

# CBOs, CSOs, NGOs in Myanmar

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*This document is prepared to use for understanding of the context and situation of social development in Myanmar. The document is a working document of Myanmar Development Network and regularly updated according to the situation of Myanmar. The tools of analyses used for the documents are documents review on information, studies and knowledge developed by Myanmar Government, Development Agencies and Academia. This document gives an overview of CBOs, CSOs, NGOs in Myanmar.*

## Introduction

CBOs, CSOs, NGOs in Myanmar are important stakeholders who have unique social capitals to building the state and social development in Myanmar. They play vital role for community development and bridging the gaps for the people to access basic education, health care, economic development and natural resources management. The social volunteerism spirit is a fundamental driven factor of CBOs, CSOs, NGOs in Myanmar to carry out social changes in both rural and urban communities. There are various controversial issues on the role and existence of CBOs, CSOs, NGOs in the agenda of politics and religious with dilemma. The social concerns of individuals and institutions have been emerged in the time of crises and disasters in last three decades such as cyclones, floods, civil wars and inter-communal conflicts to see the people as human beings and they deserve basic needs of foods, shelters and clothing. In 2000s, these social concerns have been uplifted through collective individuals to organizational on social services and civic engagement. In 2010s, numbers and engagements of social organizations has grown and broadly engaged not only in development sectors but also in peace and conflict transformation with challenging environments, transition from military government to civic government. Later on, these organizations have been working as networks, working groups, thematic groups, and sector-wise engagements to influence to develop effective policies and implementing them. In 2011, there were 120 organizations which worked for social development, peace building and civic engagement. In 2016, there were about 500 organizations worked for social development, civic engagement, advocacy and peace building. Now a day, studies have counted community based organization in Myanmar is more than 214,000 which always fill service-delivery roles.<sup>1</sup> CBOs, CSOs, NGOs in Myanmar have also been working as the forms of networks which are HIV-relate networks (2000s), Post-Nargis networks (2008), Policy advocacy networks, Gender and women's networks, Civil society umbrella networks, consortium and partnerships, media networks, producers' networks, and alliances.<sup>2</sup> These networks played vital roles to make changing through advocacy, capacity building, networking and coordination, communications, monitoring, learning and research on thematic focused. Each network has significant distinctiveness of influencing policy development and engagement in state building, federal-democratic institutions.

## CBOs, CSOs, NGOs and the Government

The relationship between CBOs, CSOs, NGOs and Myanmar government is increasing vertically and horizontally beyond 2010. Thein Sein, a former president (2010-2015) made democratic reforms in the country and provided huge space of enabling environment for CSOs in Myanmar to play vital role of development. Aung San Su Kyi, the State Counsellor led government (2016 up to now) knows also the role of CBOs, CSOs, NGOs are vital to fill the gaps of delivering social services. The organizational registration law and Association Law (2013) has been opened up the CBOs, CSOs, NGOs in Myanmar to work legalized and freely to deliver basic services in different sectors. Different development partners have also been providing institutional capacities, financial contributions and technical services to create enabling environments in the name of local empowerments which is shaping decentralization and democratization with diversity. Development partner such as ADB, EU, JICA, USAID, and other individual international organizations have been worked closely with CBOs, CSOs, NGOs with strategic agendas beyond 2020 national election on inclusive economic growth, sustainable development, and peace building. Each development partners and individual agencies has particular ways of working with stakeholders in Myanmar including CBOs, CSOs, NGOs and government of Myanmar. In 2014, more than 250 local organizations in Myanmar have met and urged the government to take account of actions on law reform and enforcement, peace building and conflict management, media freedom, governance and accountability,

<sup>1</sup> Asia Development Bank. 2015. "Civil Society Brief Myanmar". Yangon.

<sup>2</sup> Christian Aid. 2016. "The Art of Networking". Yangon. pp.14-15.

economic reform and effectiveness of international development assistance.<sup>3</sup> Later on, CSOs in Myanmar conducted series of consultations to promote peace building and democratic governance through People's Forums, Peace Forums and CSOs Forums. EU also created spaces of consultation with CSOs in 2015 and 2018 to know the concerns of CSOs in Myanmar on development sectors.<sup>4</sup>

## CBOs, CSOs, NGOs in federal democracy process

Knowing the roles of CBOs, CSOs, NGOs in transition to federal democracy needs to look the relations between CBOs, CSOs, NGOs and political parties and NLD government. The political landscape is changing quickly as new parties of alliances are formed. There are controversial and concerns about influence of CBOs, CSOs, NGOs in political and peace agenda and amending the constitution. The relationship between CBOs, CSOs, NGOs and political parties reflected varied characters of interests and strategic focused with different agendas. The distinctions between true and real CBOs, CSOs, NGOs and parties' organized organizations are controversial on making social commitments and changes. This situation drives the relationship between social actors and political parties or armed groups to be avoided of mistrust and suspicion.<sup>5</sup>

## CBOs, CSOs, NGOs in development sectors

**In food production and food security:** Farmer Unions, Myanmar Fishery Federation, Myanmar Consumer Union, Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Agricultural Producer Groups and Associations, Food Security Working Group and other organizations are active institutions in food production and security sector. In each state and region, producer associations and user groups such as farmers or pulse have been formed and active to generate agricultural production.

**In education:** National Network for Education (NNER) plays major role in educational reform in Myanmar. The network has different stakeholders and members such as Student Unions, Teacher Unions, Disability Organizations, Education Organizations, Academic and Education Experts, Monastic and Faith-based schools, Ethnic Armed Education Departments, Language and Culture Groups, and Political Organizations. NNER is active and leading organization and institutions in education sector to foster inclusive education, education sector reform and thematic researches of education sector development in Myanmar.<sup>6</sup>

**In human rights and governance:** The Local Resource Center, Equality Myanmar, Legal Clinic, Open Society Foundation and the Burma Partnership, other party-based and ethnic organizations such as United National Federal Council (UNFC) and non-UNFC are key organizations working to build vibrant and decent societies where government is accountable and people are contributing for their better future to get equality and justice. The organizations supported students, journalists, human right activists, and other democratic institutions through creating democratic norms and non-violence movements.<sup>7</sup>

**In health sector:** Ministry of Health in Myanmar uses CSOs to fill basic services especially in public and community health care services. About 130 CSOs in Myanmar are actively advocates the involvement of local organizations in National Health Programs including on the issues of community system strengthening and human rights. 3MDGs fund is active funding mechanism in the country and closely working with CSOs to engage in community health and CSOs are put as the implementing partners of Myanmar government. Myanmar Positive Groups (MPG), Panteeeain, Aryoneoo, Pyigyikhin, and Myanmar Inclusive Living Initiative (MILI) are leading health CSOs in Myanmar.<sup>8</sup>

**In humanitarian responses:** Myanmar NGO Network, Myanmar Consortium for DRR and Myanmar NGO Contingency Planning Working Group are active in responding to humanitarian crises and responses in

<sup>3</sup> Myanmar Civil Society Forum. 2014. "Civil Society's Review on Myanmar's Transition Process: Prospect for 2015 and Beyond".

<sup>4</sup> EU. 2018. "Road Map for engagement with Civil Society in Myanmar".

<sup>5</sup> NOREF. 2014. "Developing relationship: Political Parties and Civil Society in Myanmar. pp. 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Christian Aid. 2016. "The Art of Networking". Yangon. pp.31-32.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bnionline.net/en/opinion/op-ed/item/2134-burma-s-cso-leaders-alternative-leadership-to-build-peace-and-vibrant-communities-in-21st-century.html>

<sup>8</sup> MOH. 2015. Myanmar Health Forum Report. Naypyidaw, Myanmar.

[https://www.3mdg.org/sites/3mdg.org/files/publication\\_docs/mhf\\_report\\_eng\\_version\\_22aug2016.pdf](https://www.3mdg.org/sites/3mdg.org/files/publication_docs/mhf_report_eng_version_22aug2016.pdf)

Myanmar. They reached to the most remote and unreached areas through their own local members and contacted key organizations.<sup>9</sup>

**In peace process:** Civil Society Forums for Peace is active coordination platform of CSOs engagement in peace process where faith-based organizations, political organizations, humanitarian response organizations, livelihood organizations, environmental organizations, peace and conflict resolution organization and networks with other key stakeholders such as Myanmar Peace Center, Ethnic Armed Groups, National Ceasefire Coordination Team, Union Peace Working Committee, and other technical service providers.<sup>10</sup>

## Key CBOs, CSOs, NGOs networks in Myanmar

- |                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| • HIV/AIDS        | • Producer   |
| • Post Nargis     | • MNN/MNGOCP |
| • Policy Advocacy | • LRC        |
| • Gender Women    | • FSWG       |
| • CSO Umbrella    | • MATA       |
| • Consortiums     | • MLAN       |
| • Media           | • NNER       |

## Key Milestones of CBOs, CSOs, NGOs in Myanmar

- People's Forums (2010, 2012, 2014)
- CSO Forums (2014, 2016)
- National CSO Peace Forum (2016, 2017, 2018)
- Five Thematic Researches and briefings on CSOs (CA, ADB, JICA, USAID, EU)
- Watch Groups (MATA, EITI, MPM)
- State and Regional level CSO Networks

## Limitations

- The Assembly Law (2014) restricted unlawful assembly still effective
- Article 66 D,
- The Organizational Registration Law (2012) has messy steps and procedures of organizational registration.
- There is no CSO policy or guideline of NLD in relations with CSOs, CBOs, NGOs in Myanmar

## Future of CBOs, CSOs, NGOs in Myanmar<sup>11</sup>

- Influence on policy making and implication
- Transformational change to make democratic transitions
- Thematic sectors coordination and collaboration
- Fostering sustainable developments
- Promoting democratic practices

<sup>9</sup>

[https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Overview\\_of\\_Coordination\\_Teams\\_in\\_Myanmar\\_May2018\\_MIMUIG001v05.pdf](https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Overview_of_Coordination_Teams_in_Myanmar_May2018_MIMUIG001v05.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.jointpeacefund.org/en/myanmar-peace-process>

<sup>11</sup> Transnational Institute, Burma Center. 2011. *"Civil society gaining ground: Opportunities for change and development in Burma."* Amsterdam. Netherlands.

## List and data base

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_social\\_and\\_non-governmental\\_organisations\\_in\\_Myanmar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_and_non-governmental_organisations_in_Myanmar)

[https://abilitymagazine.com/news\\_Myanmar.html](https://abilitymagazine.com/news_Myanmar.html)

<https://www.lrcmyanmar.org/#>

[https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Overview\\_of\\_Coordination\\_Teams\\_in\\_Myanmar\\_May2018\\_MIMUIG001v05.pdf](https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Overview_of_Coordination_Teams_in_Myanmar_May2018_MIMUIG001v05.pdf)

<https://www.jointpeacefund.org/en/myanmar-peace-process>

## list of CBO, CSO, LNGO

<https://www.lrcmyanmar.org/ngo-database/?type1=Network>