwat\\_2005\\_0.pdf](http://peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/hr_drivenawaytraffickingkachinwomenburma_kwat_2005_0.pdf).
- Kachin Women's Association n.d., *About Us*, Kachin Women's Association, viewed 22 February 2014, <https://kachinwomen.com/about-us/>.
- Kaldor, M 2003, 'Beyond militarism, arms races and arms control', in Lundestad, G and Njølstad, O (eds.), *War and Peace in the 20th Century and Beyond: the Nobel Centennial Symposium*, World Scientific Publishing, Singapore.
- Karen Department of Health and Welfare n.d., *About KDHW*, Karen Department of Health and Welfare, viewed 22 February 2014, <https://kdhw.org/department/>.
- Karen Environmental and Social Action Network 2010, *Endangered Elephants in Megatha Forest, Karen State, Burma*, Karen Environmental and Social Action Network, Chiang Mai.
- Karen Environment and Social Action Network n.d., *Who we are*, Karen Environment and Social Action Network, viewed 22 February 2014, <http://kesan.asia/index.php/who-we-are>.
- Karen Human Rights Group 2006, *Dignity in the Shadow of Oppression: The abuse and agency of Karen women under militarisation*, Karen Human Rights Group, Mae Sot

<http://khrhg.org/2006/11/khrhg0605/dignity-shadow-oppression-abuse-and-agency-karen-women-under-militarisation>.

Karen Human Rights Group 2009, *Abuse Poverty and Migration: Investigating migrants' motivation to leave home in Burma*, Karen Human Rights Group, Mae Sot.

Karen Human Rights Group n.d., *About Us*, Karen Human Rights Group, viewed 22 February 2014, <http://khrhg.org/about-us>.

Karen National Union n.d., *Health Welfare Department*, Karen National Union, viewed 22 February 2014, <http://www.knuhq.org/departments/health-welfare-department/>.

Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN) 2018, *Burma's Dead-End Peace Negotiation Process: A Case Study of the Land Sector*, Karen Peace Support Network, Chiang Mai, available at <https://www.burmalink.org/burmas-dead-end-peace-negotiation-process-a-case-study-of-the-land-sector/>.

Karen Teachers Working Group n.d., *About Us*, Karen Teachers Working Group, viewed 22 February 2014, <http://ktwg.org/about/>.

'Karen Women's Organisations Statement on Burmese Military Persecution of the Rohingya People' 2017, Karen Women Organisation, 18 September, viewed 11 December 2017, <https://www.burmalink.org/karen-womens-organisation-press-statement-burmese-military-persecution-rohingya-people/>.

Karen Women Organisation n.d., *Who We Are*, Karen Women Organisation, viewed 22 February 2014, <https://karenwomen.org/about/>.

Kelleher, G 2018, 'Beyond the Rohingya: Myanmar's Other Crises', *The Diplomat*, 8 February, viewed 27 June 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/beyond-the-rohingya-myanmars-other-crises/>.

Kothari, U, 2002, 'Feminist and Postcolonial Challenges to Development', in U Kothari and M Minogue (eds.), *Development Theory and Practice: Critical Perspectives*, Palgrave, London.

Kramer, T 2015, 'Ethnic Conflict and Lands Rights in Myanmar', *Social Research*, vol. 82, no. 2, pp. 355-374.

Lall, M 2008, 'Evolving Education in Myanmar: the interplay of state, business and the community', in Skidmore, M and Wilson, T (eds.), *Dictatorship, Disorder and Decline in Myanmar*, ANU E Press, Canberra <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p102401/pdf/ch081.pdf>.

Lang, H 1995, 'Women As Refugees: Perspectives from Burma', *Cultural Survival Quarterly Magazine*, vol. 19, no. 1, March, viewed 1 December 2018,

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/19-1-women-and-war>.

Larkin, E 2011, *Finding George Orwell in Burma*, Granta Books, London, UK.

Larkin, M, Watts, S, and Clifton, E 2006, 'Giving Voice and Making Sense in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 3, pp. 102-120.

Lather, P 1992, 'Critical Frames in Educational Research: Feminist and Post-structural Perspectives', *Theory into Practice*, vol. 31, no. 2. pp. 87-99.

Lather, P 2004, 'Critical Inquiry in Qualitative Research: Feminist and Poststructural Perspectives: Science 'After Truth'', in deMarrais, K and Lapan, S (eds.), *Foundations for Research: Methods of Inquiry in Education and the Social Sciences*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, Mahwah, New Jersey.

Lederach, JP 1995, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures*, Syracuse University Press, New York.

Lederach, JP 1999, 'Justpeace: The Challenge of the 21st Century', in European Centre for Conflict Prevention (Ed.), *People Building Peace: Inspiring Stories From Around the World*, European Centre for Conflict Prevention, Utrecht, pp. 27-36.

Lederach, JP 2013, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (10<sup>th</sup> edition), United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C.

Leonardsson, H and Rudd, G 2015, 'The 'local turn' in peacebuilding: a literature review of effective and emancipatory local peacebuilding', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 5, pp. 825-839.

Liamputtong, P 2007, *Researching the Vulnerable*, SAGE Publications, London.

Liddell, Z 1997, 'Strengthening Civil Society in Burma: Possibilities and Dilemmas for International NGOs', Papers from a conference, Amsterdam, 4-5 December 1997, organised by the Burma Center Netherlands & Transnational Institute.

Linn, Z 2013, 'Without Honoring Panglong Agreement, Burma's reform may not do well', *Asian Tribune*, 12 February, viewed 17 September 2017, <http://www.asiantribune.com/node/61589>.

Lintner, B 1994, *Burma in Revolt: Opium and Insurgency Since 1948*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado.

Lintner, B 2011, *Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's Struggle for Democracy*, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai.

- Lintner, B and Black, M 2009, *Merchants of Madness: The Methamphetamine Explosion in the Golden Triangle*, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai.
- Lone, W 2013, 'Myanmar world's third-worst for landmines', *Myanmar Times*, 29 November, viewed 16 June 2016, <https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/8888-myanmar-world-s-third-worst-for-landmines.html>.
- Lorch, J 2006, 'Do Civil Society Actors Have Any Room For Maneuvre in Burma/Myanmar? Locating Gaps in the Authoritarian System', in *Active Citizens Under Political Wraps: Experiences from Myanmar/Burma and Vietnam*, Heinrich Böll Foundation Southeast Asia Regional Office, Chiang Mai.
- Lund, M 2004, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: Conflict-Sensitive Development in the 21st Century A Study Commissioned by the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit, Social Development Department, World Bank*, Management Systems International, Inc, Washington DC.
- Lwin, EET 2014, 'Military spending still dwarfs education and health', *Myanmar Times*, 30 March, viewed 22 February 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/10000-military-spending-still-dwarfs-education-and-health.html>.
- Lynch, K 2017, 'In Thai Border Camps, Funding Cuts Leave Refugees in Limbo', *Karen News*, 21 November, viewed on 25 November 2017, <http://karennews.org/2017/11/in-thai-border-camps-funding-cuts-leave-refugees-in-limbo/>.
- MacDonald, S 2003, 'Answering Questions and Asking More: reflections on feminist participatory research', *Resources for Feminist Research*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 77-95.
- Mae Tao Clinic n.d., *About us*, Mae Tao Clinic, viewed 22 February 2014, <https://maetaoclinic.org/about-us/>.
- Maguire, P 1987, *Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach*, Centre for International Education, University of Massachusetts, Amhurst, Mass.
- Mahadevan, J 2011, 'Reflexive guidelines for writing organizational culture', *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 150-170.
- Mahood, S, Wroe, E, Fuller, A and Leaning, J 2017, 'The Rohingya people of Myanmar: health, human rights, and identity', *The Lancet*, vol. 389, no. 10081, pp. 1841-1850.
- Mang, LM 2016, 'Date confirmed for Panglong Conference', *Myanmar Times*, 6 August, viewed 15 September 2016, <https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/21838-date-confirmed-for-panglong-conference.html>.
- Matua, G and Van Der Wal, D 2015, 'Differentiating between descriptive and interpretive phenomenological research approaches', *Nurse Researcher*, vol. 22, no. 6, pp. 22-27.

- Maxwell, D 2015, 'Things are only getting worse for Burma's Rohingya Muslims', *Asian Correspondent*, 11 September, viewed on 5 January 2016, <http://asiancorrespondent.com/2015/09/things-are-only-getting-worse-for-burmas-rohingya-muslims/>.
- McCarthy, S 2008, 'Overturning the alms bowl: the price of survival and the consequences for political legitimacy in Burma', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 62, no. 3, pp. 298-314.
- McCurry, J 2007, 'How Junta stemmed a saffron tide', *The Guardian*, 30 September, viewed 17 September 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/sep/30/burma.justinmccurry>.
- McDougall, D 2010, 'The curse of the blood rubies: Inside Burma's brutal gem trade', *The Daily Mail*, 18 September, viewed 15 June 2016, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/moslive/article-1312382/The-curse-blood-rubies-Inside-Burmas-brutal-gem-trade.html>.
- McGready, R, Boel, M, Rijken, MJ, Ashley, EA, Cho, T, Moo, O, Paw, MK, Pimanpanarak, M, Hkirijareon, L, Carrara, VI, Lwin, KM, Phyto, AP, Turner, C, Chu, CS, van Vugt, M, Price, RN, Luxemburger, C, ter Kuile, FO, Tan, SO, Proux, S, Singhasivanon, P, White, NJ and Nosten, FH 2012, 'Effect of Early Detection and Treatment on Malaria Related Maternal Mortality on the North-Western Border of Thailand 1986–2010', *PLoS One*, vol. 7, no. 7, viewed 20 September 2017, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0040244>.
- Meehan, P 2011, 'Drugs, insurgency and state-building in Burma: Why the drugs trade is central to Burma's changing political order', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 42, no. 3, pp. 376-404.
- Mero-Jaffe, I 2011, 'Is that what I Said?' Interview Transcript Approval by Participants: An Aspect of Ethics in Qualitative Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, September, 231–247.
- Mirante, E 2017, 'Troop Withdrawal Crucial for Peace in Myanmar', *The Irrawaddy*, 2 August, viewed 15 February 2018, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/troop-withdrawal-crucial-peace-myanmar.html>.
- Min, AK 2015, 'Ma Ba Tha justifies religion in politics', *Myanmar Times*, 5 October, viewed 17 September 2017, <https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/16818-ma-ba-tha-justifies-religion-in-politics.html>.
- Mlinarević, G, Porobić Isaković, N and Rees, M 2015, 'If women are left out of peace talks', in M Couldrey and M Herson (eds.), *Forced Migration Review: Bosnia and Herzegovina twenty years from the Dayton Peace Agreement*, September 2015, FMR 50, pp.34-37.

- Mosbergen, D, 2016, 'Deadly Landmines Bring Terror To Millions In Myanmar', *Huffington Post*, 17 March, viewed 20 June 2016, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/myanmar-landmines\\_n\\_56cbf830e4b041136f182e9c](https://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/myanmar-landmines_n_56cbf830e4b041136f182e9c).
- Myint, J 2015, 'The Truth About Myanmar's New Ceasefire Agreement', *The Diplomat*, 30 October, viewed 16 January 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/10/the-truth-about-myanmars-new-ceasefire-agreement/>.
- Myint-U, T 2006, *The River of Lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York.
- Myoe, MA 2017, 'Emerging Pattern of Civil-Military Relations', *Southeast Asian Affairs*, vol. 2017, pp. 259-273.
- Naing, SY 2017, 'Donors Cut Financial Support to Refugee Camp Workers', *The Irrawaddy*, 26 April, viewed on 11 November 2017, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/donors-cut-financial-support-refugee-camp-workers.html>.
- Nadarajah, S and Rampton, D 2015, 'The Limits of Hybridity and the Crisis of Liberal Peace', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 49-72.
- Naraghi-Anderlini, S 2005, 'Women and Peace through Justice', *Development*, vol. 48, no. 3, pp. 103-110.
- Narang, D and Saini, S 2013, 'An Appraisal of the Unexplored Power and Potential of Women as Peace Builders', *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, vol. 4, no. 5, pp. 1115-1119.
- Naw, S 2015, 'The Peace That We Envision', *The Irrawaddy*, 12 October, viewed 17 September 2017, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/the-peace-that-we-envision.html>.
- Ni Aoláin, F 2009, 'Women, Security, and the Patriarchy of Internationalised Transitional Justice', *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 31, pp. 1055-1085.
- Njoku, C 2018, 'The secret to ending a war? More women in peace negotiations', *World Economic Forum*, 5 June, viewed 12 August 2018, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/06/women-in-peace-negotiations-end-wars/>.
- Norwegian Church Aid 2012, *Do No Harm: Cross-Border and Thailand Based Assistance to Refugees, IDPs and Migrants from Burma/Myanmar – Report on Findings from Consultancy*, Norwegian Church Aid, 27 April, [http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NCAMyanmar\\_consultancy\\_report-public-ocr-red.pdf](http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NCAMyanmar_consultancy_report-public-ocr-red.pdf).
- Nyein, N 2017, 'Third Session of 21st-Century Panglong Peace Conference to Convene in January', *The Irrawaddy*, 27 November, viewed on 13 December 2017,

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/third-session-21st-century-panglong-peace-conference-convene-january.html>.

Obama, B 2008, Transcript of Barack Obama's Feb. 5 Speech, *The New York Times*, 5 February, viewed 23 January 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/05/us/politics/05text-obama.html>.

OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) 2012, *OCHA on Message: Humanitarian Principles*, United Nations for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, June 2012, [https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples\\_eng\\_June12.pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf).

Opotow, S 2000, 'Aggression and Violence', in Deutsch, M (ed.), *Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Paré, G 2001, *Using a Positivist Case Study Methodology to Build and Test Theories in Information Systems : Illustrations from Four Exemplary Studies*, Groupe de recherche en systèmes d'information (GRESI), Montreal.

Pearson, R and Kusakabe, K 2013, *Thailand's Hidden Workforce: Burmese migrant women factory workers*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois.

Petrie, C and South, A 2014, 'Development of civil society in Myanmar', in M Gravers and F Ytzen (eds.), *BURMA/MYANMAR - WHERE NOW?*, NIAS Press, Copenhagen.

Pick, D and Htwe Htwe, T 2010, 'Development failure and the resource curse: the case of Myanmar', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, vol. 30, no. 5/6, pp. 267-279, <https://doi.org/10.1108/01443331011054235>.

Pietkiewicz, I and Smith, J 2012, 'Praktyczny przewodnik interpretacyjnej analizy fenomenologicznej w badaniach jakościowych w psychologii [A practical guide to using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in qualitative research psychology]', *Czasopismo Psychologiczne*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 361-369. (translated into English).

Plummer, M and Young, L 2009, 'Grounded Theory and Feminist Inquiry: Revitalizing Links to the Past', *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 305-321.

Plümper, T, and Neumayer, E 2006, 'The Unequal Burden of War: The Effect of Armed Conflict on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy', *International Organization*, vol. 60, no. 3, pp. 723-754.

Pogge, T 2008, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

Porter, E 2016, 'Gendered Narratives: Stories and Silences in Transitional Justice', *Human Rights Review*, vol 17, pp. 35-50.

- Prager-Nyein, S 2009, 'Expanding Military, Shrinking Citizenry and the New Constitution in Burma', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 39, no. 4, November, pp. 638–648.
- Pringle J, Drummond J, McLafferty E, and Hendry C 2011, 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: A Discussion and Critique', *Nurse Researcher*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 20-24.
- Pureza, JM and Cravo, T 2009, 'Critical Edge and Legitimation in Peace Studies', *RCCS Annual Review 2009*, viewed 23 January 2018, <https://journals.openedition.org/rccsar/77>.
- Reardon, B 1990, 'Feminist Concepts of Peace and Security', in P Smoker, R Davies and B Munske (eds.), *A Reader in Peace Studies*, Pergamon Press, New York, pp.136-150.
- Reinharz, S 1992, *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Reychler, L 2015. 'Time, "Temperament" and Sustainable Peace: The Essential Role of Time in Conflict and Peace', *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp 19-41.
- Richards, E 2018, 'Burma's 'forgotten' war', *Asian Correspondent*, 2 May, viewed on 15 June 2018, <https://asiancorrespondent.com/2018/05/burmas-forgotten-war/#KEuX3IBLzbSDiyJF.97>.
- Richmond, O 2007, 'Emancipatory Forms of Human Security and Liberal Peacebuilding', *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, vol. 62, no. 3, pp. 459 – 478.
- Richmond, O 2015, 'The Dilemmas of a Hybrid Peace: Negative or Positive?', *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 50, no. 1, pp. 50-68.
- Rivers, P 2016, 'Myanmar army bans critical film', *ASEAN Economist*, 16 June date, viewed 22 November 2016, <https://aseaneconomist.com/myanmar-army-bans-critical-film/>.
- Roberts, D 2011, 'Beyond the metropolis? Popular peace and post-conflict peacebuilding', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 37, no. 5, pp. 2535-2556.
- Rogers, B 2010, *Than Shwe: Unmasking Burma's Tyrant*, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai.
- Rogers, B 2012, *Burma: A Nation at the Crossroads*, Random House, New York.
- Rosato, S 2003, 'The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 97, no. 4, pp. 585-602.
- Ross, M 2003, 'The Natural Resource Curse: How Wealth Can Make You Poor', in I Bannon and P Collier (eds.), *Natural Resources and Violent Conflict Options and Actions*, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

- SaferWorld 2004, *Chapter 1: An introduction to conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding*, SaferWorld, January 2004, [https://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/chapter\\_1\\_\\_265.pdf](https://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/chapter_1__265.pdf).
- Salleh, A 2014, 'Forward', in Mies, M and Shiva, V, *Ecofeminism*, Zed Books, New York.
- Sakhong, LH 2003, *In Search of Chin Identity: A Study in Religion, Politics, and Ethnic Identity in Burma*, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen.
- Sampson, H, Bloor, M, and Fincham, B 2008, 'A price worth paying? Considering the 'cost' of reflexive research methods and the influence of feminist ways of doing', *Sociology*, vol. 42, no. 5, pp. 919-933.
- Schirch, L 2002, 'Human Rights and Peacebuilding: Towards Justpeace', Paper presented to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual International Studies Association Convention, New Orleans, 24-27 March.
- Schirch, L 2003, 'Women Transforming Patriarchy: Feminist Ritual as Peacebuilding', *Canadian Women's Studies Journal*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 142-147.
- Schirch, L and Sewak, M 2005, *The Role of Women in Peacebuilding*, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, viewed 10 December 2016, [http://www.conflictrecovery.org/bin/Issue\\_paper\\_on\\_the\\_Role\\_of\\_Women\\_in\\_Peacebuilding\\_Jan2005.doc](http://www.conflictrecovery.org/bin/Issue_paper_on_the_Role_of_Women_in_Peacebuilding_Jan2005.doc).
- School for Shan State Nationalities Youth n.d., *About Us*, School for Shan State Nationalities Youth , viewed 22 February 2014, [http://www.sssny.org/?page\\_id=162](http://www.sssny.org/?page_id=162).
- Schock, K 2005, *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- Seekins, DM 2009, 'Myanmar in 2008: Hardship, Compounded', *Asian Survey*, vol. 49, no. 1, January/February, pp. 166-173.
- Sein Latt, SS, Ninh, KNB, Kyaw Myint, MK and Lee, S 2017, *Women's Political Participation in Myanmar: Experiences of Women Parliamentarians 2011-2016*, The Asia Foundation and Phan Tee Eain, [https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Womens-Political-Participation-in-Myanmar-MP-Experiences\\_report-1.pdf](https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Womens-Political-Participation-in-Myanmar-MP-Experiences_report-1.pdf).
- Sen, A 1999, 'Woman's Agency and Social Change', in A Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp.189-203.
- Shan Human Rights Foundation n.d., *About Us*, Shan Human Rights Foundation, viewed on 22 February 2014, <http://www.shanhumanrights.org/eng/index.php/about-us>.

- Shan Women's Action Network n.d., *About Us*, Shan Women's Action Network, viewed 22 February 2014, <https://www.shanwomen.org/about-us>.
- Shan Women's Action Network 2002, *Licence to Rape*, Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) [http://www.Burma/Myanmarcampaign.org.uk/reports/License\\_to\\_rape.pdf](http://www.Burma/Myanmarcampaign.org.uk/reports/License_to_rape.pdf).
- Shan Youth Power n.d., *Who we are*, Shan Youth Power, viewed 22 February 2014, <https://www.shanyouthpower.org/who-we-are/>.
- Shwe Gas Movement 2006, *Supply and Command, Natural Gas Development in Western Burma set to Entrench Military Rule*, All Arakan Students' and Youths' Congress, Mae Sot.
- Shwe Gas Movement 2009, *Corridor of Power: China's Trans-Burma Oil and Gas Pipelines*, Shwe Gas Movement, Chiang Mai.
- Simpson, A, Farrelly, N, and Holliday, I (eds.) 2017, *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Myanmar*, Routledge, New York.
- Smith, J 2011, 'Evaluating the Contribution of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis', *Health Psychology Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 9-27.
- Smith, J, Flowers, P, and Larkin, M 2009, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*, SAGE Publications, London.
- Smith, J and Osborn, M 2008, 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis', in Smith, J A (ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*, SAGE Publications, London.
- Smith, M 2007, 'State of Strife: The Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict in Burma', *Policy Studies*, 36 (Southeast Asia).
- South, A 2008, *Ethnic Politics in Burma: States of Conflict*, Routledge Contemporary, Southeast Asia.
- South, A 2011, 'Burma's Longest War: Anatomy of the Karen Conflict', *Transnational Institute*, 28 March, viewed on 24 February 2015, <https://www.tni.org/en/briefing/burmas-longest-war-anatomy-karen-conflict>.
- South, A 2016, 'Peace in Myanmar demands more than political dialogue', *Nikkei Asian Review*, 22 August, viewed 15 January 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Ashley-South-Peace-in-Myanmar-demands-more-than-political-dialogue>.
- South, A 2018, "'Hybrid Governance" and the Politics of Legitimacy in the Myanmar Peace Process', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 48, no. 1, pp. 50-66.

- Stanton, GH (2017), 'Call Myanmar's Crimes Against the Rohingya "Genocide"', *Genocide Watch*, viewed 15 January 2018, [http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/df1038\\_d6d4f62e4e6143cc8103a3c84c3a3cea.pdf](http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/df1038_d6d4f62e4e6143cc8103a3c84c3a3cea.pdf).
- Steinburg, D 2008, 'Globalization, Dissent, and Orthodoxy: Burma/Myanmar and the Saffron Revolution', *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 51-58.
- Steinberg, D 2010, *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Steinberg, D 2015, 'Contemporary Myanmar: Setting the Stage', in Steinberg, D (ed.), *Myanmar: The Dynamics of an Evolving Polity*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Colorado.
- Stephenson, C 1999, 'Peace Studies, Overview' in Kurtz, L and Turpin, J (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict*, Academic Press, San Diego, California.
- Stewart, F 2002, 'Root Causes Of Violent Conflict in Developing Countries', *The BMJ*, vol. 324, no. 7333, pp. 342-345.
- Sultana, F 2007, 'Reflexivity, Positionality and Participatory Ethics: Negotiating Fieldwork Dilemmas in International Research', *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 374-385.
- Swe, T (2012), *MYANMAR (BURMA) – The Efficacy of Sanctions*, Indian Strategic Knowledge Online, 20 May, viewed 17 September 2017, [http://indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/\\_papers43\\_paper4229.pdf](http://indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/_papers43_paper4229.pdf).
- Taylor, R 2009, *The State in Myanmar*, NUS Press, Singapore.
- Thar, C 2017, 'Peace process is the way forward: government', *Myanmar Times*, 16 October, viewed 15 January 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/peace-process-way-forward-government.html>.
- Thawngmung, AM 2017, 'Signs of life in Myanmar's nationwide ceasefire agreement? Finding a way forward', *Critical Asian Studies*, vol. 49, no. 3, pp. 379-395.
- The Border Consortium n.d., *What We Do: Partners*, The Border Consortium, viewed 22 February 2014, <http://www.theborderconsortium.org/what-we-do/partners/>.
- 'Time to lead on the peace process' 2017, *Frontier Myanmar*, 2 March, viewed 17 September 2017, <https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/time-to-lead-on-the-peace-process>.
- Tun, T, Zaw Ko, M and Mar Tun, W 2016, 'Peace Process The 'First Priority' of Myanmar's New Government: Aung San Suu Kyi', *Radio Free Asia*, 4 January, viewed on 5 January 2016, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/priority-01042016162924.html>.

- Tunney, E 2014, 'Women in Peace Processes', *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, vol. 38, no. 1.
- Turnell, S 2009a, *Fiery Dragons: Banks, Moneylenders and Microfinance in Burma*, NIAS Press, Copenhagen.
- Turnell, S 2009b, 'Burma Isn't Broke', *Wall Street Journal*, 6 August, viewed 17 September 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204313604574329181770155154>.
- Turnell, S 2015, 'Myanmar's democracy dividend begins with an economic reboot', *Nikkei Asian Review*, 3 December, viewed 17 September 2017, <http://asia.nikkei.com/magazine/20151203-INDIAN-OCEAN-CURRENTS/Politics-Economy/Sean-Turnell-Myanmar-s-democracy-dividend-begins-with-an-economic-reboot>.
- Tziarras, Z 2012, 'Liberal Peace and Peace-Building: Another Critique', *The Globalized World Post*, viewed 10 January 2018, [http://works.bepress.com/zenonas\\_tziarras/46/](http://works.bepress.com/zenonas_tziarras/46/).
- 'UN human rights chief points to 'textbook example of ethnic cleansing' in Myanmar' 2017, *UN News Centre*, 11 September, viewed on 25 September 2017, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/09/564622-un-human-rights-chief-points-textbook-example-ethnic-cleansing-myanmar>.
- UN News 2009, 'Post-conflict countries need more help to reap peace dividends, Ban says', *UN News*, 13 July, viewed 15 February 2016 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2009/07/306512-post-conflict-countries-need-more-help-reap-peace-dividends-ban-says>.
- 'UN rights chief calls for probe into attacks against Rohingya, says genocide 'cannot be ruled out'' 2017, *UN News Centre*, 5 December, viewed on 11 December 2017, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=58223#.Wk234reWapp>.
- United Nations n.d., *Building a 'Culture of Peace'*, United Nations, viewed 15 January 2018, <https://internationaldayofpeace.org/culture-of-peace/>.
- United Nations, Human Rights Council, *Situation of Human Rights of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, A/HRC/32/18 (20 June 2016), available from <http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/hchr-report-rohingya.pdf>.
- United Nations in Myanmar n.d., 'Peace Process', *United Nations*, viewed 15 January 2018, <http://mm.one.un.org/content/unct/myanmar/en/home/what-we-do/peace-process.html>.
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 47/144, Situation in Myanmar, A/RES/47/144 (18 December 1992), available from <https://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/47/a47r144.htm>.

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 52/13, Culture of Peace, A/52/L.4/Rev.1 and Add.1 (20 November 1997), available from <http://www.un.org/ga/documents/gares52/res5213.htm>.

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 70/262, Review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, A/RES/70/262 (27 April 2016), available from <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/70/262>.

United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect n.d., Responsibility to Protect, United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, viewed 14 February 2020, <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml>.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, S/RES/1325 (31 October 2000), available from [https://undocs.org/S/RES/1325\(2000\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1325(2000))

United States Institute of Peace n.d., *Resilience as a Peacebuilding Practice: To Realism from Idealism*, United States Institute of Peace, viewed 15 May 2018, <https://www.usip.org/insights-newsletter/resilience-peacebuilding-practice-realism-idealism>.

Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation 2003, *Kanbaw Myaingkalay gas pipeline*, Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation, 4 November, viewed on 1 February 2020, <https://unpo.org/article/401>.

'Violence drives more Rohingyas to Bangladesh; in Myanmar, Pope appeals for tolerance – UN' 2017, *UN News Centre*, 28 November, viewed on 11 December 2017, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=58172#.Wk926LeWapp>.

Wai, Y 2020, 'Myanmar exporting 10,000 tonnes of rice a day so far this year', *Myanmar Times*, 3 January, viewed on 15 February 2020, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-exporting-10000-tonnes-rice-day-so-far-year.html>.

Wallensteen, P and Sollenberg, M 2001, "Armed Conflict, 1989-2000", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 38, no. 5, pp.629–644.

Walton, MJ 2008, 'Ethnicity, Conflict, and History in Burma: The Myths of Panglong', *Asian Survey*, vol. XLVIII, no. 6, pp. 889-910.

Walton, MJ and Hayward, S 2014, 'Contesting Buddhist Narratives: Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar', *Policy Studies*, Issue 71.

Ware, A and Laoutides, C 2018, *Myanmar's 'Rohingya' Conflict*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Warren, K and Cady, D 1994, 'Feminism and Peace: Seeing Connections', *Hypatia*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 4-21.

- Webb, C 1992, 'Feminist Research: Definitions, Methodology, Methods and Evaluation', *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 416-23.
- Westcott, B and Smith, K 2017, 'Rohingya violence a 'textbook example of ethnic cleansing,' UN rights chief says', *CNN*, 11 September, viewed on 17 September 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/09/11/asia/rohingya-un-ethnic-cleansing/index.html>.
- Women's League of Burma 2008, *In the Shadow of the Junta : CEDAW Shadow Report*, Women's League of Burma, viewed 23 January 2016, <https://www.womenofburma.org/reports/shadow-junta-0>.
- Women's League of Burma 2014, *Same Impunity, Same Patterns: Sexual abuses by the Burma Army will not stop until there is a genuine civilian government*, Women's League of Burma, viewed 23 January 2016, <https://womenofburma.org/reports/same-impunity-same-patterns>.
- Women's League of Burma n.d., *About Us*, Women's League of Burma, viewed 22 February 2014, <http://womenofburma.org/aboutus/>.
- 'Women's Rights Activists Resist Myanmar's Proposed 'Law on Protection of Race and Religion'' 2014, *Association for Women's Rights in Development*, 11 November, viewed on 17 September 2017, <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/womens-rights-activists-resist-myanmars-proposed-law-protection-race-and-religion>.
- World Health Organisation 2017, 'Violence Against Women', *World Health Organisation*, viewed 1 June 2019, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>.
- Yin, R 2014, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, SAGE Publications, London.
- Younge, G 2009, 'The secrets of a peacemaker', *The Guardian*, 23 May, viewed 10 January 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/may/23/interview-desmond-tutu>.
- Zarni, M and Cowley, A 2014, 'The Slow Burning Genocide of Myanmar's Rohingya', *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal*, vol. 23, no.3, pp. 683-754.
- Zaw, HN 2018, 'Defense Ministry Asks For Budget Increase', *The Irrawaddy*, 17 January, viewed on 22 February 2018, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/defense-ministry-asks-budget-increase.html>.
- Zaw, HN 2018, 'Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Says Rule of Law Must Come First', *The Irrawaddy*, 8 March, viewed on 23 March 2018, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/daw-aung-san-suu-kyi-says-rule-law-must-come-first.html>.

Zaw, J 2016, 'Civilians in Myanmar conflict zones face worsening situation', *UCA News*, 21 October, viewed on 22 February 2018, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/civilians-in-myanmar-conflict-zones-face-worsening-situation-/77405>.

Zimelis, A 2012, 'Trust and normative democratic peace theory: nexus between citizens and foreign policies?', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, vol. 32, no. 1/2, pp. 17-28.