



# A community-led approach to conflict sensitivity in Myanmar

## Introduction

**Recent political developments in Myanmar offer an unprecedented opportunity to consolidate the steps taken towards peace and democracy over the past five years. Nevertheless, the limited reductions in violence in parts of the south and east of the country remain precarious; there are profound unresolved issues about the future governance structure; and the day-to-day lives of many of Myanmar's citizens are over-shadowed by militarisation and insecurity. Meanwhile, the north and northeast are experiencing the country's most intense conflicts since the 1990s between the Tatmadaw (Myanmar army) and five ethnic armed organisations (EAOs).<sup>1</sup>**

Against this backdrop, the influx of international resources into Myanmar – in the form of aid and investment – carries considerable risks that it will have an adverse effect upon conflict dynamics at the local level. Some international actors are aware of these risks and 'conflict sensitivity' is a relatively familiar term in Myanmar. However, Saferworld's work with civil society networks suggests that international actors often give only limited consideration to the concerns and perspectives of local communities. In the view of Saferworld's civil society partners, the practice of conflict sensitivity in Myanmar is primarily driven and framed by the interests and requirements of international actors.

This briefing contends that the perceptions and priorities of communities directly affected by conflict should be at the heart of what it means to be conflict sensitive. It draws upon the experience and lessons learnt from a three-year collaboration between Saferworld and civil society networks in Kachin state and in Karen areas of southeast Myanmar.<sup>2</sup>

This project revealed scope for enhancing conflict-sensitive approaches in Myanmar by enabling local stakeholders to play a more proactive and central role. The focus was limited to civil society networks in Karen and Kachin areas; a more extensive process would be required to extrapolate recommendations for international actors that are applicable to all of the very different sub-national contexts in Myanmar.

This briefing summarises some of the broader contextual issues that shape the current landscape for international engagement in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar, and describes the collaborative process between Saferworld and the civil society networks. It highlights key concerns that emerged from conflict-sensitivity assessments by local stakeholders and reflections arising from the subsequent dialogues held with international actors.

Future policies and practices of international actors in Myanmar must take greater account of the security concerns and priorities for peace expressed by local communities in conflict-affected areas. At a time of proliferating 'conflict sensitivity' initiatives, we hope that this briefing will contribute to a more nuanced understanding – and some reorientation – of what it means to be conflict sensitive in Myanmar.

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<sup>1</sup> These are the Kachin Independence Organisation, the Shan State Progress Party, the Palaung State Liberation Front, the 'Kokang' Myanmar National Defence Alliance Army, and the Arakan Army.

<sup>2</sup> Saferworld uses Kayin State to refer to the administrative State as defined by the government. The use of "Karen areas of southeast Myanmar" refers to all Karen-populated areas in that region and thus

spans multiple states and regions. See: Jolliffe K (2014) 'Ethnic conflict and social service delivery in Myanmar's contested regions,' p.54-55 (The Asia Foundation).

## Context

### A partial and fragile peace

The landslide victory of the National League for Democracy in the November 2015 election changed the political landscape in Myanmar, offering hope that the political reforms initiated in 2011 will continue on a positive trajectory. The country nevertheless faces profound challenges, including on-going armed conflicts between the Tatmadaw and a number of EAOs in Myanmar's peripheral regions.

In October 2015, the Myanmar government signed a partial Nationwide Ceasefire Accord (NCA) with eight EAOs,<sup>3</sup> six of which are mostly active in southeast Myanmar. The NCA and the bilateral ceasefires that preceded it have led to a stabilisation of the security situation in some areas of the country. The NCA also commits all sides to a political dialogue process to explore and address the causes of conflict. This will lead to a Union Accord, likely to include constitutional amendments, which will be submitted to parliament for approval. The dialogue process began in January 2016 and is expected by participants to last for 3-5 years.

However, the partial NCA does not include several powerful EAOs, mostly in the north and northeast of the country.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the NCA does not in itself secure binding commitments to address the underlying grievances and aspirations of ethnic nationalities. Armed conflict between the Tatmadaw and non-signatory EAOs persists in parts of Kachin, central and northern Shan, Chin and Rakhine States, and this has led to the displacement of thousands of people since October 2015. Furthermore, even some of the EAOs that did sign the NCA continue to be embroiled in armed conflict.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the day-to-day lives of many thousands of Myanmar's citizens living in rural areas beyond the Bamar heartlands continue to be characterised by insecurity. In Karen areas of southeast Myanmar there has been a steady reduction of armed conflict-related threats to communities. Nevertheless, according to the Karen Human Rights Group, since the 2012 ceasefire between the KNU and Tatmadaw, high levels of militarisation have continued, with the result that civilians remain subject to various forms of

predatory, exploitative, and other abusive activities by multiple armed actors operating in overlapping jurisdictions.<sup>6</sup> These include the Tatmadaw, Border Guard Forces (BGFs) made up of former EAOs, and EAOs themselves. Furthermore, in some areas, such as the trans-border economic corridors around Dawei and Myawaddy, local communities have cited increases in the deployment of Tatmadaw troops.<sup>7</sup>

Land confiscation for military, public, or commercial interests has been widespread in Karen areas of the southeast for decades. However, ceasefires and new legislation in 2012 have increased fear among those with customary land tenure that their land will be seized. This threatens to ignite new forms of conflict at the local level, and to jeopardise livelihood options for rural communities.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, land confiscation has been widespread in Kachin State, especially associated with controversial economic and natural resource projects, such as agribusiness, mining and mega hydropower projects. Exploitative land laws, inadequate consultation with local communities, and a lack of mechanisms to resolve land disputes all add to the risks of conflict breaking out over land and other resource-related issues.

### A contested environment for international engagement

Against this uncertain and unstable back-drop, the role played by international actors is critical. Market liberalisation and political reforms in Myanmar over the past five years have attracted widespread international attention and prompted increased engagement by a broad range of external actors: foreign governments and their donor bodies, intergovernmental agencies, development banks, international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs), commercial enterprises, private investors, and many others. There is great interest in Myanmar's largely untapped market of over 50 million people; its relatively cheap labour force; and its abundant reserves of natural resources, including precious minerals, timber, agricultural land, water, and hydrocarbons. There is also considerable interest in the country's geo-strategic location, and especially its potential role in regional integration at the crux of China, India, and ASEAN.

There are great opportunities for international actors to help Myanmar consolidate and build upon the gains of the past five years, be it through humanitarian aid, development assistance, or by assisting the government to prepare for increased levels of private investment. However, due to the complexity of the Myanmar context and the legacies

<sup>3</sup> NCA signatories are: The Karen National Union (KNU), The All Burma Students' Democratic Front, Arakan Liberation Party, Chin National Front, Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council, Pa-O National Liberation Organisation and The Restoration Council of Southern Shan/Shan State Army-South, Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA).

<sup>4</sup> Non-signatories of the NCA include: the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), the New Mon State Party, the Karenni National People's Party, the Shan State Progress Party and the United Wa State Party.

<sup>5</sup> Sporadic but relatively heavy clashes between the signatory Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the Palaung State Liberation Front have been seen in Shan State; while in Kayin State, the former DKBA has been engaged in clashes with the Tatmadaw and its border guard forces made up of former DKBA troops.

<sup>6</sup> See Karen Human Rights Group (2014) 'Truce or Transition: Trends in Human Rights Abuse in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire'

<sup>7</sup> The Border Consortium (2014) 'Protection and Security Concerns in Southeast Burma/Myanmar'

<sup>8</sup> Karen Peace Support Network (2014) 'Critique of Japan International Cooperation Agency's Blueprint for Development in South-eastern Burma/Myanmar'

of multiple long-running conflicts, there are risks that a large and rapid influx of foreign aid, infrastructure development and foreign investment could undermine prospects of lasting peace in Myanmar, despite the best intentions of international actors.

The risk that humanitarian intervention may aggravate local conflict dynamics is increasingly recognised in Myanmar, with the notion of 'conflict sensitivity' gaining currency. This was driven particularly by the experience of international agencies in Rakhine State – perceived by some local stakeholders to be privileging certain groups over others – which prompted humanitarian actors, both NGOs and donors, to adopt more conflict-sensitive approaches in their programming. Donors now regularly hire 'conflict advisors', and international development actors across a variety of sectors are increasingly cognisant of the concept of conflict sensitivity. Despite this, a recent survey of donors found that political imperatives often trump conflict-related concerns, and that there are differing understandings of what conflict sensitivity means in practice.<sup>9</sup>

#### Box 1. A conflict-sensitive approach

A standard definition of conflict sensitivity is:

- 1) analyse the context operated in, especially conflict issues and dynamics;
- 2) understand how your intervention affects this conflict context, and vice-versa;
- 3) act on this understanding in order to avoid reinforcing conflict dynamics and to build upon opportunities to support peace.<sup>10</sup>

This can be explained in part by the multiplicity and diversity of conflict risks that accompany operating in the Myanmar context. International development actors face particular challenges associated with operating in peripheral areas where national governance structures are contested and parallel administrations have been operating for decades. In such cases, there can appear to be a tension between one set of principles relating to national ownership – as enshrined in the global Busan Accord and the Myanmar-specific Nay Pyi Taw Accord<sup>11</sup> – and a conflict-sensitive approach, which would take account of differing perceptions of legitimate authority.

There is also growing recognition that the actions of private sector actors are rarely neutral in conflict-affected contexts such as Myanmar. Foreign investment inevitably affects the local political economy, as well as issues of access and security,

and thus has an impact on conflict dynamics. This was illustrated by an outbreak of violence in July 2015 along a newly opened stretch of the Asian Highway in southeast Myanmar, which was financed largely by external Asian investment. A section of the road cut through mixed authority areas of Kayin State; this led to armed conflict between the DKBA on one side and the Tatmadaw and BGFs on the other, which spread to a number of townships in Kayin and Mon States causing widespread displacement.<sup>12</sup>

## Articulating a community-based vision of peace

Since 2013, Saferworld has been working with Karen and Kachin civil society partners in an effort to help local stakeholders assert their role at the centre of what it means to be conflict-sensitive in Myanmar. The overall aim was to encourage international actors in Myanmar to take more account of the security concerns and peacebuilding priorities of communities in conflict-affected areas.

This initiative has involved strengthening the capacities and confidence of civil society and community-based organisations (CBOs) to undertake their own conflict sensitivity analysis and to engage in dialogue with international actors. Strategies were developed by civil society following a process of conflict sensitivity assessment and advocacy (see Box 2). This entailed developing systematic analyses of how international interventions interact with the issues and dynamics that affect local peace and security. Dialogues were then organised that enabled local civil society actors to engage with international actors about the impacts of their interventions, and how to mitigate the conflict risks identified.

In both Kayin and Kachin States, there has been significant international intervention, including humanitarian and development programmes, infrastructure development, and resource extraction. And in both regions, CSOs and CBOs have a long history of active engagement in humanitarian relief, social service provision, and human rights campaigning. Over the past decade, these civil society groups have become increasingly vocal about the harmful effects of international interventions on local communities, their livelihoods, and the environment.

<sup>9</sup> PeaceNexus (2016) 'Conflict sensitivity monitoring in Myanmar: Findings for OECD-DAC INCAF'

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/what/conflict-sensitive-development>

<sup>11</sup> PeaceNexus (2016), Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Karen News (2015) 'KPSN: Asia highway fighting damages peace' <http://karennews.org/2015/07/kpsn-asia-highway-fighting-damages-peace.html/>

## **Box 2: Designing and implementing an advocacy strategy – six key stages<sup>13</sup>**

### *Step 1 – Assessing the situation:*

Understand the context and identify factors that might affect success, drawing upon macro- and local-level analyses conducted during project design and preparation.

### *Step 2 – Establishing the goals:*

Map and clarify the problems that need addressing in order to prioritise solutions and advocacy objectives. This should draw on local-level conflict analyses and the macro-level conflict analysis.

### *Step 3 – Developing an influencing strategy:*

Capture the changes you seek, who will make the changes happen, and how to influence them to do so. Consider potential risks for communities and staff, and identify any potential unintended consequences of advocacy during this stage, making use of stakeholder and conflict mapping conducted during local- and macro-level analyses.

### *Step 4 – Planning your activity:*

Activities should be tailored to the target audience to best influence their decision-making, and be based on a solid theory of change. It is important to consider any messages that may be implicitly conveyed by how we conduct advocacy activities, and who leads such activities.

### *Step 5 – Implementing:*

As part of project implementation, decide timelines, clarity on responsibilities, and develop indicators to track changes.

### *Step 6 – Monitoring and evaluation:*

Assess whether activities are having the intended impacts, as well as continuously monitoring the context to ensure that activities remain relevant and are not exacerbating tensions or putting communities or staff at risk. This should form an integral part of the overall M&E framework of the project.

Following a preliminary scoping and needs-assessment in 2013, Saferworld identified key networks of civil society actors in each region. These represented a cross-section of local communities, including perspectives from the different politico-administrative contexts: government-controlled, EAO-controlled, contested areas, and refugee communities. Saferworld developed partnerships with these networks, and collaboratively designed and facilitated a workshop process in each region that

sought to enable civil society and community leaders to articulate their own peacebuilding priorities, and to analyse how these are affected by international interventions.

The civil society networks identified CSO and CBO participants from the health, education, environmental, social development, and human rights sectors who had been involved in community consultations over many years. These included women activists, Buddhist monks, youth representatives, refugees and internally displaced people. We nevertheless recognise that community perspectives are invariably mediated through, and potentially modified by, the viewpoints of the civil society actors that represent them.

The emphasis of the workshop process was on what needs to change in order to reach a lasting and inclusive peace for communities – rather than simply how to avoid exacerbating conflicts. Over the course of the workshops with Karen and Kachin civil society actors, participants developed a way of re-framing the conventional discourse and principles of conflict sensitivity, so that they are defined by local stakeholders – in effect, a community-led approach to conflict sensitivity. The resultant conflict sensitivity assessments provided a basis for developing strategies for engagement with international actors about potential conflict risks and mitigation strategies.

Following the workshop process, Saferworld and its Myanmar partners convened and facilitated a series of dialogue meetings in Yangon between a core group of Karen civil society leaders and representatives of around 30 international institutions, ranging from donor governments and development banks to United Nations agencies and INGOs. Two days of preliminary workshops were held with the Karen group to help crystallise the key concerns and messages that had emerged in the previous wider workshop. The dialogue meetings then provided an opportunity for all parties to exchange information and analysis, and jointly to explore how international interventions in southeast Myanmar can best support the vision of peace articulated by local stakeholders. It also allowed the Karen representatives to share specific programme-relevant information, and to raise particular concerns about certain projects.

Twelve dialogue meetings took place in Yangon, and the Karen group met with over 60 international actors. These included some of the major donors in Myanmar (World Bank, Asia Development Bank, European Union, UK Department for International Development, Japan International Cooperation Agency) and key humanitarian/development agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF, Norwegian Refugee Council, ActionAid, Save the Children). The meetings followed a basic structure that firstly enabled the Karen representatives to explain their peacebuilding priorities and conflict concerns, and how international interventions in the region affect these; and then provided an opportunity for the international

<sup>13</sup> Adapted from the Integrated Conflict Prevention and Resilience Handbook, produced by the START Network (2015), developed by Saferworld et al.

representatives to discuss these concerns with the Karen group and jointly to consider how to mitigate the associated conflict risks.

The Karen civil society group circulated a report (in Karen and English) of the dialogue meetings to all members of the wider network. This included the key concerns and recommendations that they presented to the international representatives (see Box 3).

It was not possible during the same period to organise dialogue meetings between the Kachin civil society group and international actors. However, through a workshop for Kachin CSOs and CBOs, which took place in Myktyina, and related consultations with Kachin stakeholders over the past two years, a number of issues emerged of relevance for how international actors engage in the Kachin region. Key concerns arising from the Karen and Kachin process are described in the section below. Meanwhile, Saferworld continues to work with civil society partners in both regions with a view to developing practical guidance, tailored to the specificities of each regional context, for international actors seeking to engage in a conflict-sensitive manner.

## Reflections of civil society actors on international engagement in conflict-affected areas

### BOX 3. Concerns and recommendations of the Karen Peace Support Network<sup>14</sup>

1. Attempts at peacebuilding should aim to address ethnic grievances (e.g. equality, justice, self-determination, etc.), as these are the root causes of conflict.
2. Development should focus less on 'material development', and instead support empowerment, rights, and security of conflict-affected communities in order to build peace.
3. There should be no 'large-scale development' at this time, and aid actors should avoid activities that could facilitate big business during the peacebuilding process.
4. Aid should not only support the government's centralised system, but must support decentralisation and the existing systems of ethnic people.
5. Aid should strengthen/prioritise community and CSOs leadership and capacity, especially in conflict-affected areas.

6. There is a need for greater transparency, communication, accountability, and consultation surrounding international aid interventions in order to avoid disputes and confusion.

### Openness to dialogue

In the debrief session that followed the Yangon dialogue meetings, the Karen civil society group expressed satisfaction that they were able to have this sort of exchange, on their own terms, with representatives of international organisations (for some, it was their first opportunity to meet face-to-face with 'international actors'). They were encouraged that the international representatives acknowledged their concerns, and were for the most part open to discussion about how to address them.

Unsurprisingly, the degree of openness varied across different international actors, but most expressed an eagerness to organise follow-on consultations with the Karen civil society network. In the case of one significant international actor, a series of structured consultations followed with members of the Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN), which prepared a paper in advance outlining their vision of peace, their chief concerns, and targeted recommendations for the international actor in question.

In addition, several agencies were keen to have more in-depth dialogues about specific sectors or areas. One humanitarian agency in particular had regular subsequent exchanges with KPSN regarding outbreaks of violence in Karen areas that were causing displacement and impacting on humanitarian access. Overall, the Karen group felt that by taking the initiative and inviting international actors to consult with them, they were able to set the agenda for dialogue, and to ensure that local concerns were at the heart of the discussion of conflict sensitivity.

### Demystifying 'international' and 'local' actors

Also notable in the subsequent evaluation of the dialogues by the Karen network was the importance for the community representatives of demystifying the 'international community'. As one member of the group commented after leaving a meeting with a major multilateral agency: "so they are basically just an INGO implementing some projects". In this way, the dialogues helped the Karen group to contextualise and better understand what the various international actors are – and are not – and what constraints they operate under.

While this realisation was discouraging in some respects as regards the ability of international actors to make a difference, it was also empowering for the Karen participants and strengthened their confidence to engage with international actors in the future. The corollary was the appreciation expressed by many of

<sup>14</sup> Excerpted from A Brief Report on KPSN's Dialogue Meetings with International Actors/Donors in Yangon, Burma/Myanmar from October 20-24, 2014

the international representatives who took part in the dialogues of the opportunity for in-depth discussion and exchange with local stakeholders.

## **Reinforcing a centralising model of development?**

One of the fundamental concerns raised by the Karen group was around development and infrastructure projects that they regarded as aligned with, and reinforcing, a top-down and centralising model of the state. Like many ethnic actors, they have a deep suspicion of the 'Burmanisation' agenda that such development models are seen to promote on behalf of the government and Tatmadaw. Therefore, international donor funds and programmes that directly or indirectly support the government's development agenda were seen by the Karen group to facilitate the extension and entrenchment of state control (e.g. through road-building) and to strengthen centralised systems (e.g. for education and health) at the expense of long-established and, in their eyes, more culturally appropriate systems already existing in Karen areas.

By implication, international funding and programmes of this sort were not considered conflict sensitive by the Karen group because, in supporting a centralised model of development, they were effectively entrenching Bamar political and economic control. Furthermore, this development model is perceived as part of a broader government agenda of cultural assimilation, whereby ethnic minority cultural and religious institutions, such as schools and places of worship, are replaced with their Bamar, Buddhist counterparts.

## **...and undermining a federal future?**

These concerns are profoundly related to the question of Myanmar's future governance structure, and thus to the political dialogue process now beginning. Ethnic nationality leaders have stressed that the political dialogue should ultimately lead to a federal structure, which allows ethnic nationalities a greater degree of autonomy. Indeed, since the NCA process began, the Thein Sein government and Tatmadaw committed explicitly to the political dialogue aiming to establish a Union based on the principles of democracy and federalism.

Nevertheless, concerns persist among Karen civil society actors that international alignment with, and support for, a centralising development agenda will create institutional resistance to future decentralisation. If centralised structures are solidified and augmented now, they risk undermining the evolution of a federal system.

## **Context-specific and flexible delivery strategies**

There were also more immediate concerns that as international aid to the southeast is increasingly delivered through channels mandated by the state rather than by local networks across the Thai-Myanmar border (as has been the case for much of the last 30 years), communities will be more vulnerable if conflict resumes. In reality, social service provision by, or on behalf of, EAOs remains the only option available for many vulnerable populations across Karen areas of southeast Myanmar. In some conflict-affected areas this has reduced confidence that the conditions created by the NCA will improve delivery of social services for all vulnerable populations.

This underscores the importance of donors having flexible strategies if they are to target vulnerable populations effectively. This includes anticipating deteriorations and improvements in the peace process, and targeting support separately towards the government and ethnic administrative systems in order to ensure no vulnerable populations are excluded. This is especially important given the shift in funding modalities toward multi-donor trust fund mechanisms, which may provide fewer avenues to access rapid and flexible international funding that does not come under the purview of the government.

## **International development as a Trojan horse**

Both Karen and Kachin groups also expressed concerns about international development and infrastructure projects which directly or indirectly encourage big business investment, as these have been seen to have harmful effects upon the local security situation, livelihoods, community dynamics and the natural environment. As one civil society leader expressed it: "international development projects are like a Trojan horse, unleashing big business that can harm communities and the environment".

This concern reflects the continuing deep distrust among former adversaries after 60 years of internal conflict, and in particular a long-standing grievance that, notwithstanding extensive state-backed natural resource extraction, ethnic minority areas remain economically underdeveloped due to a lack of reinvestment. In Kachin State especially this view is informed by the experience of the 1994–2011 ceasefire between the KIO and the government. Despite bringing an end to the most serious violence, there was little attempt to address the fundamental grievances and socio-economic needs of Kachin communities during the 17-year ceasefire period. Instead, elites on both sides profited from self-serving business concessions, often dressed up as 'peace and development', while new security threats related to resource-extraction emerged. These experiences

help explain the suspicion that ceasefires are a ploy to enable the commercial exploitation of ethnic areas, with little benefit for local communities. Indeed, KPSN cited several examples where internationally supported infrastructure development and foreign investment had been accompanied by land confiscation, forced labour, and militarisation.<sup>15</sup>

## Re-orienting conflict-sensitive approaches

More broadly, the experience in both Karen and Kachin regions highlights the limitations of the prevailing approach to conflict sensitivity in Myanmar. Growing recognition among international actors of the interaction between local conflict dynamics and their interventions is to be welcomed. However, the fact remains that conflict sensitivity is perceived by many local stakeholders as an agenda largely driven by international actors and their interests. Conflict-sensitive approaches generally take as their starting point the needs, perspectives, and frameworks of international donors, development agencies or private companies. Thus participants noted a tendency to treat 'conflict sensitivity' as a one-off interaction with communities, a box to tick during the inception phase of a project, despite the fact that key project decisions had already been taken.

In general, there was willingness and enthusiasm from many of the community groups that Saferworld engaged with to contribute to conflict sensitising international development programmes and projects. However, they felt that there was often not a systematic approach to engaging communities on these issues, and they were granted insufficient time or opportunity to engage in a meaningful way.

There is no shortage of 'consultations' organised by international actors with local stakeholders in Myanmar. However, the format and scope of these exercises tends largely to be determined by the programming requirements and parameters of the international actors. Participants referred, for example, to situations in which they had been consulted along the following lines: "We are going to spend X amount of money, in Y amount of time, in Z location – and now we want to know how to do it in a conflict-sensitive way". This view is echoed by recent concerns expressed by a KNU leader about the haste with which international development projects are being embarked upon in ceasefire areas.<sup>16</sup>

This sort of approach to conflict sensitivity can leave Myanmar stakeholders feeling disempowered and frustrated.<sup>17</sup> More significantly, it means that such exercises are less likely to elicit local perspectives on conflict risks or to generate locally owned strategies for reducing such risks. In other words, the way that conflict sensitivity is often approached by international actors in Myanmar – as elsewhere – limits the agency of local stakeholders, and thus risks compounding the sense of exclusion and disempowerment that lies at the heart of Myanmar's conflicts.

### About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe in a world where everyone can lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity.

We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

**Saferworld** – 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT, UK  
Registered Charity no 1043843  
Company limited by guarantee no 3015948  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7324 4646 | Fax: +44 (0)20 7324 4647  
Email: [general@saferworld.org.uk](mailto:general@saferworld.org.uk)  
Web: [www.saferworld.org.uk](http://www.saferworld.org.uk)

<sup>15</sup> These concerns are further outlined in KPSN's 'Critique of Japan International Cooperation Agency's Blueprint for Development in Southeastern Burma/Myanmar', 2014.

<sup>16</sup> As KNU Vice President Naw Zipporah Sein remarked in January 2016: "The international groups did not provide support or allow time for making the preliminary ceasefire into a durable ceasefire, but instead started the planning of humanitarian and economic development at local levels. They did not come to us to ask what we needed, or what our own plans were. They just told us what they wanted to do in their projects." <http://www.burmapartnership.org/2016/01/a-brief-nca-history-the-ncas-flaws-and-failings/>

<sup>17</sup> For example, see the January 2016 statement by the Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability and Land in Our Hands network which together represents 571 CSOs in Myanmar, to the EU in regards to the consultations with civil society actors on the Investment Protection Agreement, found here: <http://www.burmapartnership.org/2016/01/investment-protection-agreement-myanmar-eu/>

'Capacities for Peace' is a global project undertaken by Saferworld and Conciliation Resources funded by the EU under the Instrument for Stability. The project involves working with local actors to enhance the effectiveness of local analysis, early warning and early action in 32 countries around the world.

For further information, please contact:

John Bainbridge, Myanmar Country Manager,  
Saferworld

[jbainbridge@saferworld.org.uk](mailto:jbainbridge@saferworld.org.uk)



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