

BRIEFING PAPERS

*Communicating
for the Future:*

Building Trust and
Confidence in the
Myanmar Peace Process

SEARCH FOR
COMMON GROUND



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Communicating for the Future:
Building Trust and Confidence
in the Myanmar Peace Process



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SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

Search for Common Ground (Search) is the world's largest dedicated peacebuilding organization, working since 1982. We have over 700 staff, implementing projects in 32 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. Search's mission: end violent conflict. We aim to change the way the world deals with conflict, providing the tools needed to work together and find collaborative solutions. We work with all sides of a conflict, and strive to build sustainable peace for generations to come.

In Myanmar, Search has been working since 2014 to support conflict transformation and locally-led peacebuilding processes through a combination of skills building, dialogue, culture and multi-media production. We presently work in all seven states and four regions to tackle core dividing lines by: fostering an inclusive peace process; building resilience to triggers of violence; and strengthening relationships between authorities and the public to support the democratic transition. We are an ethnically and religiously diverse team, collaborating with over 15 local partners, and have built a diverse network of over 10,000 stakeholders across the country. Our programming engages government, ethnic armed groups, civil society, including women and youth, as well as media partners, and the private sector. Informed by global experience, Search Myanmar is locally rooted, consistently adapting to the changing needs of Myanmar's context.



*People's
Knowledge*

of the Myanmar Peace Process

People's Knowledge of the Myanmar Peace Process

I. Executive Summary

- Of over 3,000 people interviewed in seven states and divisions, most have very little knowledge about the Myanmar peace process, and many have never heard of it. Only a few people could differentiate the peace process from broader political processes.
- Less than half of respondents claimed to know where to get reliable information about the peace process, and very few have participated in the peace process.
- Respondents in active armed conflict areas, and respondents in less conflict-affected areas with low levels of satisfaction with the peace process, showed high levels of interest to participate in the peace process.
- The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) has created some positive outcomes and sets a roadmap for continued dialogue to address major issues underlying armed conflict across the country.
- The Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee-Local (JMC-L) provides a bridge between local communities and the peace process. JMC-Ls activities should expand in the states and regions with lower levels of participation and less satisfaction in the peace process.

II. Background and Research Findings

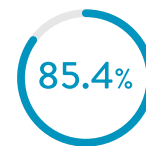
Of the 3,000 respondents in three divisions and four states, *few respondents were able to differentiate the peace process from political processes, and many had never heard of the peace process.* Of those who had heard of it, only 40% “strongly agree” that issues which are important to them and their communities are adequately addressed in the peace process. Little variation was seen in knowledge about the peace process when analyzed by ethnicity or primary language – though some variations exist as related to gender, age, and location. Men tended to cite greater knowledge about the peace process than women and younger generations, while urban populations generally claimed greater knowledge than rural. Research participants from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tended to have a higher level of education and knowledge about political processes, and in turn showed more interest in discussing pol-

Few respondents were able to differentiate the peace process from political processes, and many had never heard of the peace process.

itics and the peace process. The level of conflict in a respondent's area may also somewhat influence people's perceptions of their knowledge. For example, in Bago State, 4.6% of respondents considered themselves having "above average" or "excellent" knowledge about the peace process, compared to 11.9% in Mon State.

People's satisfaction of the peace process further varies across states and regions. Areas with active armed conflict and areas with lower levels of participation have low levels of satisfaction, compared to areas with no active conflict and high participation. **41% of participants claimed that they know where to go to get reliable information on the peace process**, and 33% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Transparency of information about issues relating to the peace process is sufficient." In Chin State, however, frustration due to the lack of accessibility to peace process activities was voiced by one respondent as, "We don't even know who will represent the Chin community in the peace process, or who is going to attend the conference; but we know of a few of them only after the conference is over and they post some pictures of it on social media [Facebook]."

In terms of participation in the peace process from both conflict-affected and less conflict-affected areas, **85.4% of respondents cited that they did not participate directly in any meetings or activities to discuss the peace process** in the last 12 months, and only 14.6% of respondents participated at least once. Most of those who participated are from conflict-affected areas where the JMC-L plays an important role in enabling the public to be involved in the formal peace process.



85.4% of respondents cited that they did not participate directly in any meetings or activities to discuss the peace process.

Respondents expressed further concern over the relationship between the peace process and large development projects. Lack of transparency in infrastructure development projects causes tension and discontent within communities, which is even more pronounced in contested areas. The local communities in Karen State often perceive the large-scale economic and road projects as support for the Tamadaw's expansions into the mix-controlled areas. Communities in Shan State have concerns over involvement of the Tamadaw and Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) in the drug trade. Although the respondents in both states feel that the NCA and other peace activities have not contributed significantly to their public good, the satisfaction level with the peace process in Karen State is 29% higher than that in Shan State. The reason for the difference may be due to the active role of the JMC-L in holding meetings where local communities can openly discuss their concerns and needs.

III. Analysis

Of those familiar with the peace process, many respondents perceive it to be a top-down endeavor, or one that is generally controlled by the Tatmadaw. Much progress toward increasing trust in the peace process could be made by increasing access to information and enhancing meaningful public

participation and engagement in the process. This includes raising awareness about the actions taken by key decision-makers in the peace process, particularly the Tamadaw and EAOs. Similarly, *local communities would benefit from increased awareness and knowledge about how issues important to them are being addressed in the peace process.* Increased collaboration amongst government actors, the Tatmadaw, EAOs, and civil society about *infrastructure and social services in conflict-affected areas could both reduce tensions and address the needs and concerns of the people living in these areas.*

There is less opportunity for people in conflict-affected areas to access information and participate in the peace process.

Though there is high interest in the peace process, *there is less opportunity for people in less conflict-affected areas to access information and participate.* Social media sites, such as Facebook and Messenger, are the only sources of information known to residents in some states. The JMC-L plays an important formal role for some local communities and constructs a vertical model of civic participation to a peace process. The general public, however, cannot access JMC's information from its official website. There is no communication channel about the peace process that reaches all areas.

The report finds that *people in the most conflict-affected areas*, Karen State for example, *have the highest level of interest and participation in peace process activities.* In those areas, the activities of the JMC-L office provide opportunity for local level participation. One Karen local representative explained, *"The JMC welcomes any discussion [from the locals] about any intervention related to peace."* The engagement of the broader public in Government- or EAO-led peace activities through a formal body like the JMC is of major importance for the peace process. Many respondents in the research believe that the NCA is responsible for the improvement in road conditions in remote areas most affected by conflict. However, respondents in large-scale development project areas where there are fewer conflicts were concerned that projects such as road construction neglects local communities' interests. The general public in these areas was not involved in decision-making, and saw themselves as passive observers in these development projects while the Tamadaw and EAOs engage for natural resource extraction, trade and taxation, and for profiting from the drug industry.

IV. Recommendations

- Create opportunities for local communities to come together to learn about, discuss, and engage with the peace process operating bodies, for example through the JMC-L. Emphasize this approach in states and regions with low levels of participation and satisfaction, and with high levels of participation but low levels of satisfaction in the peace process.
- Leverage media messaging to communicate basic information about the peace process to build the foundation of understanding, regularly cover peace process events and developments, and inform the public about opportunities for participation.

- Create opportunities for collaboration between government, EAOs, civil society actors, and local communities to promote equity and transparency in development projects both in conflict-affected areas and areas near economic projects.
- Create more spaces in both national dialogues and political dialogues for civilians by the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) to craft the peace process to be comprehensive.
- Create more opportunities for representatives from civil society in all thematic sectors of political dialogues, as well as expand opportunities for ethnic political parties.

The data, analysis, and recommendations in this briefing paper come from the July 2019 Search for Common Ground-Myanmar research report, 'Experiences and Perceptions in Myanmar's Peace Process.' The research was conducted in four states (Chin, Karen, Mon, and Shan) and three regions (Bago, Tanintharyi, and Yangon) in Myanmar in May 2019, and included more than 3,200 diverse respondents, including civil society, community members, political parties, and ethnic armed organizations. The paper includes perspectives from a 'National Level Consultative Workshop' held in September 2019 with 39 representative participants from the research areas. Both activities are a component of a Joint Peace Fund-funded project, Communicating for the Future: Building Confidence and Trust in the Peace Process.

Media

& the Myanmar Peace Process



Media and the Myanmar Peace Process

I. Executive Summary

- Media has a potentially powerful role to play in increasing understanding and broad citizen engagement in Myanmar's path to peace.
- People throughout Myanmar are active consumers of media and regularly get information from various media sources, including television, radio, Facebook, and Viber.
- Fewer than half of respondents said they know where to get reliable information on the peace process.
- Media consumption takes different forms across different demographics, yet television is the most widely consumed type of media across all.
- Tailored messages that are relevant to people's lives, delivered by admired and trusted influencers, and conveyed through the most accessible media sources will have the greatest reach and will be the most impactful.



Media consumption takes different forms across different demographics, yet **television is the most widely consumed type of media** across all.

II. Background and Research Findings

Over 3,000 research respondents from across seven states and regions were found to have very little knowledge about Myanmar's peace process. Few were able to differentiate the peace process from political processes, many participants had never heard of the peace process, and few have awareness about issues discussed in the peace process or the actual actors involved. When asked specifically how the peace process could contribute to addressing issues they identified as important, most lacked sufficient understanding of the process to provide concrete responses.

Less than half of the 3,200 respondents claimed to know where to go for reliable information about the peace process, with 41% agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement, "If I need to get reliable information about the peace process I know where to get it." 33% felt that the government is effective and consistent about sharing information about the peace process, and 25% felt that ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) are effective in doing so.

The vast majority of those who access information on the peace process say they get it from TV. Television is the most widely consumed source of media across all demographics, and more than half watch TV often or daily. About a third of the population listens to the radio, with slightly more frequency among those over 60. Facebook usage is popular, but much more common in urban settings than in rural areas. Roughly 20% of those 18 to 34 and those 35 to 59 years of age responded that they use Facebook every day. About a third of participants say they read online blogs or news sources. Viber is more well-known than YouTube or Instagram.

Television personalities and celebrities are by far the most trusted source of “important information,” and their insight is relied upon significantly more than religious, political, or community leaders. When asked to indicate three sources that you trust the most to learn important information, the top three responses are TV personalities, posts from my favorite Facebook pages, and community based organizations at 25%, 14%, and 9%, respectively. By contrast, political leaders of my state/region, international media, and national level political leaders were listed by 4%, 3%, and 3%, respectively.

Television personalities and celebrities are by far the most trusted source of “important information.”

Respondents were easily able to cite influencers amongst civil society and cultural actors, and some government agencies, but only a few could identify specific actors from EAOs. Some key influencers for peace were identified from Parliament, the Ministry of Social Welfare, and the Department of Rural Development.

III. Analysis

Due to its pervasive reach to a broad audience in Myanmar, the media can be a powerful tool to counter negative perceptions and a lack of information. Respondents repeatedly expressed an interest in knowing more about the peace process. Findings show that people attribute an increased sense of safety and security, improved livelihoods, and increased access to services to the implementation of the NCA. At the same time, they expressed low awareness of the peace process and a high sense that violent conflict will re-emerge. This fear and uncertainty is at least in part a result of lack of information, and is hampering economic development and eroding overall trust in the government’s pursuit of peace, as well as the country’s transition to democracy.

Television, radio, and Facebook rank as the highest consumed media across diverse demographics, so the most wide-reaching information campaigns will likely utilize these platforms. Recognizing that all demographics watch TV and listen to radio, while fewer people over the age of 60 use Facebook, messaging should be designed accordingly. It is possible that Viber campaigns for messaging, conducting surveys, and other engagement could reach growing numbers of young people.

As TV personalities and celebrities are found to have the highest level of trust amongst local communities, far greater than any stakeholder, and for their great interest in issues associated with armed

All demographics watch TV and listen to radio, while fewer people over the age of 60 use Facebook.

conflict it is effective to include TV personalities whenever possible. Musicians are also important, particularly at the state and regional level as there are musicians who are cultural icons in all states and regions while other cultural icons do not always have such geographically broad appeal.

With limited knowledge of basic information about the peace process, it is important to include basic information in order to educate on fundamental concepts, as well as regular updates of current developments and events. Messaging should consider that many people do not know the difference between the peace process and political processes. People also need to know how their issues are or are not being addressed in the process, as well as pathways to constructively engage with issues they care about.

With low confidence that EAOs and government are consistent about conveying information, it is important to provide opportunities for EAOs, government actors, and Tatmadaw officials to participate in interviews, discussions, and media activities to share information about the process. Their involvement could increase trust and understanding about the peace process and how the issues being negotiated affect people's everyday lives.

IV. Recommendations

- Stakeholders should better utilize the power of traditional and social media to raise people's awareness and knowledge about the peace process and pathways to peace.
- Consider the wide consumption of television when designing a media plan.
- Leverage TV, but also radio and Facebook to target different demographics, as core media messaging platforms to educate the public. Consider experimenting with Viber campaigns for information sharing and to facilitate engagement with young people.
- Communicate basic educational information about the peace process to build the foundation of basic public understanding.
- Regularly cover peace process events and developments, and inform about opportunities for participation.
- To convey relevance and build interest, integrate storylines that raise awareness about issues important to people's daily lives, outlining how these issues are being, or how they can be, addressed in the peace process. This includes issues like how the peace process is responding to the ways in which conflict affects livelihoods, the prevalence of drugs, or infrastructure development.
- Show coexistence, positive relationships, and collaboration amongst diverse communities.

- Provide opportunities for EAOs, government actors, and Tatmadaw representatives to participate in media activities to discuss the peace process and associated issues.
- Involve TV personalities and celebrities whenever possible. Engage with musicians, particularly for activities at the state and regional level. Engage with Facebook influencers, radio personalities, and bloggers.
- Convince the state media and other local media to message about the events, updates, and proceedings of the current peace process to the public in a timely manner by broadcasting on their state and local media as well as social media.

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*Women
and Youth
Engagement*

in the Myanmar Peace Process

Women and Youth Engagement in the Myanmar Peace Process

I. Executive Summary

- Women and youth are seldom included in peace-related activities either at local or national levels.
- Respondents in local communities generally would like to see better representation of women and youth in political processes, however, there is no clear understanding of how that should be achieved, nor what is meant by women's and youth inclusion. Many decision makers could not explain why inclusion is important.
- Even amongst the few women and youth who identified themselves as possessing above average knowledge about the peace process, most could not differentiate between the peace process and political processes.
- The discussions in the project's "National Level Consultative Workshop" included how media and creative arts could support women's and youth voices in affected areas to be heard by government, military, and ethnic armed groups. Peace-related education and capacity building programs for youth and women to implement their own citizen-led activities could lead to more inclusion.

II. Background and Research Findings

Among 3,000 respondents, who represent four different states and three divisions, **only 0.8% and 4.2% of women claimed to possess "excellent" or "above average" knowledge about the peace process** respectively. In comparison, male respondents claimed 2.1% and 7.3% respectively. The self-assessed level of knowledge about the peace process by youth (age between 18-34) did not vary significantly from other age groups. Yet, even amongst the women and youth who cited possessing above average knowledge about the peace process, most could not differentiate between the peace process and political processes, such as public hearings or elections. **85.4% of respondents cited that they did not participate directly in any meetings or activities related to the peace process** in the last 12 months,

Only 0.8% and 4.2% of women claimed to possess "excellent" or "above average" knowledge about the peace process.

and only 14.6% claimed to have participated once or twice.

The research respondents *would like to see better representation of women and youth stakeholders in peace and political processes*. From their perspectives, consultations with and input from women and youth are rarely included and heard in these processes. Consequently, very few of the respondents were able to speak about the peace process in any detail, many had never heard of the peace process, and few had awareness of the issues discussed in the peace process and the actors involved.

Women's involvement in peace-related activities is significantly lower in rural areas than urban. For example, in Chin State, the number of women interviewed who cited involvement in peace-related activities was only half that of the men interviewed; in Yangon Division, the men and women cited almost equal numbers of participation.

The research identified that there are active *youth groups working for positive change and community mobilization in their respective communities*. Youth groups conduct trainings and awareness-raising for communities and often take rights-based approaches in their work for community development, civic engagement, and democratic reform. Yet, like women, young people have no formal voice and limited space in the peace process.

Respondents mentioned how creative arts productions, such as short plays, art exhibitions, photo exhibitions, and the involvement of famous celebrities, local ethnic celebrities, and famous people who are admired by local people could be used to promote awareness of youth and women's participation in the peace process. They also recommend that there should be programs for youth and women's education, livelihoods, and capacity building through the concerted effort of the government, military, ethnic armed groups, political parties, and religious and civil society organizations.

III. Analysis

For most of the respondents, peace-building is perceived as a top-down process, and is beyond the involvement and access of local communities. The respondents acknowledged the limited involvement of women and youth in the peace and political processes, but more than half believe that the concerns of women and youth are adequately considered in the ongoing peace process. Many could also not articulate the impacts of exclusion, nor what power dynamics need to be considered to meaningfully engage women and youth. The general public's low awareness about the NCA process was acknowledged as an important issue for the peace process by participants in the "National Level Consultative Workshop" in Yangon, but these participants did not prioritize the exclusion of women and youth in the peace process as an urgent issue.

In some states, women cited that there is no information for women about when and how to position themselves for village and township administrative leadership roles, or how to get involved in the



Research respondents would like to see better representation of women and youth stakeholders in peace and political processes.

peace process. Women are neither in the union level Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC-U) nor in decision-making positions for the peace process in government, Tatmadaw, or Ethnic Armed Organizations. Both in key informant interviews and focus group discussions, participants could also not concretely describe how youth should be engaged in the peace process.

Peace-building is perceived as a top-down process, and is beyond the involvement and access of local communities.

Some discussions at the “National Level Consultative Workshop” included having policies and laws to formally include youth and women in the current peace process. The participants considered civil society and media as key actors to advocate for the importance of including youth and women in dialogue and peace processes. In addition, youth and women’s inclusion initiatives can be harnessed by existing policies and platforms. For example, the Myanmar National Youth Policy, launched in 2018, and internationally ratified CEDAW, are legitimate advocacy tools that can support youth and women’s inclusion in the peace process. The participants also stated that the voices of youth and women in affected areas could be promoted and heard through civil society, the media, and creative peace building approaches.

The participation of women and youth would build a generation of peacemakers and balance what is considered to be an exclusionary, elitist peace process – ultimately supporting a more sustainable and durable peace agreement. Many women’s groups and youth groups have wide networks, are well connected civil society influencers, often operate as mediators in conflict areas, and have been trained in higher-level conflict resolution and critical thinking skills from national and international organizations.

IV. Recommendations

- Raise awareness to the Tatmadaw, EAOs, and civil society actors to regularly and systematically engage with women and youth, and to recognize roles of women and youth as important for politico-economic issues and a sustainable peace process.
- Organize policy conferences to find ways to effectively implement existing youth and women policies in the peace process.
- Facilitate local youth and women to engage frequently in both formal and non-formal peace-related meetings and activities.
- Find ways to train women’s and youth so they are well-prepared to be included in formal peace activities that operate at local levels.
- Create practical steps to increase the quota of women in village and ward administrative leadership for local level formal participation in the peace process.

- Promote creative approaches to peacebuilding such as short plays, art exhibitions, photo exhibitions, and the involvement of famous celebrities who are admired by local people, to raise awareness of the importance of youth and women's participation in the peace process.
- Create the space and mandatory plan for youth and women to participate in the formal peace process and political dialogue (specifically in UPDJC and JMC as the civilian) and peace building.

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*Livelihoods
and Land
Issues*

Livelihoods and Land Issues

I. Executive Summary

- Livelihoods remain a top concern amongst over 3,200 respondents across all research areas in seven states and regions.
- Though some people express that their livelihoods have improved since the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed, they are not confident that conflict will not re-emerge and once again negatively affect their economic well-being.
- Land issues, including land grabbing by powerful entities, were frequently cited as a major threat to people's livelihoods.
- Conflict is widely perceived to have a direct negative influence on people's livelihoods. Conflict also hinders or obstructs access to education and health services, which further negatively affects livelihoods.
- Transparency and trust-building efforts between key actors in Myanmar's peace process and communities, including reformed land disputes rights, could significantly improve people's sense of economic security.

Livelihoods remain a top concern amongst over 3,200 respondents across all research areas in seven states and regions.

II. Background and Research Findings

Livelihoods was a top concern among all regions included in the research except Karen State. In every region surveyed, at least 50% of respondents agree or strongly agree that their family has been able to earn a better livelihood since the NCA was signed. While 37% of respondents agreed with the statement, “Violent clashes between EAOs and the Tatmadaw have disrupted the ability of myself or a close family member to earn a living in my lifetime,” only 13% agreed this has been the case since the NCA was signed.

While economic security has improved for many around the country, 30% of respondents still identified threatened livelihoods in their top three issues of concern with a range of perceived, and actual, threats. *Income levels and specific threats differ by state and region.* Land grabs by large private companies and powerful actors were frequently identified as a major threat, especially for those from rural areas who rely on the land either for agriculture or the utilization of natural resources. Perceived corruption in the response to land disputes has exacerbated tensions and has at times resulted in open confrontation between villagers and private companies. Environmental destruction due to

resource extraction projects was also commonly cited as threatening people's livelihoods.

Respondents expressed their concern that future armed conflict would negatively impact their livelihoods. When given the statement, “Sometimes I worry that the livelihood condition of my family may worsen in the coming years because of violent clashes between the Tatmadaw and EAOs,” 61% of rural and 58% of urban respondents either agree or strongly agree. The highest percentages in agreement/strong agreement were from Chin with 76%, followed by Bago at 67%, and Tanintharyi, Shan, and Karen at 63%, 60%, and 59%, respectively.

While many respondents did not have sufficient understanding of the peace process to be able to provide concrete responses as to how it could impact their lives, **93% did express that the issue of livelihoods is important or very important to be addressed in the peace process.** Some explained that if there was more transparency and accountability, and corrupt business people were held to account over their land seizures and the adverse environment impacts caused by extractive projects, that the livelihoods of the people would improve.

Closely related to livelihoods, many respondents discussed challenges they face that are due to companies occupying or buying the land that was formerly used by community members. According to this research, respondents largely blame land grabbing on corruption. Across all surveyed locations, less than 37% of respondents agree with the statement that, “Since the NCA was signed, planning processes of large companies operating in my township have been more transparent and inclusive,” with the exception of Chin State where roughly 41% of respondents agreed with this statement. Land registration processes are perceived as unfair and difficult, and many villagers expressed feeling that they are vulnerable and can lose their land at any time to those who are more powerful and who are more educated and better resourced. Some cited the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Management Law of 2018 as the reason they have lost their land. Respondents also told stories of conflicts between EAOs and the Tatmadaw over land disputes increasing tension in their communities and driving further conflict.

93% of respondents expressed that the issue of livelihoods is important or very important to be addressed in the peace process.

III. Analysis

Many communities are concerned about the lack of job opportunities and economic security available to them. They expressed their sense that conflict pushes trade away from their areas, and affects agriculture and the sale of products. Furthermore, they pointed out that internal displacement affects the livelihoods of both those who have been displaced and others as a result of broader market disruptions.

Respondents highlighted barriers to education and healthcare, often a result of conflict, as key threats to livelihoods. **Young people particularly emphasized that improved access to quality education**

Young people particularly emphasized that improved access to quality education would lead to better livelihoods.

would lead to better livelihoods. They also cited poverty or illness in the family as a major factor forcing young people to work rather than pursue schooling. Young people, particularly those with little or no training or education, are often faced with low-paying jobs and are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Many respondents see the lack of job prospects for youth as directly leading to rising rates of depression, drug and alcohol use, and increased crime. Furthermore, respondents discussed how rising poverty in areas where livelihoods are threatened is a major push factor for migration to Thailand or other countries.

Perceived land and livelihood insecurity limits land productivity by curtailing household and foreign investment. Rather than invest in the land, communities are prepared to leave on short notice, limiting their personal and communities' potential for growth.

Peace process actors should be aware that, while there is some increased sense of safety and improved livelihoods since the NCA was signed, ***the severe lack of trust that local communities feel toward the government, the Tatmadaw, and EAOs — due to economic and livelihood issues, including land grabbing — undermines the peace process.*** Without transparent discussion and definitive actions taken to build confidence in reform, people will continue to have little trust that violent conflict will not re-emerge and, in turn, doubt that their economic well-being is secure.

IV. Recommendations

- Through dialogue and media, spread information about how some people have improved livelihoods as a result of the NCA. Highlight how fear that violent conflict will re-emerge because of corruption and commercial projects lowers confidence in the peace process and harms the community.
- Media can increase storylines that raise awareness about livelihood struggles, including issues over land rights and environmental degradation to demonstrate how they can be addressed by the peace process.
- Increase awareness about people's concern over government, Tatmadaw, and EAO actors profiting from economic projects that harm local communities.
- Create opportunities for government actors and EAOs to engage with local communities on livelihood concerns, including young people, women, and CSOs.
- Create opportunities for decision-makers from government, the Tatmadaw, and EAOs to find collaborative solutions to land grabs and environmental destruction. Support stakeholders to communicate with local communities about needs and remedies in a transparent and open dialogue.
- Begin or expand government interventions such as technical training programs, access to capital

(loans), infrastructure projects that create employment and facilitate access to markets, etc. to improve people's livelihoods and resilience.

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*Sexual and
Gender-based
Violence
(SGBV)*

Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV)

I. Executive Summary

- Over 80% percent of respondents agreed that it is “important” or “very important” to address SGBV by armed actors within the peace process. However, the respondents expressed that sexual violence and other abuse perpetrated by armed actors is less of a concern than it was in the past in non-actively-contested areas.
- Amongst over 3,000 research respondents in seven states and regions, there is strong belief that the rising rates of SGBV is directly attributable to the increased prevalence of drugs and drug use.
- According to respondents, the existing legal provisions and support for victims of sexual violence are not sufficient.
- Overall, respondents had a high level of awareness about SGBV, though knowledge varied amongst age, gender, and other demographics.

II. Background and Research Findings

While 10% of key informant interviewees and focus group discussants consider SGBV as one of the top three issues in their communities, **over 80% percent of respondents agreed that it is “important” or “very important” to address SGBV by armed actors within the peace process.** The research did not collect data related to sexual violence cases in active conflict areas, and no respondents outside of active conflict zones directly cited sexual violence perpetrated by the Tatmadaw or armed actors. Yet, **5% of respondents stated that during their lifetime either their close friend or family member has been affected by sexual violence by Tatmadaw or other armed actors.** The research also cites discussions of ethnic communities’ concerns around armed groups’ impunity from SGBV violations committed in the past.

Amongst the 3,200 research respondents from across seven states and regions, respondents strongly felt that SGBV cases are frequently a direct result of



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drug use. One respondent from Yangon stated, “easy-to-buy drugs are triggers for drug addicts to commit gross acts of violence, like rape of children...” Another respondent from Bago Division highlighted limited rule of law as a driver of violence, including SGBV: “The direct and indirect involvement of authorities from high positions in dealing and trading drugs is the main challenge. Lack of rule of law is the main weakness in solving the drug problem and drug-related violence in the community.” Only 51% of all men and women consider that, in their township, women are protected from sexual violence and other related abuses by legal safeguards. Many respondents expressed concern about failures in the legal system that make it difficult to prosecute perpetrators of SGBV.

Some civil society organizations (CSOs), such as the Women Organization Network (WON), conduct monitoring and research about SGBV cases and violence associated with drugs, though more CSOs work to provide support to victims of sexual violence. Some organizations conduct SGBV trainings as part of human rights advocacy work and others provide legal support to sue perpetrators of child rape cases and other forms of SGBV. Through these trainings, people in research areas gain awareness about protection, rights, and legal assistance.

Knowledge of SGBV cases in the community further affects feelings of safety and security for all women.

Knowledge of SGBV cases in the community further affects feelings of safety and security for all women. Though not all cases of SGBV are women, they do constitute the majority of cases. In addition to first-hand experience, women respondents were also more likely to have had direct communication with friends and family who have been victims. Possibly as a result, many respondents noted that women are more active and more concerned than men in advocating against SGBV and drugs in many communities. Among those concerned, female respondents over the age of 60 more often shared their worry about SGBV

associated with drug use. A respondent from a Tanintharyi Region stated that, “The local community is always hearing news about drug trafficking, gun trading, smuggling and corruption. It makes us have a growing sense of anxiety and a feeling that we are unsafe.”

III. Analysis

Research respondents strongly attribute increased cases of crime and sexual violence to rising rates of drug use, both in active armed conflict areas and areas with no active conflict. The respondents voiced widely held perceptions that there is a high-level of collaboration among drug-traffickers, the Tatmadaw, government officials, ethnic armed organizations, and police in drug distribution. Although local actors — police, local government, and ward and village administrators — are well-aware of rising numbers of SGBV and drug-related crimes cases in their communities, their law enforcement efforts are not seen as effective in combating the broader drug industry. A sense of trust and confidence that authorities are making sincere efforts to protect citizens through combatting drug use was not prevalent amongst respondents.

The respondents in areas without active armed conflict noted that sexual violence and other abuses perpetrated by armed actors is less of a concern than it was in the past. The findings could be different if the research focused on active conflict zones. There could be a greater sense of insecurity for women in active conflict areas not covered by this research. In those places, for decades sexual violence cases perpetrated by Tamadaw personnel and armed groups were documented and publicized by women's groups in an effort to seek justice for SGBV victims. The perpetrators, however, have not been prosecuted.

At the local level, ward and village track level administrators have information related to domestic violence cases, drug-related violence within families, child rape, and other forms of SGBV. As such, it is important to have women members in local administrative bodies, in part because women who are SGBV victims could feel more comfortable and willing to come forward and report the incidents, and hopefully receive legal and other assistance. Respondents noted, however, that in some townships, there are no women ward and village administrators. Most people don't know where to go to address SGBV cases through official channels. Even cases of child rape are seldom brought to the attention of authorities. Oftentimes, the only way to get numbers of actual SGBV cases in communities is from the handful of women's organizations collecting this data.

IV. Recommendations

- Use media to deliver awareness raising programs highlighting communities' concerns about SGBV and drug related violence.
- Establish effective law enforcement and show how people's sense of safety and security can be addressed as a part of the peace process.
- Strengthen and adapt existing victim support services provided by CSOs and women's organizations working against SGBV and drug-related crime in the communities.
- Facilitate an inter-organization working group and multidisciplinary stakeholder meetings and trainings where the Tatmadaw, EAOs, local CSOs and women's organizations, local government, police, and service providers can discuss issues, design policy and procedures, and coordinate support services for SGBV victims.
- Initiate and create a transitional justice process for victims from the conflict affected areas as well as the national plans and bills to prevent, protect and enact legal enforcement mechanism for SGBV victims.

The data, analysis, and recommendations in this briefing paper come from the July 2019 Search for Common Ground-Myanmar research report, 'Experiences and Perceptions in Myanmar's Peace Process.' The research was conducted in four states (Chin, Karen, Mon, and Shan) and three regions (Bago, Tanintharyi, and Yangon) in Myanmar in May 2019, and included more than 3,200 diverse respon-

dents, including civil society, community members, political parties, and ethnic armed organizations. The paper includes perspectives from a 'National Level Consultative Workshop' held in September 2019 with 39 representative participants from the research areas. Both activities are a component of a Joint Peace Fund-funded project, Communicating for the Future: Building Confidence and Trust in the Peace Process.

Drugs, and Drug Use



Drugs, and Drug Use

I. Executive Summary

- From 62% up to 91% percent of respondents, depending on location, agreed with the statement, “*Issues related to drugs (production, trading, or consumption) are a problem in my township.*”
- Rising drug use is perceived by respondents as directly related to increased crime, including sexual and gender-based violence.
- The drug trade is widely seen to be conducted by a broad and complex network of the nation’s most powerful institutions.
- Improved collaboration, transparency, and trust that efforts are being made by Government and political decision-makers to help communities suffering from drugs could help strengthen positive perceptions of the peace process.



From 62% up to 91% percent of respondents, depending on location, agreed with the statement, “*Issues related to drugs (production, trading, or consumption) are a problem in my township.*”

II. Background and Research Findings

Drug abuse and increased proliferation of drugs was consistently cited by respondents as a continued challenge for communities across all states and regions. This includes drug production, addiction, and trade, all of which are seen as widespread and pressing concerns. Respondents in all states and regions, with the exception of Chin State, identified drugs and related crime as a priority issue, with over 43% of respondents placing it in their top three issues of concern. More broadly, between 62% and 91% of respondents, depending on location, agreed with the statement, “*Issues related to drugs (production, trading, or consumption) are a problem in my township.*”

Respondents around the country described what many consider to be a drug epidemic, particularly affecting young men at alarming rates. Many explained that drugs were previously a major issue mostly in border areas, but that the business has become so well organized that it is now a problem all over the country. *The proliferation of low-cost drugs was often attributed to the high level of collaboration between drug traffickers and authorities.* Respondents also listed the sharp fall in drug prices, large-scale and highly organized trafficking operations, and new tactics used by drug dealers to be the main factors behind this proliferation. Various other contributing causes were mentioned, including a shortage of livelihood opportunities in local communities and resulting high unemployment.

Respondents further shared a growing concern about the increasing prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including rape of minors, as being directly linked to increased drug use due to the perception that these crimes are often perpetrated by drug users. Women interviewed for this research more often cited concerns over SGBV than male respondents, and tended to be more active in advocating against drugs than men in many communities.

Many respondents discussed their perceptions of involvement of the Tatmadaw and Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) in profiting from the drug industry, and a majority of participants in every participating region agreed or strongly agreed that this is an area of concern. Respondents voiced their hope that there can be transparency and some open political agreement within the peace process about how to address drug issues, including how to achieve non-drug income generation for EAOs.

Many different stakeholders who are in positions to address these problems are already aware of the crisis and responding in different ways., ***Civil society organization respondents explained that they are actively working with youth to address drug issues.*** Activities include raising public awareness about the harms of drugs, conducting research on drug use and its consequences, and providing legal support mechanisms, including remedies for rape and other SGBV cases. Cultural personalities, including musicians, actors, and writers, are seen to be voicing public concerns about drugs and related crime. Journalists report on drug issues and have much insight into the effects on local communities as well as the broad drug industry. Furthermore, according to responses from research participants, some of whom are local officials, local government officials are well-aware of issues about drugs and drug-related crime as it is their responsibility to address domestic violence cases, so they frequently hear about cases of drug-related violence within families as well as other SGBV cases in their areas. Respondents from peace architecture positions also expressed that they are well aware of how the drug industry is related to conflict dynamics.

III. Analysis

Peace process actors should understand that, while there is some increased sense of safety since the NCA was signed, there is continued lack of trust from local communities toward government, the Tatmadaw, and EAOs due to the drug industry. This also creates much fear and uncertainty about the future. Respondents generally showed little trust that armed conflict would not resume, primarily citing their beliefs that segments of the Tatmadaw and EAOs continue to profit from the drug industry and from major economic projects that harm local communities. ***Corruption and profit from the drug industry, therefore, undermine communities' trust in the peace process.***

Greater collaboration and communication between stakeholders, including communities and officials, can raise awareness and build trust. Without transparent discussion or concrete steps to address

Corruption and profit from the drug industry, therefore, undermine communities' trust in the peace process.

the issues related to the drug industry, people will continue to have little optimism that the peace process will have enduring effects and that violent conflict will not re-emerge.

Increased public dialogue on drug issues would send a powerful signal that the government, the Tatmadaw, EAOs, and other authorities are sincerely engaged in addressing the nation's drug problem. Furthermore, with high interest in this issue across a range of stakeholders, anti-drug campaigns present an opportunity for collaboration amongst many stakeholders. To support this effort, the media could integrate storylines about drugs, including struggles people have when communities are affected by drugs; how drugs can contribute to a rise in violent crime and SGBV; the involvement of various players in the drug trade; and how this affects the peace process. The strong concern about drugs amongst many cultural actors, together with a high level of public trust for celebrities, musicians, and other cultural icons, means that their involvement could be significantly influential in these campaigns.

IV. Recommendations

- Create opportunities for government actors and EAOs to engage with young people, women, and CSOs that work to address drug issues.
- Create opportunities for peace influencers from government, the Tatmadaw, and EAOs to find collaborative solutions to drug usage and the drug trade. Support stakeholders to communicate with local communities about discussions and solutions in a transparent and open manner.
- Involve diverse religious leaders, community leaders, and CBOs to collaborate on drug issues.
- Media could integrate storylines that raise awareness about drugs, and explain how this can be addressed in the peace process.
- Foster collaboration for anti-drug campaigns to involve celebrities, musicians, and other cultural actors.

The data, analysis, and recommendations in this briefing paper come from the July 2019 Search for Common Ground-Myanmar research report, 'Experiences and Perceptions in Myanmar's Peace Process.' The research was conducted in four states (Chin, Karen, Mon, and Shan) and three regions (Bago, Tanintharyi, and Yangon) in Myanmar in May 2019, and included more than 3,200 diverse respondents, including civil society, community members, political parties, and ethnic armed organizations. The paper includes perspectives from a 'National Level Consultative Workshop' held in September 2019 with 39 representative participants from the research areas. Both activities are a component of a Joint Peace Fund-funded project, Communicating for the Future: Building Confidence and Trust in the Peace Process.

Briefing Paper: Communicating for the Future: Building Confidence and Trust in the Peace Process

The data, analysis, and recommendations in this series of briefing papers are summarised from Search Myanmar's research report, *Experiences and Perceptions in Myanmar's Peace Process*, as part of the Joint Peace Fund-funded project, 'Communicating for the Future: Building Confidence and Trust in the Peace Process.' The research was conducted in four states (Chin, Karen, Mon, and Shan) and three regions (Bago, Tanintharyi, and Yangon) in Myanmar in May 2019, and included more than 3,200 diverse respondents, including civil society, community members, political parties, and ethnic armed organizations. The papers further include perspectives from a 'National-level Consultative Workshop' held in September 2019 with 39 representative participants from the target research areas.

Communicating for the Future:
Building Trust and Confidence
in the Myanmar Peace Process



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