



SAFERWORLD
PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT. BUILDING SAFER LIVES

Community security

Introduction

Security is a core part of human well-being. However, in many countries affected by armed conflict, communities experience insecurity in their daily lives. Community security is about addressing insecurities as experienced by communities. It aims to improve the relationships between communities, authorities and institutions by providing opportunities for community members to identify and prioritise their security concerns and address them in a collaborative manner.

This set of cartoons is based on Saferworld's community security handbook, which is available in Burmese and English, and is intended to help explain the theory and practice of community security for community members, civil society actors and local authorities (state and non-state).

Saferworld is grateful to the Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security Studies (MIPSS), Myanmar Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS), the Karen Women's Empowerment Group (KWEG) and the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) for their input and our collaboration on community security in southeast Myanmar.

What is community security?

A 'community' is a group of people living in the same geographic area, such as a village or village tract. Communities often have shared values, history and identity, but they can also be made up of people of different ethnicities, religions and vocations. Because of migration, births, deaths and marriages, the make-up of communities is always changing.

'Community' does not just refer to individual community members, but to all people, groups and institutions within a specific space. This means that it can include civil society organisations (such as community-based organisations and religious institutions) and local authorities such as the Government Administration Department and police or armed and civilian branches of ethnic armed organisations. Ideally, communities live in harmony with one another, but this is not always the case as there can be tensions or conflicts between different members of a community. Community security is an approach that aims to identify and reduce these tensions or conflicts.





Domestic violence



Dangers from alcoholism



Physical safety risks



Risks from having to go to the rubber plantations to collect sap during the night

Security

Security refers to a situation whereby people feel safe, where they have the chance to seek justice, solve their problems, and to settle disputes, where they have fair access to resources and livelihoods, and where their rights are protected. Security is a universal entitlement and a core part of human well-being. However, around the world, many people experience insecurity in their daily lives, as exemplified by the quotes below:

“Lack of jobs makes me feel insecure. Regardless of how hard I tried I just could not get a job. So I went through Côte d’Ivoire to become part of any group looking for a potential fighter.”

**Former combatant,
Sierra Leone, Africa**

“In earlier days even small earnings were sufficient for a living, but now, the price for everything has escalated and it’s difficult to save anything. I feel that I may die of hunger. This makes me feel insecure.”

**Kewat woman,
Morang district, Nepal, Asia**

“Competition over water and grazing land is one of the causes of persistent insecurity.”

**Participant, Warrup state,
South Sudan, Africa**

Security relates to many different issues – including economic, social, environmental, cultural and political. People want their concerns and views on how to solve security challenges to be heard and understood. Community security approaches help communities to achieve this.

Who should be involved in community security?

- All social groups within the community, including marginalised groups, can use the community security approach to address their safety and security concerns.
- Community leaders, such as 10/100 household heads (elected leaders responsible for between ten and 100 households) and religious leaders can play an important role in helping to build relations between communities and authorities.
- Civil society can play an active role in promoting community security by helping to encourage the involvement of community members from all backgrounds. They also play an important role in promoting the views and needs of communities and helping to improve the policies, structures and practices of authorities.
- Local governments, including security and justice actors, can support community security as part of broader strategies to improve security in the area and solve disputes. These actors include village and ward tract administrators, local Myanmar Police Force (MPF), General Administrative Departments (GAD), Tatmadaw units, Border Guard Forces, militias, ethnic armed organisations (EAOs), security and justice departments of EAOs and of the national government, lawyers and judges. Strengthening relationships between communities and these groups is a key element of community security.
- Central governments, especially the Ministries of Home Affairs (including MPF and GAD), Border Affairs, Defence, State Councillors Office, the Department for Social Welfare, the Joint Monitoring Committee and the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, can integrate support for community security initiatives into their broader security provision strategies.





Villagers see a soldier burying a land mine in the summer



Villagers go to confront and speak to the soldier about how this puts the community in danger (rainy season)



Everyone is now happy that the area is safe (the following summer)

Community security – a journey and a goal

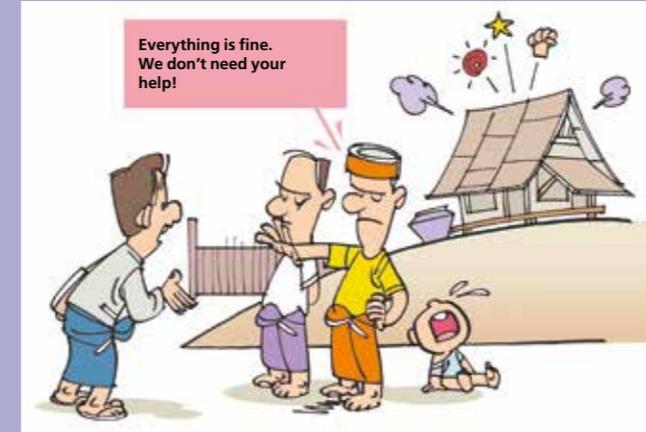
Community security aims to involve and empower communities to address their own community security concerns. Lessons from this process can be used to advocate for reform of authorities, including security and justice actors, so that security provision is relevant for communities and appropriate to their needs. As a process, this means that communities lead on identifying and prioritising their security concerns and that they build relations with local authorities and demand their rights, hold authorities to account, and collaborate with them when appropriate.

Community security is achieved when communities and local authorities work together in trust and harmony to ensure that all people, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, religion and other distinctions, feel safe and that their rights are protected, that they have safe paths to redress grievances, solve disputes, and have fair access to resources and livelihoods.

How to select the project area

When selecting locations to start a community security project, there are certain criteria that increase the chance of success. These include the following:

- Community members have clear security concerns.
- Community members themselves want change and are committed and motivated to play an active part in addressing their safety and security concerns.
- Promoting change will not place partners and the public in significant danger.
- There are opportunities for quick and simple actions and solutions for some security issues but communities are also willing to sustain efforts over a longer period.
- A sufficient proportion of local power-holders approve of the project and will actively engage.





Community security assessments

A 'community security assessment' is an in-depth look at how different people in a community experience and perceive insecurity, and why. Many security concerns are shared and there might also be some security concerns that impact particular individuals or groups more than others. For example, domestic violence issues are likely to affect women and girls differently from men and boys, or people with disabilities might have different security concerns compared with able-bodied people.

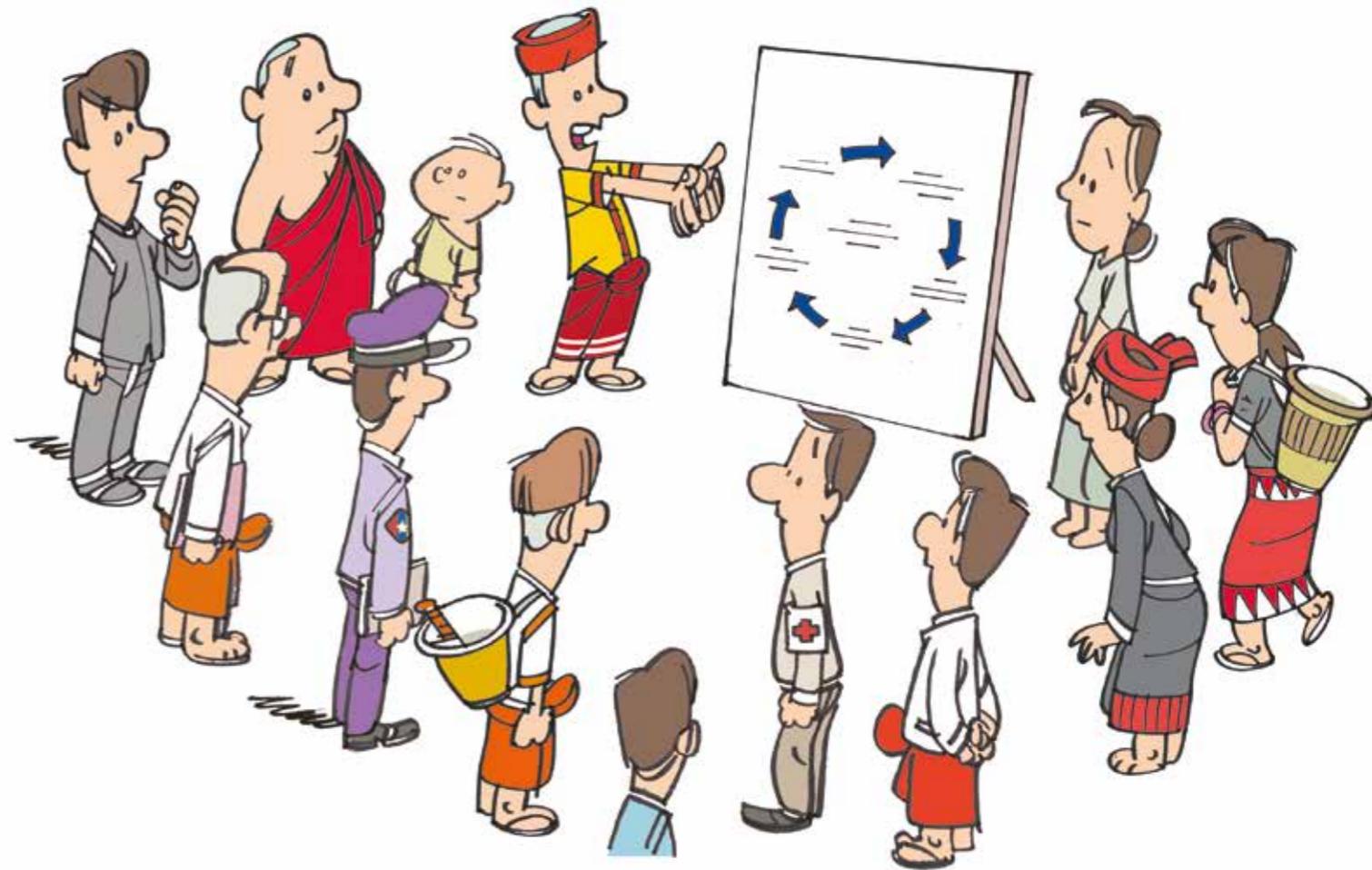
The community security assessment will help to identify what communities feel are the key safety and security issues. It will also identify people and institutions that are likely to be supportive or opposed to community security activities, which will be useful information later in the project.

Community Security Working Groups

Community Security Working Groups (CSWG) are a group of people from the community who will listen to the security concerns of the wider community and who will lead efforts to address these concerns.

To effectively address the security concerns of all community members, CSWGs need to be representative of the wider community. They should include men, women and LGBTI, young and older people, able-bodied people and people with disabilities, and where relevant, people of different vocations, status, ethnicities and religions. CSWGs can include local authorities as well, either within the membership or in a board function, but care needs to be taken that they will not dominate the groups and that people with less power can voice their concerns equally.

The CSWG identify and prioritise the wider communities' security concerns, build relations with local authorities and security and justice providers, and take action to address the concerns of the wider community.



Action planning!



Community security action plans

After establishing Community Security Working Groups (CSWGs) the groups are supported by partner civil society organisations to look at the safety and security issues affecting them and to jointly come up with a plan of action to address each problem. At a minimum, such plans should include:

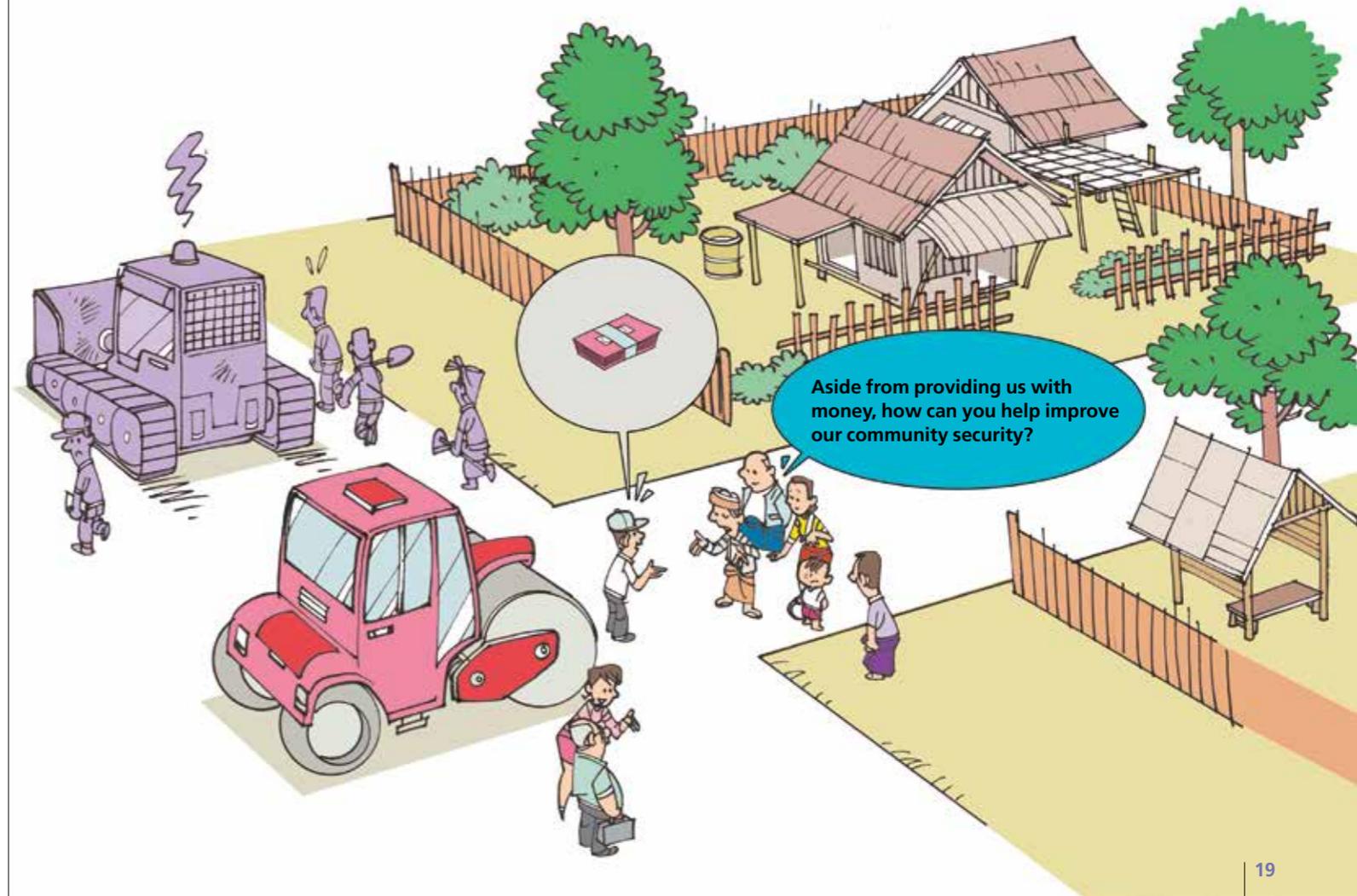
- A clear statement of the problem.
- The agreed steps to address the problem.
- The allocation of tasks to individual working group members.
- Objectives and indicators of progress.
- Regular review dates.

Taking action

Implementing action plans requires joint action by members of the Community Security Working Group. Some of the actions will be simple and can be done in the short term, something we refer to as 'quick fixes', such as fitting locks to people's doors in a village to prevent burglary. Other actions will need sustained efforts over a longer time, which includes building relations with local authorities, for example:

- Connecting villages to the power grid and installing street lights.
- Regular consultations for police officers to meet local residents for confidential discussions about crime.
- Asking armed groups to remove landmines from certain areas.

In all these examples, success is most likely achieved when communities and authorities work together in a collaborative manner.





Building relations with local authorities and security providers

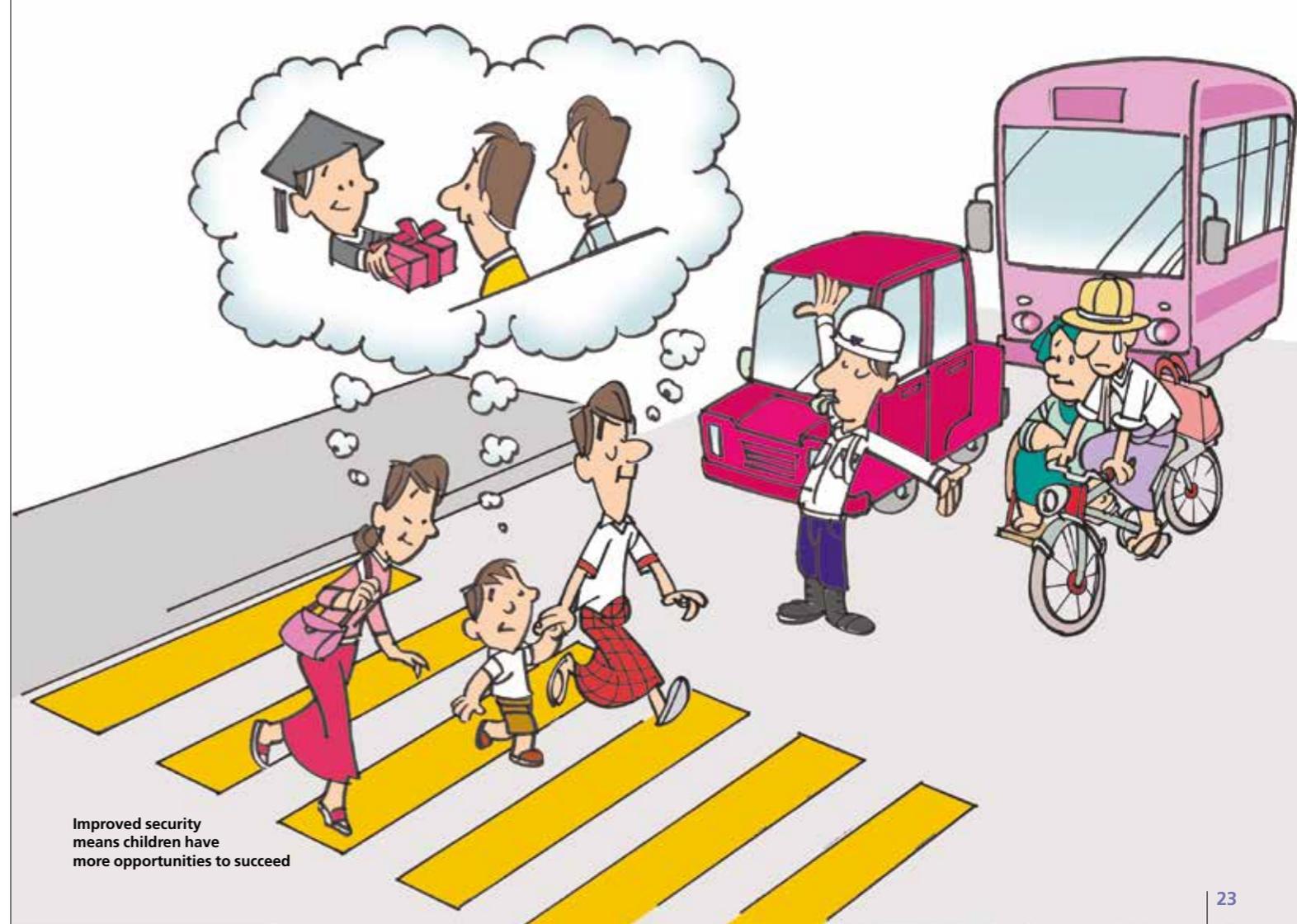
An important element of community security is strengthening relationships between communities and authorities.

In many countries around the world, security is a service that is provided by authorities to ensure that communities can live in safety, dignity and peace. Good relations between communities and authorities will help to make communities safer, while increasing the legitimacy of authorities. In countries with a history of conflict or authoritarian state structures, local authorities are at times a source of insecurity for communities and security actors can have negative perceptions of communities.

The goal of community security is to improve interaction between communities and local authorities. Improved interaction will help the authorities to become more responsive to the needs of communities which will then, over time, lead to better relations between communities and authorities, and increase the legitimacy of authorities.

Achieving community security

Security is something we experience. Community Security can also be seen as a goal whereby people feel protected and valued as members of society. This goal is achieved when the processes behind community security are functioning, or rather, systems are in place for communities to voice their security needs, and local and institutional authorities have the capacity and willingness to respond to them.



Improved security
means children have
more opportunities to succeed



Community representative actively seeking women's consultation



Community representative seeking the involvement of young people



Representative asking women about the bridge conditions after it was repaired by the CSWG



Representatives share community concerns in parliament

Linking community security to reform at the national level

Local insecurity can be caused by policies and practices at the state and union level. Community security approaches attempt to improve the structures, policies and practices of these higher levels through advocacy strategies. Successes at a local level can produce 'lessons' that can be used to influence policymakers and institutions.

In addition, research can influence reform at the national and state level. For example, a knowledge, attitudes and practices survey can reveal how communities' security concerns are linked to practices and policies of authorities. By demonstrating that some actions of authorities are not in the best interest of communities and decrease legitimacy, we can convince authorities to change their policies and practices to be more responsive to community needs, which will then lead to incremental improvements in the way communities perceive them.

SAFERWORLD

MYANMAR OFFICE

R 3A-B, No. (275 C), Pyay Road
Myaynigone, Sanchaung Township
Yangon, Myanmar

Phone: +95 (0) 9264802051

Email: saferworldmyanmar@saferworld.org.uk

www.saferworld.org.uk