



Paung Ku

Annual Report 2018

Paung Ku | Annual Report

January to December, 2018



Table of Contents for Annual Report 2018

I.	Introduction	4
II.	Executive Summary	5
III.	Context Update	8
IV.	Activity Report	13
	4.1 Reflection and Learning	14
	4.2 Accessing Resources	16
	4.2.1 Grant	16
	4.2.2 Direct Implementation	23
	4.3 Linkages and Networking	27
V.	Outcomes by Domains	30
	5.1 Domain 1	31
	5.2 Domain 2	35
	5.3 Domain 3	39
VI.	Gender and Diversity	46
VII.	Financial Narrative Report	48
	Annex: 1.	50
	Annex: 2.	51

List of Case Studies

End of Project Reflection with Kan Chay Arr Man Small Fishermen Development Group	15
Local Governance: Pace on Peaceful Pluralism	18
Natural Resource Governance: Atran River Report	19
Land: Labutta Farmer Union	20
Media: Hsenpai News Journal for Shan People	21
Humanitarian Assistance to IDPs: Htoi Gender and Development Foundation	22
Forum of Myanmar's Special Economic Zones	24
People's Dialogue Initiative	25
Peace Music Movement: Peace in Dawna Myay (Kayin State)	26
Peace Practitioner Research Conference (PPRC)	29
Bedar: A CASE STUDY: Amplifying the Voice of Slum Community	31
Athan: A CASE STUDY: Voice for Freedom of Expression	35
Myitsone: A CASE STUDY: Making Space to Influence Decision-makers	39

I.

INTRODUCTION

Paung Ku is a Myanmar Non-Government Organisation (NGO), which provides support to more than 300 partners across the country. Paung Ku supports and collaborates with civil society actors to protect and promote freedom, justice, rights, peace and sustainable development that is both pro-poor and environmentally sustainable.

The goal of Paung Ku is that civil society in Myanmar drives positive social change.

For Paung Ku, “*positive social change*” is the way of achieving our vision of:

... a pluralistic society that values all of the diverse ethnicities, cultures and beliefs, and ensures equity and respect for the rights of all particularly those who are marginalized. This is a Myanmar with a civil society that can shape the country to have freedom, justice, rights, peace and development that is pro-poor and environmentally sustainable.

Paung Ku’s Strategic Framework (2017-2021) notes that our work is inherently complex and thus we cannot predict specific outcomes; however, all of our work is assessed in relation to three outcome domains:

- Civil society is capable to organize and use resources effectively
- Civil society is capable to analyze and apply learnings to address social injustices
- Civil society has the space to influence decision-makers

This report uses the outcome domains as a framework to describe progress over the previous year. Case studies are used to depict changes achieved in the outcome domains and activities are described primarily through the voices of our partners and beneficiaries.

II.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018, Paung Ku continued work towards the central objectives by supporting civil society partners throughout 14 states and regions of Myanmar who share our common goal of achieving positive social change.

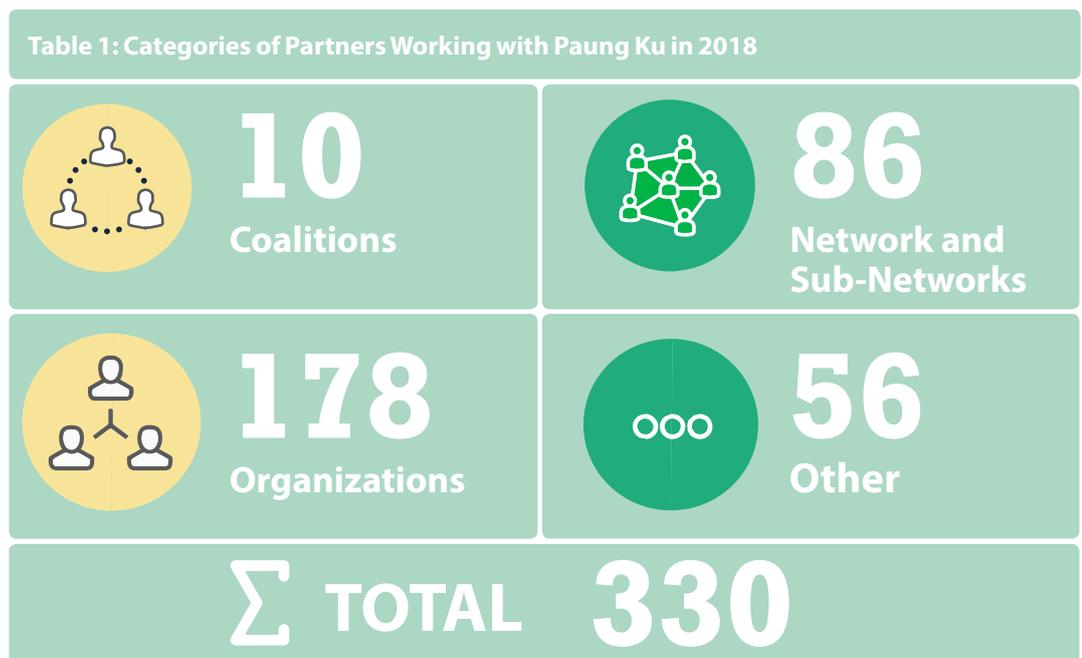
Our main activities can be highlighted as

- ➔ Supporting 330 civil society partners through grants and in-kind support.
- ➔ Facilitating reflection and learning for 144 civil society partners 421 times.
- ➔ Provision of 194 grants to 140 partners totaling USD 813,025 (1,114,834,397 Myanmar Kyat). 87 percent of the grants were under USD 5,000.
- ➔ Supporting partners and wider segments of civil society to access 97 learning platforms. Organizing 78 events, workshops, forums as direct implementation to strengthen the knowledge of partners.

The direct and indirect beneficiaries reached from the activities above are listed in the table below for easy reference.

Activities	Direct Beneficiaries			Indirect Beneficiaries		
	Male	Female	Other	Male	Female	Other
Member of CSO Partners	5,232	5,481	24			
Grants	93,561	83,598	10	667,182	570,719	150
Direct Implementations	4,569	7,076		11,000	11,000	
Learning Platforms	1,162	1,217		1,005	905	
Total	104,524	97,372	34	679,187	582,624	150

Paung Ku supported 330 civil society partners to promote positive social change by influencing power holders and decision-makers as well as empowering grassroots communities to identify and respond to marginalization and inequity. These partners work at village, regional and national levels to address issues ranging from land, natural resources and environment protection to rights and justice for ethnic minorities. In all of Paung Ku's work, we strive to protect and promote equity and justice for all regardless of disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, age, sexuality, poverty or other characteristics.



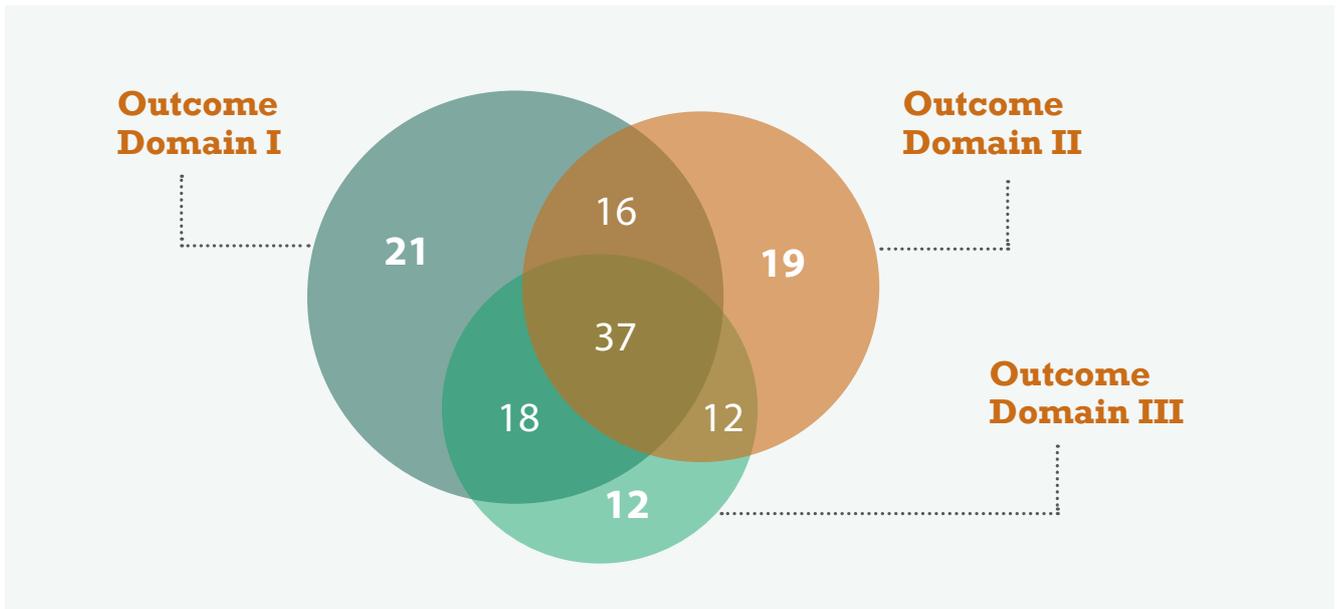
Outcome Indicators

Paung Ku collated data from 135 out of the 140 partners that received grant support to assess changes in partner capacity related to our three outcome domains. The data were drawn from partner final grant reports, end of project evaluations and interviews carried out by project staff; thus enabling us to learn from both partner and staff perceptions of change. The table below showed recognition of improvement in at least one of the outcome domain areas. This far surpassed the targets set.

Outcome domain	Outcome indicators	Target	Achievement
1: Paung Ku partners are better organized and effectively managing the resources	# of partners perceived to be better organized and effectively managing the resources	40	92
2: Partners become more reflective and use learning to address social injustice	# of partners perceived to be reporting more reflective and use learning to address social injustice	40	84
3: Partners are capable to expand their space for better influence	# of partners perceived to be capable to expand their space for better influence	20	79

A further breakdown of this data can be seen in the Venn diagram below. The numbers in BOLD represent the total number of partners reporting a change in each outcome domain, while the numbers in the intersecting segments demonstrate how many partners improved in both domain 1 and domain two (16); domain two and domain three (12); domain one and domain three (18); as well as in all domains (37).

It is telling that the least number of improvements occurred in domain three; this is indicative of the general closure of space for civil society in Myanmar.



Looking more closely at the 37 partners who improved their capacities in all of the three outcome domains, the vast majority (27) reported this improvement after receiving only one grant. Four partners received two grants and only six received more than two grants. This shows that the partners can bring forth positive change with minimal support. Paung Ku believes that our partners can produce such outcomes because Paung Ku recognizes and builds upon existing capacities, thereby tailoring our work to each partner's real situation. In addition, the mentoring and reflection exercises that we use – combined with Paung Ku's focus on identifying and analyzing on-the-ground social injustice (including gender injustice) - have helped partners to explore their own context of inequality and to become more effective and efficient in identifying and addressing their social justice priorities.

In terms of the geographical distributions of the 37 partners who have improved their capacities in all of the three outcome domains, 16 are from Yangon Region followed by Shan (4), Kachin (4), Chin (3), Mon (3), Mandalay (3), Thanintharyi (2) and Kayah (2). Thus Paung Ku is able to work closely with the partners in the remote ethnic states who have limited access to resources in addition to supporting the established networks and organizations based in Yangon.

Chapter V of the annual report provides three case studies that illustrate the types of improvements that partners have noted. The case study on Bedar, a Yangon-based CSO empowering the urban poor, demonstrates change in outcome domains 1 and 3. The case study on Athan, which campaigns on freedom of expression in Myanmar, demonstrates change in all three outcome domains. The final case study, which explores the Myitsone dam campaign, demonstrates how various Paung Ku partners worked together to influence the decision makers.

III.

CONTEXT UPDATE

Civil Society Space

At the beginning of Myanmar's democratic transition in 2010, the enabling environment for civil society in Myanmar rapidly expanded leading to noticeable increases in freedom of expression, association and assembly. Unmentionable issues could gradually be discussed by civil society organizations (CSOs).

However, under the current civilian government which came into power in 2016, many CSOs have struggled to play a meaningful role in the transition. The government has increased mechanisms of tight oversight, control, and developed requirements for bureaucratic reporting.

Since October 2018, invitation letters by CSOs/NGOs for international experts to apply for a business visa have been rejected. Without a business visa, international consultants cannot deliver a public talk or conduct field visits. In addition, 10 days prior notice is needed in order to request permission which is not possible for many CSOs to comply with. Even when the instructions are followed, experience showed that the approval given does not give enough time organizations to make the preparations. Due to these matters, CSOs struggle with repeated postponements and adjustments of their activities. In the worst cases, authorities have rejected the requests with irrelevant reasons.

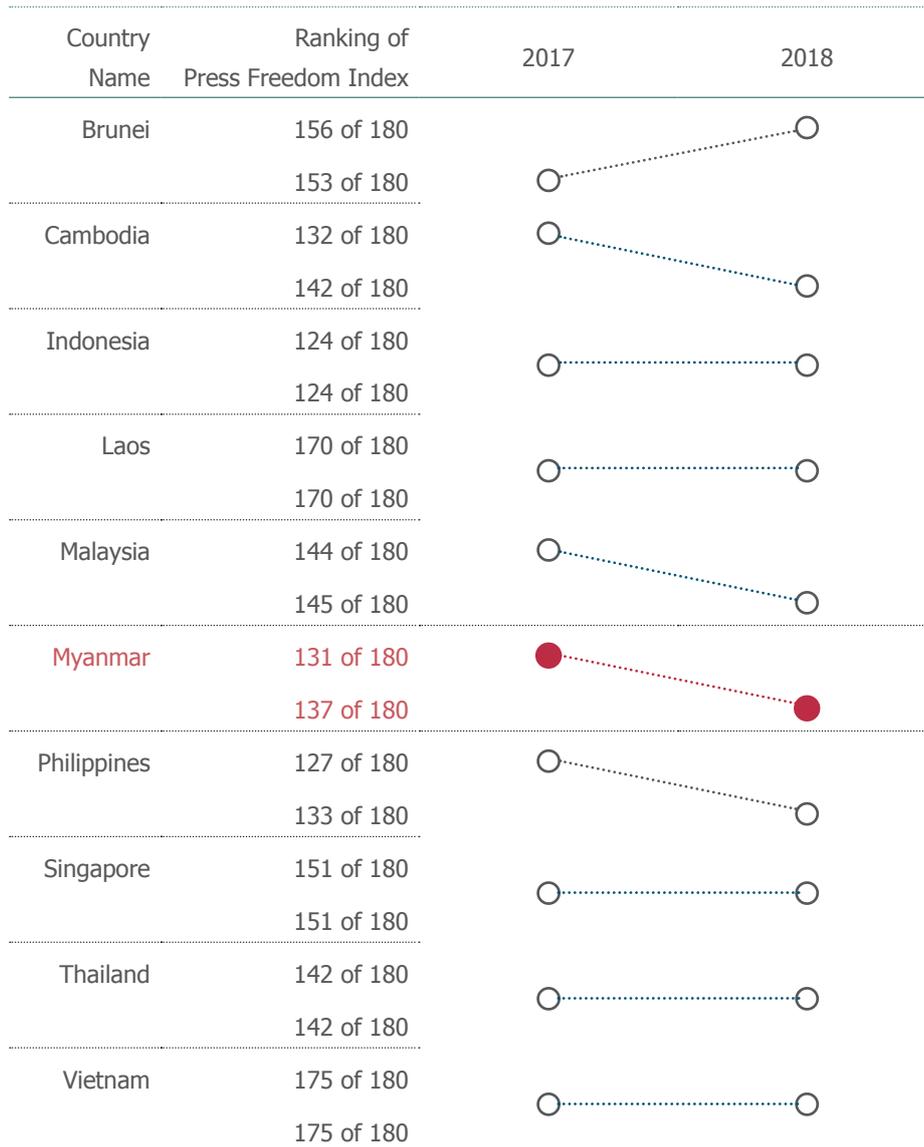
In addition, other factors, such as Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law, have constricted the space for civil society organizations over the last year. The article permits persons to being accused for defamation. In the last year, the number of individuals charged under this article by a scope of actors including the military, private people, and as well as by advocates of the National League for Democracy (NLD) have signif-

icant increased. This has brought about self-censorship not only for journalists, but also for civil society associations. Above and beyond, the fear is developing among the public to collaborate with CSO services. The support from the authorities is significantly dropping particularly in advocacy endeavors. There are more difficulties to work with the government at all levels -- the village, village tract (urban ward), township, state, region, and national levels.

In light of these challenges, Myanmar civil society organizations have a lot of experience navigating these uncertain situations and look for the ways to carve out spaces. As the government has not given CSOs their space, the CSOs have started creating own space and actively pushes for an enabling environment rather than reacting to restrictions. To elaborate, 330 Paung Ku partners work in diverse layers to influence the decision markers at different levels while attempting to retain the strong and concrete foundation of community involvements. Paung Ku also enhances new coalitions among local players, regional players, stakeholders from different sectors including the public and private in order to broaden the space. More research works were undertaken for evidence-based advocacy as a crucial means to influence power holders. In addition, art is used as a tools for public advocacy. Besides, Paung Ku works with different media channels as they are important avenues for civil society to sustain the space. CSOs have increasingly utilised press conferences and media outlets to promote policy messages and organised campaigns in Social media, especially Facebook, to facilitate public awareness raising on the role of civil society in Myanmar.



Press Freedom Index of ASEAN (2017 - 2018)



MYANMAR

137

in the 2018 World Press Freedom Index

Ranking

-6

131 in 2017

Credit - <https://rsf.org/en/myanmar>

Freedom of expression is a vital element of a democratic system as it secures rights of minorities to participate in political processes. In its 2015 Election Manifesto, the current government guaranteed to make news media the eyes and ears of the people and to secure the right to gather and disseminate news to inform the public about the exercises of the three parts of government. The Manifesto promised that after the NLD's election triumph, Myanmar's journalists would be able to trust that they would never again need to fear capture or detainment for examining the legislature or the military. However, in the 2018 World Press Freedom Index, Myanmar's position tumbled to 137, in contrast with its 2017 spot of 131. According to the findings of Paung Ku partner Athan, a freedom of expression activist organization, freedom of expression under the NLD government is declining in spite of initial expectations of improvement. By November 5th, 2018, there had been a

total of 164 formal cases under the Telecommunications Law. Under the current government, there had been 91 cases before the amendment of the Telecommunications Law and there were 62 cases after the amendment. Among these 62 cases after the amendment, 20 cases were filed by Members of Parliament and public officials. There have been 21 complaints filed against 29 journalists under the Telecommunications Law.

All the above evidences show a mismatch between the words and actions of the regime. Media, the fourth pillar of democratic society and CSOs have the view that the government and Tatmadaw remain the primary threats to free speech and media freedom because they not only keep using old oppressive laws with no plan to amend them, but they are also adopting new ones.

Investment

As Myanmar advances and opens its way to new markets, the nation is preparing for industrialization to make up for lost time. The government is seeking investors for business opportunities that help to develop and shape the “New Myanmar” and accelerate the national development goals through nationwide plans including, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), economic crossroads, and hydropower plants.

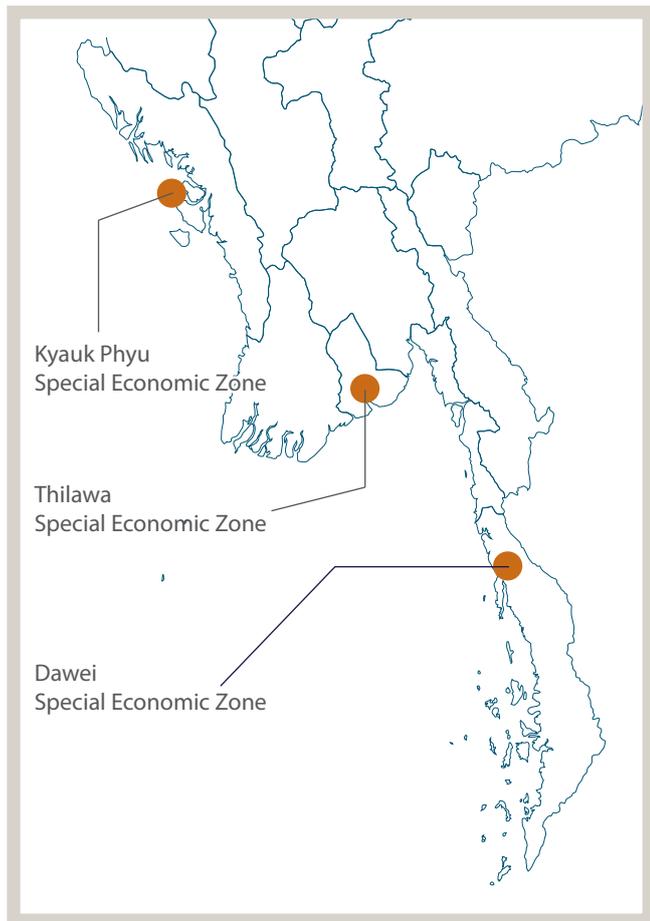


Figure 1. Location of Kyauk Phyu, Thilawa and Dawei SEZs in Myanmar

SEZs and Crossroads

In late 2016, the government emphasized that it anticipates SEZs to frame the focus of Myanmar’s industrialization plans as they are pulling in billions of dollars of investment in Myanmar. Alongside Dawei in Thanintharyi Region and Kyauk Phyu in Rakhine State, the Thilawa SEZ in Yangon Region have been implemented swiftly to enhance the country’s economy.

However, research by Oxfam has shown that without transparent and responsible governance, or a reasonable strategy for linkages to local markets, SEZs can result in harmful

environmental and social effects. As consequence, they fail to deliver expected benefits. The report also highlights that there are many failed SEZs in Myanmar’s neighboring countries which can largely be attributed to an absence of local-related strategic planning in the early as well as during development.

Proceeding with giant projects such as SEZs is fundamentally shifting the country’s livelihood opportunities which undeniably has massive impact on the people especially

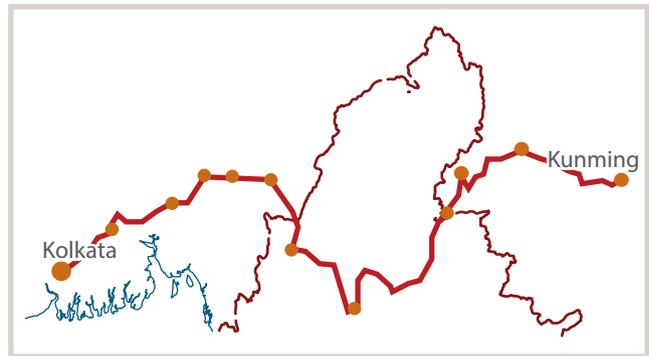


Figure 2. BCIM Economic Corridor

on those living in areas where the projects are implemented. Myanmar should take an opportunity to learn from these experiences before other SEZ development projects are initiated, and take action to improve prospects for local communities and reduce the negative impacts.

Moreover, a new approach to industrialization was sought to include “economic corridors” which will link up to regional economic corridors that are the focus of infrastructural development in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). Vital elements of these economic corridors are the SEZs where companies could relocate certain industrial processes in order to maintain or increase their overall dimension of productivity. However, on the other hand, the SEZs may have potential harm effects on the public’s wellbeing and the environment.

CSOs also viewed the corridors and SEZs as part of a process of extracting value from Southeast Asia’s rich natural resources and from its cheap labor with the purpose of sustaining the reproduction of global capital. One of the important implications of this is the negative impact for the ethnic groups in the national’s borderlands where most wanted natural resources are found.



Graphic Design Model of Myitsone Dam, Kachin State, Myanmar

Hydropower Plants

Myanmar is confronted with the choice of three energy paths. The coal-intensive path favored by the Asian Development Bank and Japan by means of its development wing, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, is an environmentally harmful option. Large-scale hydropower, which is supported by China and the World Bank, also has demonstrated negative effects. Besides, the World Bank's methodology of "sustainable hydropower" is not a practical solution for communities as it is currently envisaged; suitable procedures for what is yet a concept will need to be developed in detail.

In the third option, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and its allied associations have proposed that the sustainable energy path for Myanmar primarily depends on renewable power sources. This seems the most promising methodology; however, it has also come with some negative impli-

cations such as a need for additional significant technical capacity. The formation of large wind farms and biomass plantations may accelerate additional clashes over lands in Myanmar where there is already a struggle over massive land-grabbing. Consequently, this option has a risk of marginalizing hundreds of thousands of rural families.

Therefore, Myanmar's industrialization plans and energy projects need to pay more attention to wider social and environment impacts. Unclear or unaccountable delivery and implementation institutions, uncertain legal frameworks and weak judicial system still exist as core challenges. Moreover, frail operational capacity, fragmentation of limited resources, poor coordination, inconsistent support or policies across central and local government, and wider political instability or conflict and security are also contributing to the difficulties of investment in Myanmar.

Land

2018 September, the amendments to Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management (VFV)

Law enforced to put into effect and because of it, tens of millions of villagers face the danger of eviction from their ancestral lands as it is fail to recognize the prevalent land occupation rights.

One statement explains that the VFV Land Management Central Committee's notification of 30 October 2018 requires people to register under the VFV land registration to continue using the land. This requirement creates serious uncertainties for a giant portion of Myanmar's population. If they do register their land, they will lose their historic and traditional rights to it, in exchange for a 30-year use permit. If they do not register the land, they face the danger of eviction or penalties of imprisonment for two years and/or 500,000 kyats fine. Paung Ku partners – Land In Our Hands (LIOH) and Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability (MATA) issued a statement with endorsements from 346 civil society organizations to cancel the bill as an immediate response.

CSOs have pointed out the ways that the VFV Land Law will threaten pre-existing land occupancy, will facilitate land grabbing, and will cause more land conflicts. Instead of accepting and enacting the law, the fundamental priority must be to effectively apprehend customary practices and communal land rights, and to protect the interest of the people depending on land. Moreover, the law will negatively have an effect on men and women displaced through conflict, who already face challenges in preserving on to their ancestral land.

The VFV regulation modification has also flashed a public exclamation by farmers' organizations and ethnic groups who claim that it counters the National League for Democracy's pledge to defend minority landowners and unravel land disputes.

The conflicts may also impact the ongoing peace negotiations as it isn't in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.

It could harm trust between both sides if it is no longer repealed and will lead to adverse the country's peace process.



IV.

ACTIVITY REPORT

The primary activities of the Paung Ku program are:

1. Reflection and Learning (Mentoring)
2. Accessing resources (Grant and Direct Implementation)
3. Linkages and Networking

These activities, which are conducted in support of Paung Ku's partners, are closely related and mutually reinforcing. To ensure that the support provided is cohesive and appropriate for the specific partner, each Paung Ku partner is supported by one focal Program Officer. The Paung Ku teams also work with external mentors who have good understanding of the local context to provide additional mentoring support to some partners.

When needed, Paung Ku teams also provide additional support for emergencies due to conflict and natural disasters.

Paung Ku currently has six regional programme teams covering 14 states and regions in the country. The teams are:

- Mandalay-Kachin team (MKC) covering Mandalay and Sagaing (upper) regions, and Chin and Kachin states;
- Shan-Magway team (SMG) covering Shan and Kayah states, and Sagaing (lower) and Magway regions;
- Delta team (AYY) covering Ayeyarwaddy region and Kayin state;
- Yangon team (YGN) covering Yangon and Bago regions and Mon state;
- Coastal and Collaborative Initiatives A team (CO-CI-A) covering Tanintharyi region and national and cross-regional initiatives; and
- Coastal and Collaborative Initiatives B team (COCI-B) covering Rakhine state and national and cross-regional initiatives.

4.1) Reflection and Learning

Paung Ku accepts that social change is complex, and that there is no simple equation to follow in achieving positive change. That is why our work is guided by the process of reflective learning, which is summarized in the Action-Reflection Model. For more details, please refer to <https://paungkumyanmar.org/category/report-and-research-papers/>

Paung Ku staff use this model to help each other, and to help partners, reflect on what they want to change and why; how change might be brought about; who should be involved, when, and where.

Starting from experience then reflecting on underlying issues (such as power dynamics and inequity of access to resources) before moving on to planning and action sounds simple, but takes a lot of skill and patience. It also requires relationships of trust and mutual respect.

We strive to apply reflective learning in all of our interactions, from informal conversations to planning meetings or multi-day workshops involving large numbers of people responding to an issue requiring positive social change.

Paung Ku mentoring is a broad process of accompaniment, which helps to facilitate the partners to be able to plan their activities based on their vision, strengths, resources they have and their previous experience.

The reflection and learning exercises are carried out at Paung Ku offices or Partners' offices or outside meeting places, alternatively while implementing project monitoring visits and end of project reflection meetings. Apart from these meetings, Paung Ku staff work with partners through phone conversations and social media. But these interactions are not counted and reported quantitatively.

Learning is usually closely linked to the grants provided although some partners receive mentoring support without grants. Under this area contributed into Paung Ku activities, the organization's mentors are mostly having a great comprehension of the local context and an issue to provide additional mentoring support to some partners. Not only the mentors but also program teams facilitate reflection and learning among its partners through a mentoring process to meet with partners, monitoring visits and a review for the end of a project.

Depending on the needs of each partner CSO, Paung Ku staff have facilitated and supported reflective learning sessions on the following topics: Paung Ku's values, grant orientation, organizational development, project management, and financial management.

In 2018, Paung Ku teams facilitated reflective learning support to 144 civil society partners 421 times. Partner meetings were organized in different places such as Paung Ku office or partner office or other suitable place based on the time and convenience of both Paung Ku staff and the partners

Table 2: Type of Reflection and Learning Facilitated Partners in 2018

Type of Reflection and Learning	Number of Meetings/ Visits
Partners Meeting	236
Project Monitoring and Field Visit	82
End of Project (Reflection)	68
Other Meeting	36
Total	421

End of Project Reflection

Paung Ku program staff facilitated end of project reflections to support partners to reflect on their implemented activities and explore recommendations for the future. In the review sessions, partners are encouraged to list their achievements for each planned outcome and reflect on the approach taken while considering who benefited the most from the project and identify if anyone was left out.

Based on this, they are likewise encouraged to talk about the main challenges confronted, and how they overcame or reacted to them, highlight the primary changes caused by the project, clarify why they think these changes are imperative, and to whom they are important. Partners are probed to explore the unintended outcomes of this project in terms of positive or negative effects. They are moreover facilitated to identify causal patterns and linkages from the information they have, who are possible allies, what information is available and what needs to be further collected, what are most effective solutions, and how can these be sustained. With the facilitation of Paung Ku, the partners additionally discuss how the partner's project has contributed to Paung Ku's outcome domains.

Paung Ku also supports the partners to address marginalized issues and identify the most effective ways for achieving social justice where all people are respected regardless of their sex, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical ability, sexuality or any other characteristic. Finally, in the end of a project reflection, an opportunity is given to adapt lessons learnt to plan for their forthcoming phases.



Small-scale fishermen working on Nga Yoke Kaung Beach in Ayeyarwaddy Region, Myanmar/Kan Chay Arr Man

END OF PROJECT REFLECTION WITH KAN CHAY ARR MAN SMALL FISHERMEN DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Kan Chay Arr Man Small Fishermen Development Group (KCAM) is a community-based organization working for guaranteeing the rights of small fishermen. The organization is based in Ngayokekaung town of Ayeyarwaddy region. The organization implemented a capacity development project focusing on fishery-related laws for the small fishermen from May to October of 2018. In December 2018, Paung Ku's Ayeyarwaddy team facilitated KCAM in an "End of Project Reflection" as the partner had completed the activities under the grant support.

In the reflection session, Paung Ku facilitated the partner to reflect on the training delivered to the fishermen including 102 women, to be aware of the fishery-related laws. KCAM was facilitated to think about who most benefited and least benefited from the project. Due to limited budget, even with some contribution from the organization's core fund, the group couldn't provide enough documents for all the fishermen in the area.

KCAM reflected that they were more accountable to the small-scale fishermen and able to communicate with the authorities.

The authorities and businessmen recognized the organization as they share the information, knowledge and laws related to small-scale fishermen. KCAM was capable of

communicating with the decision-makers from township to the union level. In the final session of the reflection, the organization prepared its future plan.

"As we've learnt the constraints and challenges in the reflection session, now we are able to analyse our capacity and plan our activities clearly."

U Hla Tun Win, Head of Program Kan Chay Arr Man Small Fishermen Development Group



End of Project Reflection with Kan Chay Arr Man Small Fishermen Development Group in Ngayokekaung Town of Ayeyarwaddy Region/ Kan Chay Arr Man

4.2) Accessing Resources

Paung Ku supports partners in accessing both financial and technical resources. For the financial resources, Paung Ku provides micro-grants with a number of direct implementation activities.

4.2.1) Grant

Paung Ku runs a year-round micro-grants program that encourages partners to respond to issues of diversity, marginalisation and inequity in their own communities. Paung Ku staff use the reflection-action model to help partners think through their project ideas and grant applications.

Paung Ku grants make small amounts of financial resources available for civil society actors to catalyze action, support on-going partnerships and enable learning through planning, doing and reflecting on activities. Depending on a civil society partner’s request and proposal, whole or parts of their activities are implemented using grant support from Paung Ku.

Paung Ku also supports partners to access technical expertise as and when they need it. Sometimes this involves organizing cross-visits for partners to learn from each other; sometimes it involves international exchange visits, small-scale training opportunities or facilitated workshops. Paung Ku also distributes Myanmar-language publications on technical, legal, or social issues (e.g. The Land Law).

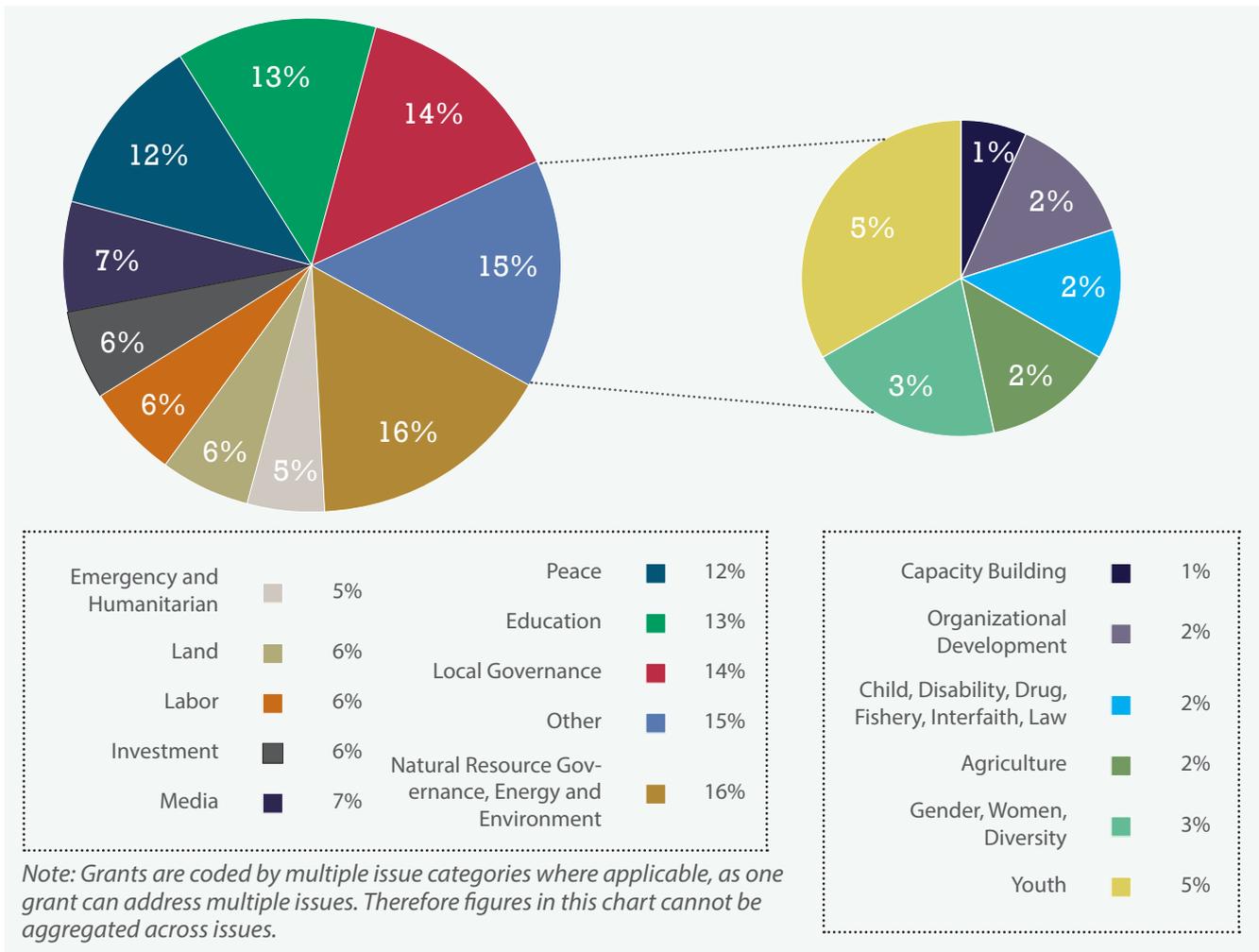
In response to requests for support from civil society actors, Paung Ku teams provided 194 grants to 140 different partners in 2018. Among them, 25 partners received more than one grant.

Grant Distribution by Size of Grant

The grants totaling USD 813,025 [1,114,829,845 Myanmar Kyat] were distributed to the partners in 2018. These grants averaged USD 4190 while the majority by 168 out of 194 grants were under USD 5,000. Grants during this period were supported for civil society activities in all of Myanmar’s 14 states and regions.

Issue Focus

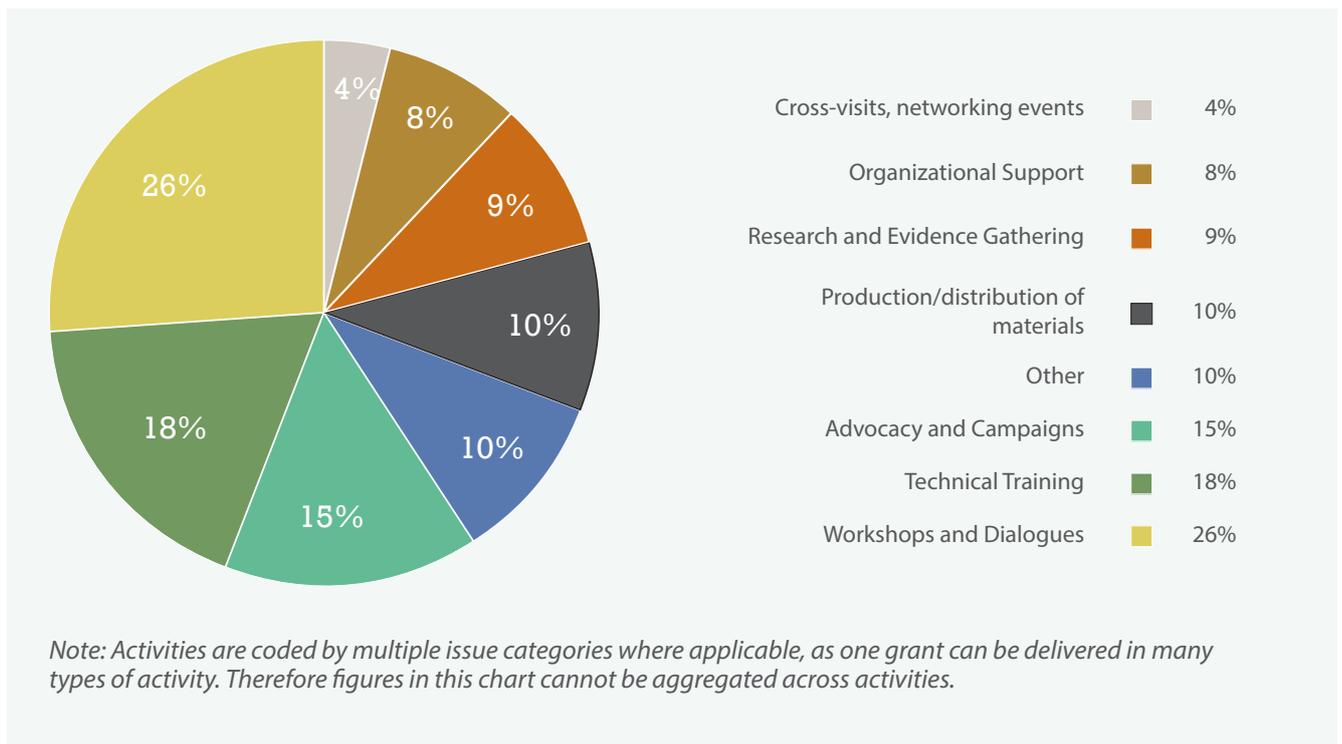
Figure 3: Grants by Issue Focus in 2018



The pie chart illustrates the frequency of issues implemented by the partners with grant support in 2018. Partners concentrated on natural resource governance, energy and environment with the most noteworthy recurrence (16%) because the target communities had more demand for this issue in the reporting period while local governance remained the second priority issues with 14%, 13% and 12% were provided for education and peace issues. Only 5% grants were provided for the emergency and humanitarian sector. Under the “other” category, 15% were provided to partners working on the issues of youth, gender, women and diversity, agriculture, organizational development, capacity-building, children, disability, drugs, fishery, inter-faith, and law.

Partners use the grant support provided by Paung Ku to carry out a range of activities including: advocacy and campaigns, cross visits, networking events, organizational support, production/distribution of publications, research and evidence gathering, technical training, and workshops and dialogues.

Figure 4: Grants Support by Type of Activity in 2018



The pie chart indicates that how the partners implemented their activities. Workshop and dialogue peaked with 26% times while technical training was regarded as the second recurrence by 18%. Advocacy and campaigns, production/distribution of materials, research and evidence gathering, organizational support, and other remained on the points by 15%, 10%, 9%, 8%, and 10% respectively. But, it bot-tomed out in cross-visit and networking event by 4%.



Chairman of Bago Region Parliament addressing in the launching ceremony of the research: Looking Back from the Midway for the parliament/PoPP

LOCAL GOVERNANCE: PACE ON PEACEFUL PLURALISM

Pace on Peaceful Pluralism (PoPP), formed in 2016, is a CSO making efforts for reinforcing good local governance in Bago region. In its endeavors, it is gaining recognition from not only Bago region government and parliament but also local people.

The organization aims to create a peaceful society to drive local development in the democratic transition period. It expects to gain achievements in local development activities through participation, coordination for formation of accountable local government and parliament, equal access to citizen rights, and building up a fair democratic society in accordance with human rights.

Their primary activities are to monitor local elections, provide training for development committees, watch on regional parliament, publish research reports related to local governance and parliament, organize town hall meetings for township development affairs, and conduct discussions and coordination for formation of local development affairs laws.

With the grant support of Paung Ku, PoPP is implementing civic education, awareness-raising for election of local development committees to all citizens in Bago region, participation in monitoring of the elections held throughout the region, press conference for launching election monitoring report, submission of monitoring report of ward/village tract administrator election to Bago region government and conducting the report of mid-term review of

Bago region parliament. By carrying out its committed activities, PoPP has better influence on both the regional government and parliament. Paung Ku has also helped to improve the effectiveness of PoPP’s activities. U Khin Maung Yin, Chairman of Bago region parliament, remarked,

“We can reflect on our activities by studying the assessment conducted: Looking Back from the Midway prepared by PoPP which was supported by Paung Ku.”

Paung Ku plans to continue to support PoPP to monitor not only development committees and ward/village tract administrator election but also local government’s administration and parliament. Paung Ku has encouraged them to work intimately with Burma Monitor to watch on and reveal possible tensions in the region.



PoPP presenting the research: Looking Back from the Midway at Bago Region Parliament/PoPP



The Atran river report on coal ship impacts was successfully launched in October, 2018/Montree

NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE: ATRAN RIVER REPORT

The Atran river- flows east-west from the Tanintharyi Mountain Range located at the border of Myanmar at Kayin State and Thailand at Kanchanaburi Province. Atran River's two main tributaries meet at Chaunghanakwa, Mon State and flow down to join the Salween River at Mawlamyine, Mon State—about 50 kilometers away from the Salween mouth. The Atran River has about 140 villagers who rely on fishing for their livelihoods.

Recently, local people and local CSOs, HURFOM (Human Rights Foundation of Monland) and Pyar Taung Region Social Development Association, solid partners of the Paung Ku, have observed the negative deviations of the river and people's livelihood because of the giant ships by Mawlamyine Cement Limited (MCL) where they transport raw materials and finished products [cements]. Soil erosion and water displacement from passing ships, as well as noise pollution from the ship's engines, have negatively impacted nearby communities with houses being destroyed and livelihoods gained through river activities, such as fishing, being reduced.

In order to collect the in-depth data of the problem, Paung Ku's community mobilization consultant Montree assisted the Local CSOs to do participatory action research in the area in early 2018. All through the process, the villagers became to understand more about ground situations. So they decided to make a documentary film by using the power of art to amplify the problems and enlighten the public about the issues.

With the support of Paung Ku, on November 15th 2018 in Mawlamyine, HURFOM and Pyar Taung Region Social

Development Association launched a new report and documentary. Around 150 participants event including government representatives, community-based organizations (CBOs) and locals from Kyaikmayaw Township attended the launching. The report highlights the voices of local people whose lives are negatively impacted by Mawlamyine Cement Ltd.'s (MCL) coal-powered cement factory as well as the resulting effect on natural resources and the environment along Atran River and the Pyar Taung Region in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State.

In the event, the public was informed the survey of the current status of land, water, and other natural resources in the Pyar Taung Region and discussed the impact of the cement factory and coal-fired power plant. It was followed by the documentary about the impacts from the vessels used to transport coal to the coal plant which powers the cement factory on Atran River to provide a summary the conditions of the affected area.

"I'm pleased with the results of the works we have done and we will constantly be working on these issues as this is important. As the air pollution from the coal-powered cement factory, dust from the stone mining factory, and ships using the Atran river on a daily basis will continue to take their toll, land, water, forest, and further environmental destruction will only continue in the future Also, it was great to work with Paung Ku's programme officer and advisor. We can openly discuss throughout the process on what and how of the approaches, strategies and everything" said, Ko Naing Buhar Mon, Project Manager of HURFOM.



An executive member of Labutta Farmer Union sharing the knowledge of land laws to farmers in Daye Phyu village, Labutta Township, Ayeyarwaddy Region/Labutta Farmer Union

LAND: LABUTTA FARMER UNION

Labutta Farmer Union (LFU), formed in 2016, is a farmers' union striving for fulfilling land rights and farmer affairs in Labutta township of Ayeyarwaddy delta. It is implementing its activities by building better relations with the local administration, lawmakers and farmers. One of the LFU members is also a member representing CSOs in the Land Reinvestigation Committee. LFU is a trusted strategic member of the Land in Our Hands network (LIOH) in Ayeyarwaddy region.

LFU's aim is to help the farmers in resolving land confiscations and disputes. Thus, LFU supports farmers to have the right of cultivating their land officially by acquiring the necessary land documents. The farmer's union also aims to support the return of land to farmers through advocacy to and coordination with Members of Parliament, township administrator and departments, and strengthening a better land resolution mechanism.

In reality, as the local administration has requested LFU to resolve the conflicts between farmers and them while farmers are demanding the union to raise their voices, this is an indication that both of the local government and the farmers have recognized the role of the union. The Members of Parliament have thanked them for their efforts to act as a bridge with the local people.

In practice, as one of the biggest land returns in Myanmar, LFU has given support to about 300 farmers to register and receive land documents (Form 7) for their land property covering 39,022 acres. Apart from this, LFU is also supporting other resident farmers affiliated with the farmer union to apply for registration on another 40,000 acres of vacant/

fallow land. Through these action, LFU together with the community are fighting against corruption on land-related issues.

With the support of Paung Ku, LFU has delivered awareness-raising on land laws and registration to its member farmers. It organized knowledge sharing sessions with a lawyer and forest consultant in collaboration with partners on a research on the case of land return to resident farmers working on forest land. U Aung Win, a farmer from Taungy-argyizu village, said,

“After the land laws training, I’m able to share my knowledge to the farmers near my village and help the farmer union in organizing trainings.”

Additionally, LFU is strengthening its organization and continuously learning about land laws from Paung Ku's mentors.

By carrying out its committed activities, LFU has enhanced its influence both with the local administration and Members of Parliament in terms of ensuring land returns to the farmers. U San Tun Myint, secretary of LFU, explained,

“Our farmer union could share more knowledge of land laws to the affected and vulnerable farmers, and enhance our capacities as well as coordination with authorities are better.”

Paung Ku intends to continue to support LFU to organize awareness-raising on land related laws to small-holder farmers. They will be attempting endeavors to facilitate the return of land seized and disputed to the farmers in Labutta township.



Shan people reading Hsenpai News Journal/Hsenpai News Journal

MEDIA: HSENPAL NEWS JOURNAL FOR SHAN PEOPLE

Hsenpai News Journal was set up by Sai Nyunt Lwin, chairman of Shan National League for Democracy, in cooperation with a Shan poet in 2002. After eight publications, in 2003, the journal was not permitted by the military government to continue. When media laws were relaxed in 2013, the journal was re-registered that year, and subsequently a bi-monthly journal is now being published in Shan language.

Hsenpai News Journal mostly publishes news on the cease-fire, armed conflicts and internally displaced populations (IDPs), landmines, agriculture, development, government support for social welfare and health, economic issues, Shan culture, land, and other issues. The journal focuses on the development of Shan language and disseminates information to Shan people who are mainly proficient in Shan language from the rural area. Recent trends show that people are increasingly reading news through digital platforms and the website (www.hsenpai.media) was launched in 2017. Some tests have also been launched to disseminate news through Facebook, Twitter and You Tube.

The journals are distributed mainly in Shan, Kayah and Kachin states where more Shan-spoken people live, as well as in Mandalay, Yangon and Bago regions. The average distribution is over 5,000 copies and sometimes rising to 10,000. Sai Mao On, Central Committee Member of Tailai Youth Network, Muse Township, and Shan State (North),

“Hsenpai Journal is drawing attention of a group of regular readers. It is seen that the journal is progressively making Shan people more knowledgeable. The readers are increasingly inspired by the affairs and contents of Shan tribes.”

With the grant support of Paung Ku, Hsenpai News Journal is delivering important information to the marginalized Shan people who do not have access to information. As the journal often uncovers harassment by the armed forces, readers are better able to protect themselves in the wake of knowing the right information. As a result of Paung Ku's support, Hsenpai has improved the utilization of its resources to more effectively deliver the right information to the Shan population.

“Hsenpai News Journal reaches to Shan ethnic armed groups and can influence them with some knowledge and idea to some extent,” said the editor-in-chief.

Paung Ku will continue support Hsenpai to develop its digital media in order that it may be more accessible to the vulnerable Shan people.



Humanitarian assistance to IDPs in Palana and Trinity Camp, Kachin State/Htoi Gender and Development Foundation

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO IDPs: HTOI GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

Due to the resurgence of armed conflict between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Tatmadaw in Sumprabum and Tanai areas in Kachin State during March 2018, thousands of people from Aung Lawt and In Gan Yan villages have fled away from the battle affected areas leaving their properties behind. Thus, in order to respond to their emergency needs, Htoi Gender and Development Foundation contacted Paung Ku to support the daily basic needs for IDPs at the temporary Trinity Camp, Palana Village and Jawmasat Camp, Nawng Nang Village. The on-time respond secured the fundamental basic products for the affected families and helped them in time which made them feel safe and pleased. Maternal care products for pregnant women and required medicines for the elderly were also included.

Htoi Gender and Development Foundation is one of Paung Ku's long-term thriving partners based in Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin state in Myanmar. The partner has been tirelessly working for the Kachin community since it was founded in June 2005, with the objective of understanding and being aware of history, supporting humanitarian activities, and capacity building. The organization seeks to identify the real situation and provide updates on current issues to give the information to Kachin State community and to networking at an international level. Htoi Gender and Development Foundation serves as a change agent for vulnerable women and men, with a focus on girls, widows,

IDPs in Kachin State. Paung Ku's Mandalay-Kachin team works closely with them not only to grants but also to support learning and monitoring through undertaking reflection and aiding in financial procedures.



IDPs receiving humanitarian assistance from volunteers at Palana and Trinity Camp, Kachin State/Htoi Gender and Development Foundation

Geographical coverage

Grant activities were spread out throughout the country in where our different partners are working for their prioritized issues. CSOs in Yangon Region received the highest number of grants (57) because most organizations are based in Yangon; however, many of the activities by these organizations were implemented in other states and regions. There were fewer grants to CSOs in Naypyidaw (2) which was included in Mandalay region as well as to CSOs from Magway region and Rakhine state (4 each) as Paung Ku has fewer linkages with CSOs in these regions and some of the activities proposed by organizations in these regions were not relevant. Other states and regions received between 5 and 20 grants. For more details, please kindly see the map in the annex.

4.2.2) Direct Implementation

In some circumstances where partners are not able to manage grants, Paung Ku directly implements the activities. In such cases, Paung Ku still works closely with the partner organizations but funds are not channeled to the partners. In 2018, Paung Ku directly implemented a total of 78 events.

A total of 11,645 participants (female: 4,569; male: 7,076) took part directly in the different events while an estimated of 22,000 participants (female: 11,000; male: 11,000) benefited indirectly.

The most commonly covered issue in these events was local governance (42), followed by natural resource governance, energy and environment (28). Other issues raised included land (21), education (19), investment (19), peace (14), emergency and humanitarian support (7), labour (6) and media (4). Other issues were discussed for 20 times.

Of the events directly implemented by Paung Ku in 2018, 53 were workshops and dialogues, 9 events were advocacy and campaigns while other events included cross-visits and networking events (6), organizational support (5), technical training (2) and a one times, production/distribution of materials. In other forms were additionally conducted for 2 times.



Senior Program Coordinator of Paung Ku facilitating the panel discussion of Myanmar’s Special Economic Zones at Novotel Hotel, Yangon Region/Khin Zarchi Latt

FORUM OF MYANMAR’S SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) have been built worldwide since the 1960s to facilitate global free trade and integrate developing countries into global production and distribution networks, and have been mushrooming in Southeast Asia in recent years. They remain controversial and are attracting growing interest from policymakers, investors, civil society, and the general public. Supporters praise them for spurring foreign investment, creating jobs, building infrastructure, and helping host countries to diversify their economies; critics argue that they entail more costs than benefits, negatively impact local communities, undermine workers’ rights, and cause environmental harm and degradation.

Because of those complexities, it is important for the affected people to be informed and updated on SEZ implementation to ensure all their rights will be protected and respected. CSOs have a significant role to encourage such public awareness and dialogue. Because of this, a forum on Myanmar’s Special Economic Zones was organized by Paung Ku on 6 October 2018 in partnership with Myanmar SEZs Watch, Earthrights International, Denmark Myanmar Rule of Law and Human Rights Programme.

The Forum aimed to bring together local communities, relevant government ministries, Members of Parliament and CSOs working on SEZ and related issues to exchange information, share experiences, analyze key issues and seek potential cooperation for working together.

Nearly two hundred people attended the forum. The forum started with updated highlights on current SEZ’s realities from the ground of by U Soe Shwe of Myanmar SEZs Watch and continued with keynote speeches on Environmental Impact Assessment and SEZs by the Environmental Con-

servation Department, Yangon. The forum also included two panel discussions, the first by different scholars on the topic of SEZs in Myanmar’s Economy: Prospects and Challenges. Panelists, U Thant Zin from Dawei Development Association, Daw Than Ei from Thilawa Social Development Group and U Tun Kyi from Kyaukphyu Rural Development Association where current SEZs operations are occurring discussed experiences and perspectives of local communities on the impact of SEZs on the environment, land rights and involuntary resettlement.

Following the panel discussions, Dr Charlie Thame, from Thammasat University’s faculty of political science, shared his expertise on SEZs in the ASEAN region, including the success, challenges and lessons offered for Myanmar. The academic urged people to think whether SEZs in the country are political projects or economic schemes and whether the economics of SEZs justify their fiscal and human capital costs.

One of the most significant session of the forum was exploring the legal framework for Myanmar SEZs led by U Htay, Legal Advisor and Founding Member of All Myanmar Trade Unions Network and other fellows legal experts. Participants discussed the SEZ law, highlighting the lack of a clear simple legal process. They observed that, often, the legal procedures are being carried out in the wrong way. Plans are implemented prematurely before they are finalized. The legal consultants went on to say that the government at the union level has the role to ensure that the management committees have the direction and clear instructions regarding the implementation and coordination of the laws in the SEZs in a way which aligns with not only national laws but also the state’s obligations under international human rights laws.



Facilitators facilitating a People's Dialogue Initiative in Shwe Gyo Phyu village of Kungyangone Township in Yangon Region/Kungyangone Network

PEOPLE'S DIALOGUE INITIATIVE

The People's Dialogue Initiative (PDI) aims to create a platform for the people of Myanmar whose voices have remained at the margins of the peace process to express their concerns and opinions and improve awareness of the current transitional processes at the community level. Paung Ku initiated the PDI in collaboration with Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS), Gender Development Initiative (GDI), Knowledge, Dedication and Nation building (KDN), and Nyein Foundation.

By creating and expanding interactive, safe and inclusive spaces for engagement and learning, the initiative enables community level visions and strategies for the future to be articulated and heard as the country continues to undergo significant socio-political transformations. Utilizing a conflict transformation approach, dialogues are organized at the community level in different villages and wards in Myanmar where people can have a positive experience of sharing perspectives, listening to each other and feeling heard by one another.

Facilitated dialogues create opportunities for mutual listening and understanding, aiming to open people's mindsets, challenge stereotypes and assumptions and transform relationships in communities. The overall aim is for these dialogues to contribute to an inclusive peace process and peaceful transformation of conflicts across the country. Ashin Sandavara, Kyunkalay Monastery, Kyunkalay village, Kyauktan township, remarked,

"PDI is a good practice in a friendly manner for not causing conflict."

Each dialogue's basic outline is adapted to suit the local context and ensure that participants are able to discuss issues that are relevant and meaningful. Technical sup-

port is provided to build dialogue facilitators' capacity. The training provides the knowledge, skills and confidence required for facilitators to conduct transformative dialogues independently and explore and deepen their own understanding of Myanmar's dynamic context. A peer mentoring system is used to ensure lessons are shared across the People's Dialogue network. U Myo Myint Aung, a facilitator from Kungyangone Network, reflected:

"We're satisfied with resolving some conflicts and defending from potential negative impact caused by the coal power plants."

In 2018, 1,072 people (female: 591 and male: 481) participated in 40 People's Dialogue Initiatives. Local governance was mostly discussed topic followed by education, natural resource governance, energy, and environment.



Saw Phoe Khwar, leader of One Love Music Band, singing peace songs to the children in Gracious Heart Foundation in Hpa-an Township of Kayin State/DVB

PEACE MUSIC MOVEMENT: PEACE IN DAWNA MYAY (KAYIN STATE)

One Love Music Band was established under the leadership of Saw Phoe Khwar, a reggae vocalist in 2007. The band has been implementing the program of “Peace in Myanmar” in recent years. Their activities are executed in terms of peace songs and edutainment both within Myanmar and in other countries. The band attempts to convey a peace message to the general population in coordination with CSOs, Members of Parliament, ethnic armed organizations, political parties and government authorities.

The band hopes for Myanmar to be a peaceful society in a humanitarian spirit without discrimination regardless of ethnic, religion, and race.

From 18 to 30 November in 2018, One Love Music Band completed the peace tour of delivering the peace and child rights message, performing peace songs to the people living in seven villages located in Karen National Union (KNU) controlled areas in Kayin state. Children took part actively in the edutainment activities. Religious leaders, students, KNU local authorities, Members of Parliament, and communities helped the band make a successful event.

Along the movement, the band also coordinated with the authorities and the media, Democratic Voice of Burma, who will broadcast the peace trip. By broadcasting it, the peace message will reach people and authorities widely across the entire nation. In the process, Paung Ku’s Aye-yawaddy team closely supported the band for program

development, coordination and logistics. Naw Zember, founder of Gracious Heart Foundation for orphans affected by wars, said,

“I see the peace tour brought the seed of peace to the people who hope for peace and it is likewise a significant event due to the active participation of the different individuals.”

One Love Music Band has a plan to implement the activities with children for peace not only Kayin state but also in Kachin, Shan (North), and Rakhine states where there are conflicts and internally displaced populations.



One of contributors to the peace music movement, Ahngelay singing in the Kaw Wah Lae village, Kawkareik Township, Karen State /One Love Band

4.3) Linkages and Networking

Over the years, Paung Ku and its staff have built strong relationships of trust and respect with individuals, organisations and networks working at local, national, regional and international level. As appropriate, Paung Ku also connects partners with local and international universities, regional and international organizations and policy institutions that have particular technical expertise. We have collaborated closely with the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies in Cambodia, Spirit in Education Movement in Thailand, and the Universities of Thailand, Japan and Australia.

Building on these linkages and networking, Paung Ku could create learning platforms where different stakeholders can learn and interact. Learning platforms support civil society actors to access opportunities for learning through exposure to new locations and people, new information and ideas, and people with expertise, experience or useful knowledge.

These relationships help us to bring different actors together in pursuit of positive social change. We help partners from different parts of the country to learn from each other. Learning platforms support civil society actors to access opportunities for learning through exposure to new locations and people, new information and ideas, and people with expertise, experience or useful knowledge. We also support civil society actors to build formal or informal networks and coalitions that can advocate or campaign together to challenge rights abuses or to influence policy and practice.

In January to December 2018, Paung Ku supported civil society actors to access 97 learning and advocacy platforms. These platforms provided opportunities to 2,379 (Female: 1,162; Male: 1,217) members from civil society groups for learning and advocacy purposes. The bulk of the learning platforms were workshops and trainings (59). Other platforms included technical trainings (51), cross-visits (9), campaign events (23), forums, seminars and public talks.

In many cases, Paung Ku was the primary funder, organizer or facilitator of the learning platform. For other platforms, Paung Ku's contribution has been to connect partners and other civil society actors with learning opportunities, including by: linking and inviting participants and resource persons; acting as a co-organizer, facilitator or co-facilitator; or via financial support such as for travel costs.

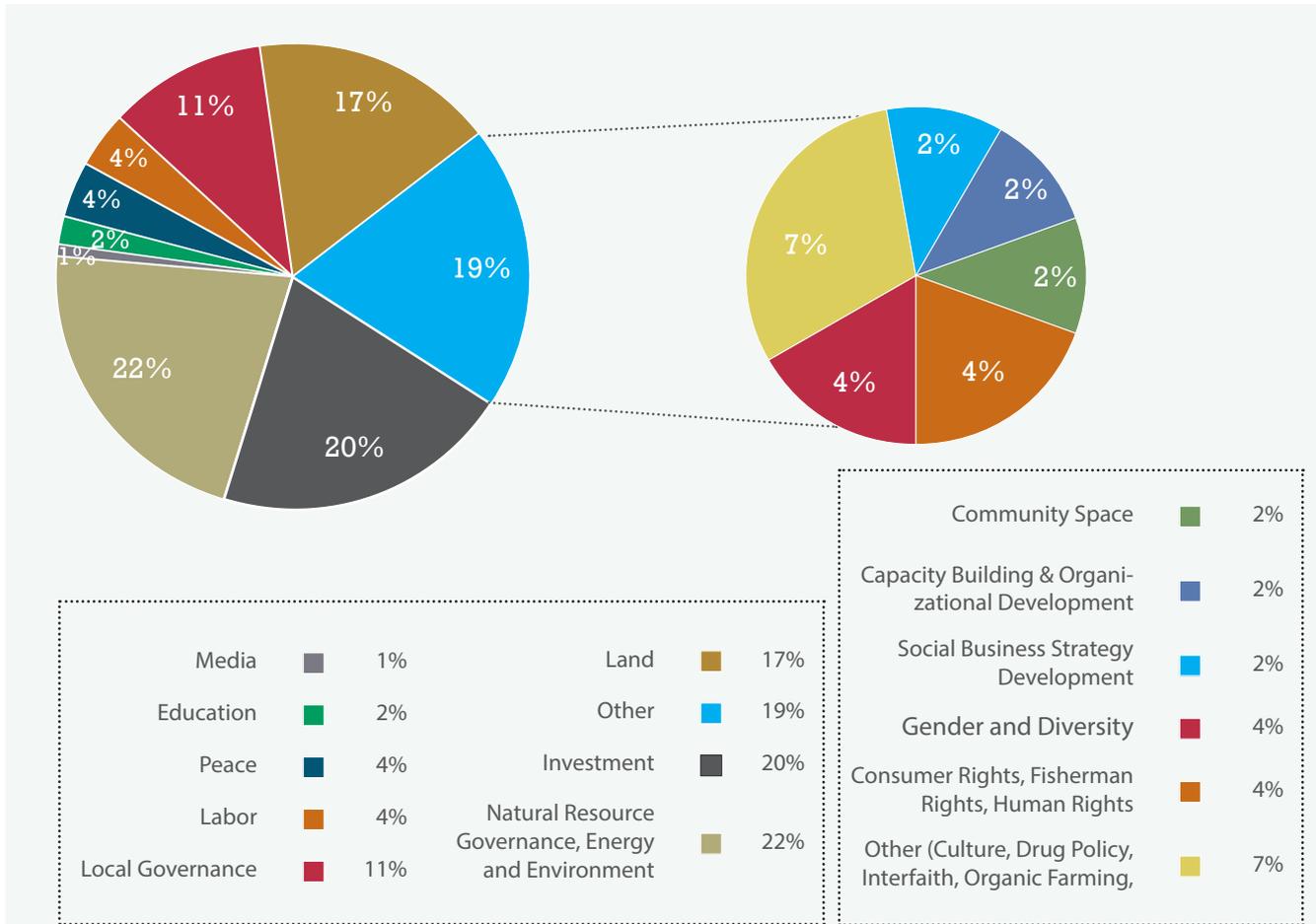
Paung Ku organized learning platforms as workshop and dialogues as the most critical by 59 times while delivering in the kinds of technical training to the partners for 51 times as well as 23 times for movement and campaign. Cross-visit and networking was organized with the most reduced recurrence: 9 times. In the other form of meeting were held on 22 occasions.

Table 3: Learning Platform organized in 2018

Type of Organizing	Number of Events
Events co-organized by Paung Ku with other	48
Events organized by Paung Ku	32
Referral to other's events	13
Other	4
Total	97

Issue Focus

Figure 5: Issue Discussed in Learning Platforms in 2018



Note: Learning platforms are coded by multiple issue categories where applicable, as one learning platform may involve multiple issues. Therefore, figures in this chart cannot be aggregated across issues.

The pie chart depicts the issues discussed in the learning platforms organized or co-organized by Paung Ku for partners. The most common issue addressed was natural resource governance, energy and environment (22%) followed by issues of investment (20%) as well as land (17%) as these are the key priority issues affecting many communities in Myanmar. Other issues addressed include local governance (11%), peace (4%), labor (4%). The issues of gender and diversity, media, consumer rights, fishermen rights and human rights were additionally discussed.



Participants of Peace Practitioner Research Conference (PPRC) 2018/PPRC

PEACE PRACTITIONER RESEARCH CONFERENCE (PPRC)

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies conducted the 7th Peace Practitioner Research Conference (PPRC) in Siem Reap, Cambodia in November 2018. The conference was attended by more than 200 people, including community leaders, peace practitioners and scholars, from around the world. The theme of the Conference was “Peacebuilding Begins in the Midst of Crisis”. This year, Paung Ku organized and supported 30 participants (10 males and 20 females) representing 26 CSOs -

Over the course of two days, participants learned from each other and from speakers describing their own grounded interventions in conflicts in Cambodia, Singapore, Mindanao, Marawi, Sri Lanka, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Southern Thailand.

The annual PPRC aims to enhance the sustainability of peace work in Asia by providing a space and opportunity for peace practitioners, researchers and scholars to reflect on and share successful peacebuilding theory and practice in the region.

By exploring the relationship between theory and practice, the PPRC aims to stimulate learning from local peacebuilding practices initiated by practitioners across the region and to identify, consolidate and share best peacebuilding practices. Each year, the PPRC provides an opportunity for participants to hear different perspectives on dialogue,

mediation and negotiation, discuss similarities and differences in practice, and to meet and engage with a range of different actors in the peace processes.

The conference also serves as a platform for networking and collaborative learning, as well as challenging the nexus between existing peacebuilding theory and practice, and promoting new, innovative and home-grown approaches to peacebuilding in Asia.

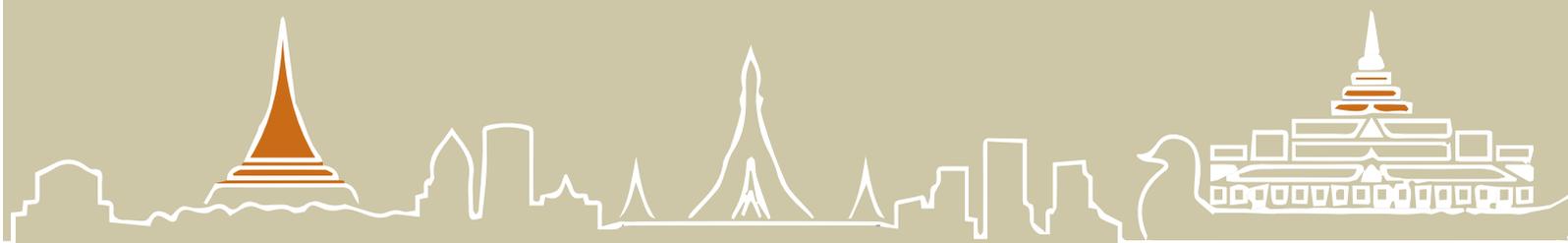
One of Paung Ku supported participants, Tin Maung Wai from Burma Monitor, shared his thoughts on his experience:

“This is an incredible trip from me. The learning of the fundamental reasons of bringing terrorism up in Afghanistan and the associations of the neighboring counties made me consider the recent situation of our country. Listening to the conflict circumstances in various countries, their methods of resolution, the instruments that they applied and their experiences is exceptionally helpful for us to figure out which way we will work for our country. And we also discovered that, in the country, we don’t get updated and in-depth information in contrast with individuals outside. I think the data stream should be changed.”



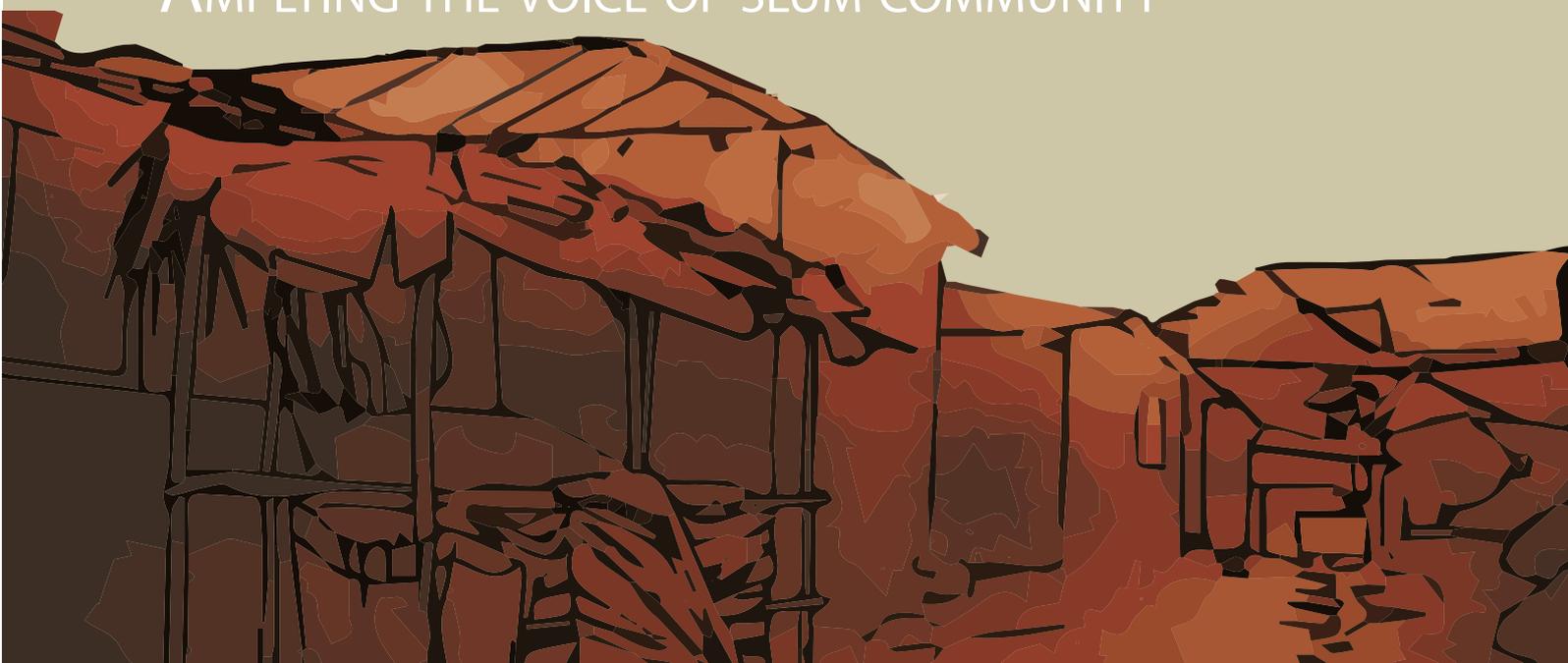
OUTCOMES BY DOMAINS

Domain Area	Number of Partner Improved in Domain
Domain 1: Civil society is capable to organize and use resources effectively.	92
Domain 2: Civil society is capable to analyse and apply learnings to address social injustices.	84
Domain 3: Civil society has the space to influence decision-makers.	79



BEDAR: A CASE STUDY

AMPLIFYING THE VOICE OF SLUM COMMUNITY



5.1) Civil society is capable to organize and use resources effectively.

Most Paung Ku partners already have strong linkages with and knowledge of the community they work with and have dynamic capable and motivated members. Paung Ku support, through provision of resources, opportunities for reflection and learning, and linkages with other civil society actors and stakeholders, helps partners to strengthen these existing capacities as well as to develop the other core elements – community involvement, downward accountability; participatory leadership; accountable and transparent processes for mobilizing and managing resources.

BEDAR: A CASE STUDY

AMPLIFYING THE VOICE OF SLUM COMMUNITY



Slum area in Hlaing Thar Yar Township, Yangon Region/Christine Schmutzler

*'Making a documentary about survivors of Nargis, who are now living in areas of Yangon that others call slums, changed my mind set; I had fear about slums community till before I made the film **BUT** their resilience humbled me'*

*Khin Thethtar Latt,
Director of Quarter #Zero documentary.*

Quarter #Zero is a powerful documentary that testifies to the capacities, and needs, of the estimated 100,000 people living in large informal settlements in Yangon's Hlaing Tharyar Industrial Zone.

Most of the residents of these informal settlements came to Yangon from the Ayerwaddy Region after the devastating effects of Cyclone Nargis in 2008. They now eke out a living with jobs such as motorcycle taxi or trishaw drivers, street vendors, manual labourers and factory workers.

Paung Ku partner Bedar works to amplify the voices of those who live in these informal settlements. Their rights must be protected as planning for Yangon's future progresses.

Using a community development approach, Bedar helps mobilise community members in claiming these rights, at the same time as working to promote greater public understanding of and empathy for those living in informal settlements (for example through Quarter #Zero).

Bedar started community organising in Hlaing Tharyar in 2015, and this in turn has led to a range of community-based action planning and initiatives including:

- ➔ Regular community meetings, where community members can explore their own experiences and strategise for change;
- ➔ Urban gardening schemes and arts projects within the settlements;
- ➔ A long-running (and ultimately successful) campaign to get Yangon City Development Council (YCDC) to collect rubbish from the settlements, after YCDC had repeatedly ignored requests for rubbish clearance services, told residents that the area 'is not under YCDC's control' and they would have to pay about 100,000 kyats for each visit by a rubbish truck if they wanted the rubbish cleared;
- ➔ Organising a two day, cross-learning event on urban planning that brought together a leading homelessness academic and activist from Thailand, representatives from Yangon Regional Government's Municipal Urban Unit, NGOs, INGOs and UN agencies, Myanmar academics and students, the media, and representatives from the informal settlement at Hlaing Tharyar. This was the first time that Myanmar academics and representatives of the Regional Government met face-to-face with those who live in informal settlements in Yangon;
- ➔ Sending community representatives and Myanmar members of parliament to learn from Thai activism, which convinced the Thai government to adopt a participatory, rights-based approach to addressing issues of homelessness and informal settlements in Bangkok;
- ➔ Bringing the media onside by holding a series of press conferences and briefings to build media understanding of the situation of the urban poor, and to gain support for their claim to basic human rights;
- ➔ Organising commemorations for those lost in Cyclone Nargis, as a way of both respecting the dead and drawing attention to the plight of the living;
- ➔ Linking with Leaders and Organisers of Community Organisations in Asia (LOCOA), which works 'to claim and obtain the fundamental human rights of the urban poor';
- ➔ Hosting the 2018 LOCOA annual meeting in Yangon, Myanmar;
- ➔ Celebrating World Habitat Day by hosting public discussions between community members and representatives of YCDC, held at Hlaing Tharyar informal settlements;
- ➔ Welcoming researchers, students and community groups from Korea, Japan and Thailand to the informal settlements, as part of sharing community experiences and ideas;
- ➔ Linking with academics in the Department of Anthropology, Yangon University, to brainstorm on promoting social harmonisation between those living in informal settlements and the broader community;
- ➔ Linking with Indonesian-based Architects Without Borders to discuss urban poor resettlement plans, community-oriented architecture for low cost urban villages and how to influence regional governments to improve the lives of Myanmar's urban poor;
- ➔ Helping other Myanmar CSOs to learn about the capacities, resilience, rights, and grassroots power of urban poor people

Throughout, Bedar has been careful to ensure that those living in the informal settlements are recognised not just as victims but also as people of strength and resilience. Quarter #Zero is a key part of this strategy. Shown as part of Myanmar's own Wathen Film Festival 2018, the documentary lets those living in the area tell their own story. More than 100 people attended the screening at the festival, and a further 70 attended a launch event organised by Bedar.

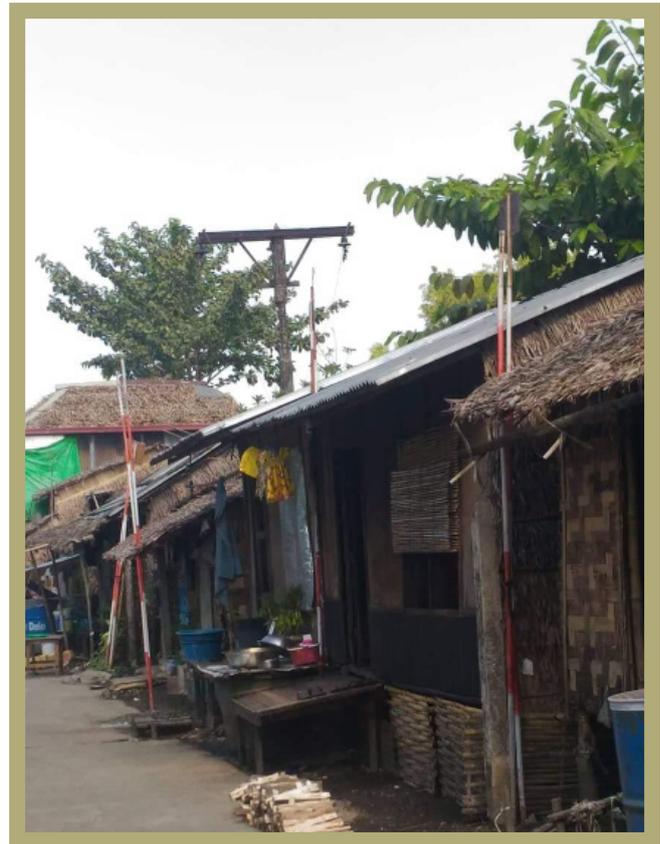
Paung Ku's contribution

Paung Ku has provided small grants to Bedar since 2015, as well as helping Bedar with linkages and networking. For example, we have funded:

- The salaries of four community organisers from the Hlaing Tharyar community (ongoing);
- Bedar participation in LOCOA meetings and events;
- Press conferences

We have helped Bedar build its national and international networks and provided a wide range of resources such as handbooks on the law and Paung Ku staff members have mentored Bedar in financial, office and HR management, all of which is recognised and appreciated by the organisation. But Bedar founder Keh Zar sees our greatest contribution as being our support for values-based reflection and learning (as outlined in Paung Ku's Learning Model).

For example it was lessons learned through use of the arts as a campaign tool (see the Myitsone case study) that helped lead to the Quarter #Zero documentary and to Bedar's arts activities within the Hlaing Tharyar communities. (Funding for Quarter #Zero was found from Thar The Myae, after Paung Ku connected Bedar with them). Lessons learned by Paung Ku from other partners with regards to environmental protection were also shared with Bedar, and contributed to the urban gardening initiative.



Households in slum area, Hlaing Thar Yar Township, Yangon Region/Bedar



Community activities in slum area, Hlaing Thar Yar Township, Yangon Region/Bedar

Through use of the reflective learning approach, Paung Ku staff members also helped Bedar to reflect on their own capacity, values, and achievements; be clearer on their vision; and to plan for the future in a way that builds on their existing capacity and achievements while remaining grounded

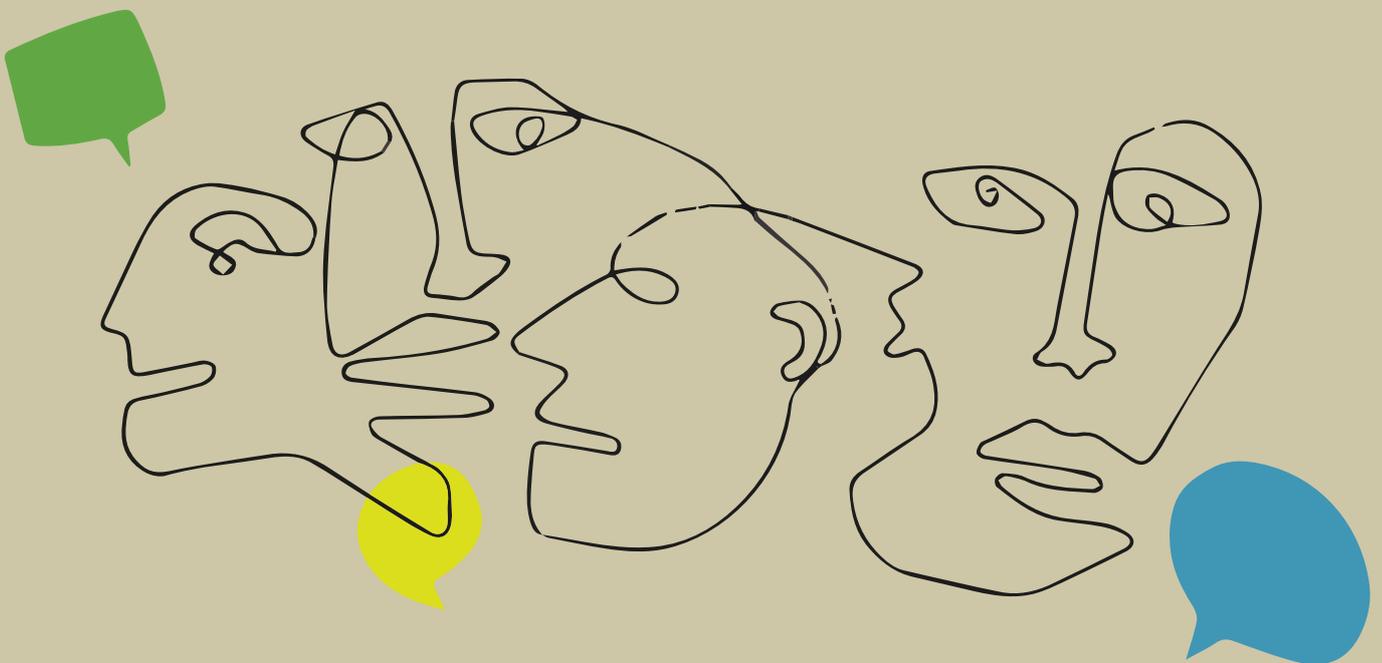
in community. Bedar successfully applied for new grants from Misereor and the Mitta Foundation following these reflection sessions.

Keh Zar said:

"Paung Ku organization not like any other organisation, because Paung Ku always thinks about sustainable development concepts and never loses sight of the human rights point of view. Even if we weren't getting funding from Paung Ku, we would continue to be a partner and work alongside Paung Ku because we have the same values; for example they believe that community organising is important and effective for building the community's own power. Paung Ku staff are genuinely interested in what we do, and want to learn from the community on the ground."

ATHAN: A CASE STUDY

VOICE FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



5.2) Civil society is capable to analyse and apply learnings to address social injustices.

One of Paung Ku's criteria for selection of partners is that the partners have a vision that is consistent with Paung Ku's vision. This is a prerequisite for all partners. With Paung Ku's financial and technical resources as well as linkages, partners are enabled to analyse the situation in their communities, to identify the root causes of their problems, identify groups that are marginalized and centers of power in order to develop solutions that are inclusive, just, equitable and sustainable.

ATHAN: A CASE STUDY

VOICE FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION



One of Athan founder Maung Saung Kha in a demonstration demanding the release of jailed Reuters Journalists/Aung Khant

In December 2018, Maung Saung Kha —poet, advocate for free speech and founder of Paung Ku's partner Athan ('voice' in English)—became the first Myanmar recipient of a Human Rights Tulip Award from the Netherlands Embassy in Myanmar. The award, which Maung Saung Kha sees as being both for Athan and for himself, is a symbol of the reality that freedom of expression is being increasingly curtailed in Myanmar. Athan documents this reality, and campaigns to promote freedom of expression.

The organisation's latest report on freedom of expression in Myanmar noted that 42 journalists and 149 activists have been imprisoned since the NLD-led Government came into power, mainly through use of Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law 2013 (which deals with defamation) and the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law 2011. Under the previous government, there were 11 cases filed under the Telecommunications Law.

Maung Saung Kha was himself jailed under Telecommunications Law's Article 66(d) and the colonial-era Section 505(b) of Penal Code, after posting a satirical five-line poem on Facebook in 2015. The poem was borne out of his frustration at the lack of transparency within the Union Election Commission (UEC) during the last days of U Thein Sein's presidency. He was found to have committed 'criminal defamation' by the courts and sentenced to 6 months in prison.

The charges relating to Section 505(b) of the Penal Code were reportedly dropped in April 2016. In May 2016, Maung Saung Kha was freed after serving time. The seeds that grew into Athan were planted prior to Maung Saung Kha's imprisonment although being unfairly prosecuted under an unjust law certainly watered his commitment. He and fellow Athan founders Aung Khant and Ye Wai Phyo Aung, came together on their paths to freedom of expression activism in March 2015. Aung Khant was part of a group of young people busy handing out white armbands to pedestrians passing Mahabandoola Park in downtown Yangon on a particularly humid day. The armbands read: "We are Students, Respect Our Rights", and were distributed in protests against a brutal crackdown of police on students demonstrating for education reform that had taken place just two days before.

When Maung Saung Kha was released from prison, he and others came together to stage demonstrations and campaigns in support of freedom of expression; then saw it was necessary to form an organisation that could speak out for the voiceless and for citizens mistreated under the law.

They started to approach donors but had repeated funding applications rejected. A small amount of funds for monitoring violation of freedom of expression in Myanmar was provided by the South East Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA), but Athan's activists were limited to holding work meetings at the local teashops and in friends' office spaces. The computers used to compile data on violation of freedom of expression were rented from another organisation.

In February 2018, Athan made contact Paung Ku. As usual, the Paung Ku program team took time to get to know the organisation – including learning about their aspirations, past work, and what existing capacities they wanted to strengthen. Athan's founders were clear that they wanted to document cases of violation of freedom of expression as well as to raise community awareness about the importance of freedom of expression in Myanmar. Together we

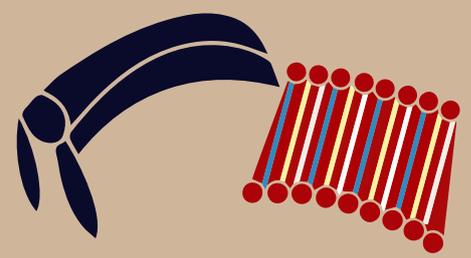
brainstormed about the Athan's vision, analysed their existing capacities, and identified what Athan needed to carry out its work effectively as well as what Paung Ku could offer in terms of networking support, small grant funding and access to technical resources. This groundwork meant that when Athan submitted a funding proposal to Paung Ku, we had a shared understanding of what might be possible.

However, in order to receive a grant Athan had to follow Paung Ku's partner financial management guidelines (set up to ensure accountability to our own donors). This meant transitioning from being a freeform organisation with no finance staff to a more structured one. A Paung Ku program officer helped build Athan capacity in financial and administrative documentation, evaluating their awareness raising work, report writing and other skills: while taking care not to overburden the newly formed organisation with stringent procedural requirements. Paung Ku also had to make sure we gave Athan enough space to pursue their vision. Looking back, it was a mutual learning experience for both Athan and Paung Ku.

Meanwhile, increasing number of journalists and citizens were charged with different kinds of lawsuits for openly criticising the government and, in some cases, for merely pointing out the situation. In June 2018, Paung Ku's partner Mon CSO Network was charged with Article 10 of the Law Protecting Privacy and Security of Citizens by a member of the Ethnic Affairs Committee of Mon regional parliament. They requested Paung Ku help in finding a lawyer; we also contacted Athan so they could document the case.



Athan led in Prayer event for Reuters Journalists/Irrawaddy News Journal



MYITSONE: A CASE STUDY

MAKING SPACE TO INFLUENCE DECISION-MAKERS

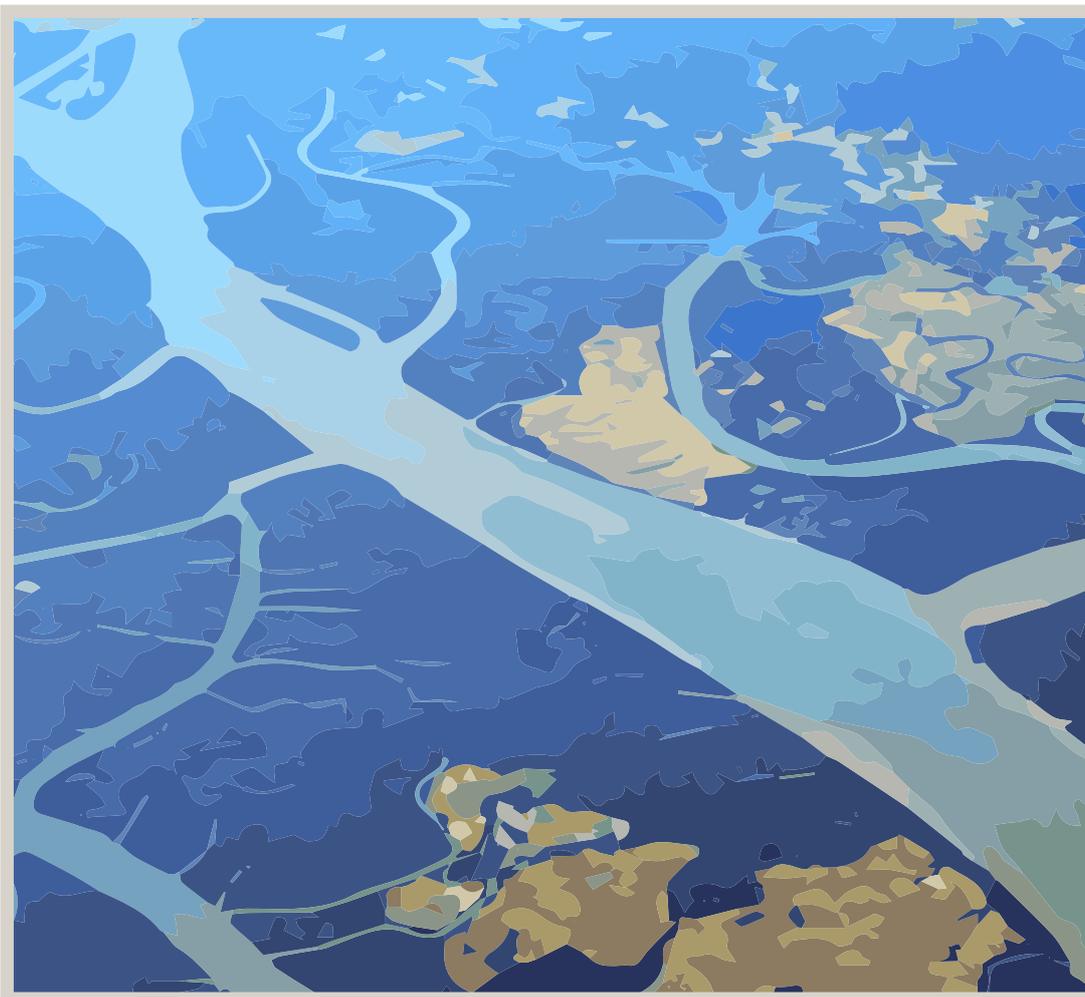


5.3) Civil society has the space to influence decision-makers.

Power holders include government officials at different levels, companies in the business sector and other non-state actors. Paung Ku support contributes to partners developing the core elements for vertical influence access to power holders; access to information for evidence-based advocacy; credibility and trust; linkages with others for increased influence; and voice to be heard and hold others accountable. As described in the Strategic Framework, focus will be placed on supporting partners to collect and document the evidence needed to influence change.

MYITSONE: A CASE STUDY

MAKING SPACE TO INFLUENCE DECISION-MAKERS



Skyview of Myitstone, Kachin State/Google Map

The start of 2019 has brought with it a clear return to a long-running Myanmar civil society struggle: the Myitstone dam project.

Just over seven years previously, on September 3 2011, civil society across Myanmar was celebrating after then-President Thein Sein suspended the controversial project. He acted in response to what had been a countrywide protest, the like of which had not been seen before.

In this case study, we will trace the history of the Myitstone struggle; explain recent developments; and explore the role that Paung Ku has played in helping to protect two important symbols of identity for Kachin and Myanmar people.

Background

For the Kachin people, tradition states that the confluence of the N'Mai and Mali rivers near Myitsone in Kachin State is the birthplace of their race. For the rest of Myanmar, the Ayeyarwaddy River (formerly Irrawaddy) —which is formed by the N'Mai and Mali joining together—is a lifeline that runs through Myanmar. The river's delta is home to most of Myanmar's rice production, while the rest of the river provides water and livelihoods to hundreds of thousands of people who live along its banks.

So when in 2006 the former military regime announced that it had signed an agreement with state-owned electricity producer the China Power Investment Corporation to build a massive hydroelectric dam at Myitsone, feelings ran high. The Myitsone dam was one of eight dams planned in Kachin State as part of a US\$3.6 billion proposal that would have seen one dam built on the Chipwe River (about 150km from Myitkyina); five built on the Maykha River and one on the Malikha River.

The biggest of these—at 152 metres (500 feet) high and 152 metres wide—was to be at Myitsone. Polluted water expelled from the turbines was to go straight back into the river while an estimated 90% of the power generated would go to China.

The resultant flood plain has been described as potentially the size of Singapore, with subsequent displacement of as many as 20,000 people: mainly the Kachin traditional owners of the land. Environmentalists say the dam site has some of the highest biodiversity in the world and warn that the project would destroy both the natural beauty of the Ayeyarwaddy River and severely disrupt water flow throughout the Ayeyarwaddy's 2,210km length. This, in turn, would affect all those people, animals and plants that rely on the river for survival. Risks from flooding would also increase, with the capacity of forests to retain floodwater degraded by loss of trees and riverbeds silting up with accumulated deposits. Statistics and reports from the Myanmar government and China Power that proclaimed the benefits of the deal were widely dismissed as artefacts of politics and self-interest, and there was mass concern at a lack of transparency and accountability surrounding the deal.

People from all walks of life and from across the country came together to 'Save the Ayeyarwaddy!', in what was probably the first mass protest of its kind in Myanmar against what was seen as vastly inappropriate development. The Kachin people guard their precious Myitsone not just to secure Kachin land, river and resources but also because of the importance of the Ayeyarwaddy to the rest of the country. The river is a vital part of Myanmar; flowing past and bringing together people of different cultures, ethnicities, and livelihoods, as well as through diverse ecological and biological systems. Campaigners agreed: to lose the Ayeyarwaddy would mean losing the heart of

Myanmar. Concerns were also expressed that the project could lead to an intensification of the decades-long conflict between Kachin armed forces and the Myanmar army. A 17-year ceasefire between the Kachin Independence Army and the Myanmar Army ended in 2011, after the Myanmar Army attacked KIA forces close to an existing hydro-power plant. The agreement to build the dam was widely condemned as an act of self-interest from the Chinese government and the military regime.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi launched her own 'Irrawaddy Appeal' and describing the mighty river as 'the most significant geographical feature of our country, the grand natural highway, a prolific source of food, the home of varied flora and fauna, the supporter of traditional modes of life, the muse that has inspired countless works of prose and poetry' ([Aung San Suu Kyi, 2011](#)).

The campaigning took many inspired forms. Environmental impact reports were commissioned; experts brought in from across the region and from further afield; artists, dancers, musicians, poets, writers and celebrities contributed their skills and commitment; public talks were organized across the country; people of all religious beliefs joined together to oppose the dam; opposition to the Myitsone plan mobilised the nation. A poll carried out by the Yangon School of Political Science has been reported as finding that 85% of people surveyed opposed the dam project ([Myanmar Times, January 3, 2017](#)).

Paung Ku was asked by a wide array of civil society partners to use all of its services in supporting this mass uprising of civil society: since 2010, when we were first approached by Kachin activists, we have supported campaigners across the country with reflection and learning, accessing technical and financial resources, networking, and linkages (see infographic). For Paung Ku's Mandalay-Kachin team, a sightseeing trip to the confluence of the rivers the dam site—organized as a peaceful break during a team meeting in Myitkyina (capital of Kachin State) in 2014—only added to their resolve to support civil society in opposing the dam. Program Officer Kyaw Soe Oo writes:

From the bus, we saw acres of land on which fallen trees were scattered. Armed security guards in uniforms were standing by. The area was once a land of hills and valleys clad in dense forest where monkey, other animals and so many species of birds enjoyed living in peace and harmony. Now they were driven out, and we heard of rare species being driven to the edge of extinction. We could see rows of metal roofs glittering in the sunlight as we got closer to Myitsone village; rows of barracks and warehouses had been erected. Red boards with the signs "restricted zone" were everywhere around.

When then-President Thein Sein announced suspension of the dam scheme in 2011, it was a major win for Myanmar’s civil society as it emerged from decades of military control. Of the other seven dam projects contained in the same deal—none of which drew the protests that the planned Myitsone dam did—one (on the Chipwi River) has been completed although it was shut down for two years due to damages caused by armed conflict. The others were all suspended in 2012 **‘due to armed conflicts in north Myanmar’**.

Now, seven years later, the struggle for Myitsone and the Ayeyarwaddy is starting again.



Attendants in “Why we must protect our Ayeyarwaddy” event/Nyan Thar Zaw

Recent developments: the name has changed, but the game is the same...

China Power merged with the State Nuclear Technology Corporation in 2015 to form State Power Investment Corporation Ltd (SPIC). Still state-owned, SPIC is under the administration of the Chinese central government. It holds seven listed companies, including SPIC Yunnan International Power Investment Co., Ltd (SPICYN). SPICYN is an 80% shareholder in Upstream Ayeyawady Confluence Basin Hydropower Co, Ltd (ACHC), a joint venture established by SPICYN, Myanmar’s Ministry of Electricity and Energy (15% shareholder) and Asia World Company (5%).

There is evidence of increasing pressure from China for the dam project to re-start; in June 2018, when Myanmar President U Win Myint attended the 8th Ayeyawady-Chao Phya Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy Summit, China’s Global Times took the opportunity to publish a story titled **‘Relaunching Myitsone Hydropower dam could win investor confidence in Myanmar’**.

The story stated:

“If Myanmar wants to make itself an attractive destination for investment, especially in the field of hydroelectric infrastructure, the country must pay more attention to maintaining policy continuity and consistency.

... the [Myitsone] hydropower station is a commercial cooperation project that China and Myanmar have agreed upon. Myanmar did something unorthodox when it suspended a project that had gone through a complete approval process.”

The Global Times is owned by The People’s Daily, which is itself the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party.

September 2018 saw representatives of SPIC travelling to meet with local residents and officials ‘to convince them’ to back the project, according to a report in **The Irrawaddy**. ACHC has issued statements ratifying their plan to build a dam at Myitsone, and trying to convince Kachin and other Myanmar people that the dam will bring benefit to the Kachin and to the country as a whole.

Reports are coming in of villagers being offered incentives to support the dam proposal, ranging from health care provision to the building of schools and provisions of vehicles. Local administrators and religious leaders are also being courted. Dr Myint Zaw, a Myanmar journalist and activist who won the 2015 Goldman Environment Prize for his work on reporting the environmental and social impact of the proposed dam (work that was supported in part by Paung Ku), noted:

“China is under the delusion that with more public relations and bigger enticements they will get the dam project back on track.”



Writer Ko Tar in “Why we must protect our Ayeyarwaddy” event/Nyan Thar Zaw



The invitation card of “Vanishing Treasure of Myanmar” part 1

In January 2019, the Global Times published a story titled **‘What holds back Myanmar’s development?’**. The story introduction read: ‘With the progress of China-Myanmar relations, the resumption of the Myitsone Dam project in northern Myanmar can be placed on the agenda of both parties. The Myitsone Dam is a hurdle in the way of China-Myanmar relations and an obstacle to Myanmar’s economic development and attracting foreign investment!’

The story concluded:

“The political factors that interfere with this problem must be eliminated, especially the tendency of some Western organizations to mislead. Let people know the actual role of the dam in development and how China uses advanced environmental technologies for dam building and management. Starting this process as soon as possible will facilitate further cooperation between China and Myanmar and accelerate the development of Myanmar.”

This was all in spite of the December 2018 publication of a Strategic Environmental Assessment of Myanmar’s hydropower sector, supported by the energy and finance ministries and authorised by the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group. The SEA recommended ‘excluding all mainstream hydropower development on the Ayeyarwaddy, Chindwin and Thanlwin rivers’ ([SEA Final Report, page 68](#)).

Campaigners are not daunted. Whenever representatives of SPIC or ACHC travel to the dam site, they are met by protesters wearing ‘No dam!’ t-shirts. When World Bank representatives visited the Myitsone site, protesters walked from Myitkyina to Myitsone to join them. The protest walk was

organised by the Htoi Gender and Development Foundation, Kachin Development Networking Group, and Mara Juu Group. Villagers from locations along the route joined in the protest as it passed; by the time the walk reached Myitsone, it was about 300 people strong.

Prayer meetings have been held in villages that will be lost if the project does go ahead, and civil society activists across Myanmar are starting, once more, to share information and ideas in readiness for the ongoing battle.

Paung Ku’s commitment and contributions to the Myitsone campaigns have been noticed and welcomed. Dr Myint Zaw said:

“When I talk to leading Kachin civil society organisations, I realise how much they trust and respect Paung Ku. That’s why they go to Paung Ku for brainstorming on possible campaigns and activities, as well as for support in finding experts and making links across the country and across the region. They also appreciate that Paung Ku does not try and tell them what to do, but appreciates and recognises their existing capacities and knowledge.”

On Paung Ku’s side, Mandalay-Kachin team Program Officer Kyaw Soe Oo said:

“Paung Ku will increase its efforts in coming years to help CSOs and other key actors as they and we keep learning and acting together to protect Myitsone and the Ayeyarwaddy. We are guided by the needs and voices of local people and CSOs; Paung Ku will never fail to recognize or appreciate the solidarity of so many activists and organisations who stay true to their dream of no dam at Myitsone.”

Brief timeline of Paung Ku works

Return? ←

2018

7

- Celebrate 7 Years of Dam Suspension
- Published 3 books related to Myit-sone Dam Issues

2017

- Community mobilization and engagement

2016

- "Myanmar-Ayeyarwaddy's Forward Journey" (Exhibition, Public Talks, Workshops, etc.)
- "Myanmar-Ayeyarwaddy: Myanmar Future" (Exhibition, Public Talks, Workshops, etc.)
- Supported water resources for Tan Phae Village

2015

- Celebrated 4 Years Dam Suspension
- Closed-door strategic meeting with different actors of Paung Ku
- "Living Rivers" (Exhibition, Public Talks, Workshops, etc.)

2012

- "Why we must protect our Ayeyarwaddy?" (Exhibition, Public Talks, Workshops, etc.)
- Initiated Ayeyarwaddy Watch Network

2013

- "Vanishing Treasure of Myanmar" (Part 1, Part 2) (Exhibition, Public Talks, Workshops, etc.)
- Published 11 books related to the water resources and policies

2014

- Train Trip towards Myitsone
- People Ayeyarwaddy Forum

2011

- Supported transports for students and salary of teachers
- 2 Boat Trips and a March towards Myitsone
- Exposure trips, Forum
- **Suspension (30th Sept, 2011)**

2010

- Engage with CSOs/LNGOs/INGOs, Media, Scholars, Individuals, etc.
- Prayers, Protests, Campaigns, Etc. (Tan Phae Village)
- Supported school in Tan Phae Village

2009

- Celebrated "World Water Day"

2006

Signed between Government & CPI

Brief timeline of Paung Ku works

- 2009: Celebrated “World Water Day” (used world water day as a mean to articulate Myit Sone issues).
- 2010: Kachin-based CSO Sein Young So approaches Paung Ku to brainstorm options open to them and to reach out to other Myanmar civil society actors. When Sein Young So decides to start a national awareness-raising campaign to mobilise anti-dam support, Paung Ku provides mentoring and puts Sein Young So in contact with technical resource persons and famous speakers. Recordings of the key messages delivered during this awareness raising campaign were made into a DVD (funded by a small grant from Paung Ku) and distributed throughout the country. Monasteries including Kandet-Kone monastery in Mandalay and North Oakalapa Monastery in Yangon took the step of distributing the DVD. Moreover, Aung Ku help and fund to have a nurse school in Tan Phae Village. (Tan Phae Village faced force-eviction because of Myit Sone Project however, most of the villagers remain living at Tan Pane.) Paung Ku also commits to facilitating regular networking among the many and diverse civil society actors who are passionately opposed to the dam project. This support has continued.
- 2011: Small grants provided to Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG), a network of Kachin civil society groups and development organizations inside Kachin State went oversea exposure visit to Bhumibol Dam in Chaing Mai, Thailand. Paung Ku and Sein Young So reflect on and learn from the awareness-raising activities, and reach out to other actors to embark on a round of innovative and creative ventures, including:
 - A riverboat trip from Mandalay to Shein-Ma-Khar village where invited writers, poets, artists, musicians, and CSO members developed strategies to campaign against dam construction. The trip was alive with dancing, poetry recitals, painting, and the composing and singing of songs to heighten the passion for Ayeyarwaddy.
 - CSOs Zin Lun, Maryar Gar and the Ayeyarwaddy Foundation join together to organise a march from Myitstone to Myitkyina (a journey of about 40 miles, or 64 km). En route, a memorial to the fight to save the Ayeyarwaddy was erected in Tan Phe village.
 - In the same year “Public Forum of Myit Sone “was organized by Paung Ku to enhanced public participation regarding to case.
 - Village support group Zin Lun, established by those who had been forcibly relocated from Tan Phe to the ‘model village’ of Aung Myintha (built by China Power) approached Paung Ku for help because many families could not cover the cost of transporting their children to and from the school provided in one area of Aung Myintha.
- 2012 “Why we must protect our Ayeyarwaddy?” Exhibition. It was carried out to draw public attention for Myit Sone issues. It elevated awareness the vital role of the vital role of Ayeyarwaddy for the country. Public talks by scholars, experts and penal discussion of effected community members were also included in the event and alongside with this, a workshop was facilitated among locals CSOs working for the issues. “Ayeyarwaddy Watch Network” was initiated after the workshop.
- 2013 “Vanishing Treasures of Myanmar” part 1 and part 2 celebrated in Yangon. The Exhibit presented works on the issues of water resources, mountains, forests and trees, biodiversity, art, cultural heritage, diversity, ethnicity, music and sustainability in Myanmar by well-known Graphic Designer Myint Maung Kyaw, Songwriter Myint Moe Aung, Environmentalist Myint Zaw, Writer Ko Tar and Author Ju. Exhibitions were on for 3 days each part. Paung Ku also published 11 books regarding with water resources and assorted policies.
- 2014 A train journey from Mandalay to Myitkyina was organized by Paung Ku embraced various CSOs opposed to the dam distributing ‘Stop the Dam’ posters and leaflets to local people along the way. Ayeyarwaddy People Forum was held in Mandalay.
- 2015: Paung Ku took the lead in organising events to commemorate the fourth year of the dam suspension, organising a series of public talks in Myitkyina. A further public awareness exhibition kick off in Yangon Living River. Paung Ku organized a closed-door meeting with Myit Sone’s focal actors (CSOs) and discuss about new strategies for new-elected government.
- 2016: By the request of the villager at Aung Myintha, Paung Ku provided a small grant to aid to get the clean water resource as Ayeyarwaddy river couldn’t provide clean water every season. There were two events held in Yangon named “Myanmar Ayeyarwaddy’s forward jounery” and “Myanmar Ayeyarwaddy Myanmar Future”.
- 2017 Paung Ku program officer continuously keep in touch with Kachin Community Organizations for mentoring, discussions and community engagement.
- 2018: Commemoration of 7th anniversary of Myitstone suspension. Mass rally held in Tan Phe village (threatened by the dam project). Organised by Kachin CSOs with input from Paung Ku. Leading environmental organization Myanmar Green Network took the lead on inviting speakers and arranging media coverage from media outlets including Weekly Eleven, 7 Day and Frontier Myanmar.

VI.

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

This was a year of learning and action in relation to gender and diversity for Paung Ku. We strengthened our Protection from Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse Policy to define and address explicitly harassment, exploitation and abuse of a sexual nature. And following our Learning Model, we spent time working internally and with partners to explore and respond to experiences of inequity related to gender and diversity at all levels.

Paung Ku integrates gender and diversity work because we know, from on-the-ground experience, there is no single dimension to inequality. A simple illustration of this can be found in the 2014 census data on levels of literacy. The lowest levels of literacy in the country were recorded amongst Shan women, but Shan men had lower levels of literacy than women in every other State or Region (Ministry of Immigration and Population, 2014). Ethnicity, religion, disability, sex, gender, poverty and other forms of difference work together in Myanmar (as elsewhere) to create inequity and disadvantage. Further, women are not 'equally unequal'; a wealthy Myanmar woman who belongs to the ethnicity and religion that is in the majority in the area where she lives will have greater access to power and resources than a poor man who lives in the same area and comes from a minority ethnicity and religion.

During 2018, Paung Ku finalised and published a new gender and diversity staff reference and reflection guide, which had been suggested by staff and the content of which was developed based on gender and diversity work undertaken in 2017. Activities included in the guide (titled Bridging Divides) were used in workshops with Paung Ku staff members and with CSO partners, to promote deeper reflection on the ways in which judgements of worth made about different types of people function to deepen inequity as well as on ways to counteract this.

Among the workshops held was a three-day Peace and Diversity workshop involving representatives of more than 30 Paung Ku CSO partners, drawn from each State and Region. Participants reflected on the personal, organisational and political challenges of promoting and protecting all forms of diversity and identified ways of moving forward that included working to acknowledge their own personal prejudices as well as paying deeper attention to the ways in which different forms of inequity intersect.

Internal to Paung Ku, male and female staff members shared their personal experiences of the negative effects of gender norms and stereotypes. The many and debilitating ways in which men and women police those of their own and the opposite sex were made visible, and the consequences of such policing on both men and women openly discussed. People reflected on their own behaviours and committed to identifying and challenging negative gender stereotypes in their personal lives and through their work in 2019.

One very concrete starting point for this will involve exploring the reality that the vast majority of Paung Ku CSO partners are male dominated. Work undertaken on Paung Ku's MEL data showed that the percentage of men and women reported as actively participating in CSO partner activities varied from 64% men, 36% women among partners of one Paung Ku team to 76% men, 24% women among partners of another team.

Data from Paung Ku supported activities were also analysed, and there were clear differences in male/female participation in learning platforms by topic. Learning platforms on land-related topics were heavily dominated by men (71% to 29%), while learning platforms on topics related to responsible investment were attended by 55% men, 45% women.





Local women sellers at Taunggyi Market, Shan State/Khin Zarchi Latt

2018 also saw Paung Ku's Gender and Diversity Adviser (funded by the Swiss Development Corporation) continuing to support Paung Ku partner Kayan Women's Organisation (KyWO) in implementing an action learning project on increasing female participation in decision-making. Having previously worked together with KyWO volunteers to identify lack of confidence and fear of criticism as a major barrier to young women stepping forward in their communities, the project has supported these women to make their own plans for generating change: starting with them organising and facilitating discussions on decision-making in their communities. Between them, just nine volunteers engaged about 200 community members in discussions related to two key questions: who makes decisions in the family, and who makes decisions in your community?

The volunteers, some of whom were just 17 years old, negotiated with community and religious leaders (some of whom were of different religious or ethnic backgrounds); found suitable dates and venues; considered who best to invite and how (e.g., in some villages the volunteers decided to invite strategic influencers to join discussions, such as senior representatives of the Mothers' Union and teachers; in others they focused on providing space for less powerful women to have their say), and facilitated the discussions.

All volunteers confessed to being 'very afraid' about running the discussions, but reported marked increase in their own self-confidence and having a sense of pride in what

they achieved. Some of the volunteers have gone on to attend village meetings for the first time ever, and changes in attitudes have also been reported at community level after the discussions. For example:

"During the discussion, women moved from saying decision-making was for men to agreeing that women should participate in decision-making. The village leader has asked for support in getting more young women involved in village leadership, particularly in terms of building their experience and confidence.' And 'Other women in the village say they want to be like us, leading facilitation and speaking out."

VII.

FINANCIAL NARRATIVE REPORT

Description	USD	USD	%
BUDGET LINE ITEMS	2018 BUDGET	2018 ACTUAL	BURNING RATE 2018
1. Personnel	607,895	589,805	97%
2. Travel and Per Diem	19,906	18,553	93%
3. Equipment	58,447	53,447	91%
4. Office Running Cost	109,798	96,938	88%
5. Program Costs	1,269,679	1,229,209	97%
6. Audit Fees	13,860	11,700	84%
Subtotal Program Cost	2,079,585	1,999,681	96%
7. Organization Fees/Contingency (3%)	52,577	49,522	94%
TOTAL AMOUNT	2,132,162	2,049,203	96%

As shown in the table above, Paung Ku' 2018 total budget is about USD 2.1 million and Paung Ku has spent 96% of our budget in 2018. The major underspent of more than 10% are from lines – 4. the office running cost and 6. the audit fees. Due to the drop in the prices of the Internet cables, Paung Ku team has spent only about 75% of our planned communication budget. In addition, the fuel cost for the generator and the transportation for admin and finance staff has been saved for 2018. Thus only 88% of the office running cost had been used. Regarding the audit fees, some of the project audit costs were saved as many Paung Ku's funding partners accept the organizational audit and did not require a separate project audit for their support. Paung Ku will continue to use Khin Su Htay and Associates Audit Firm for this year as the second year of the three year contract.

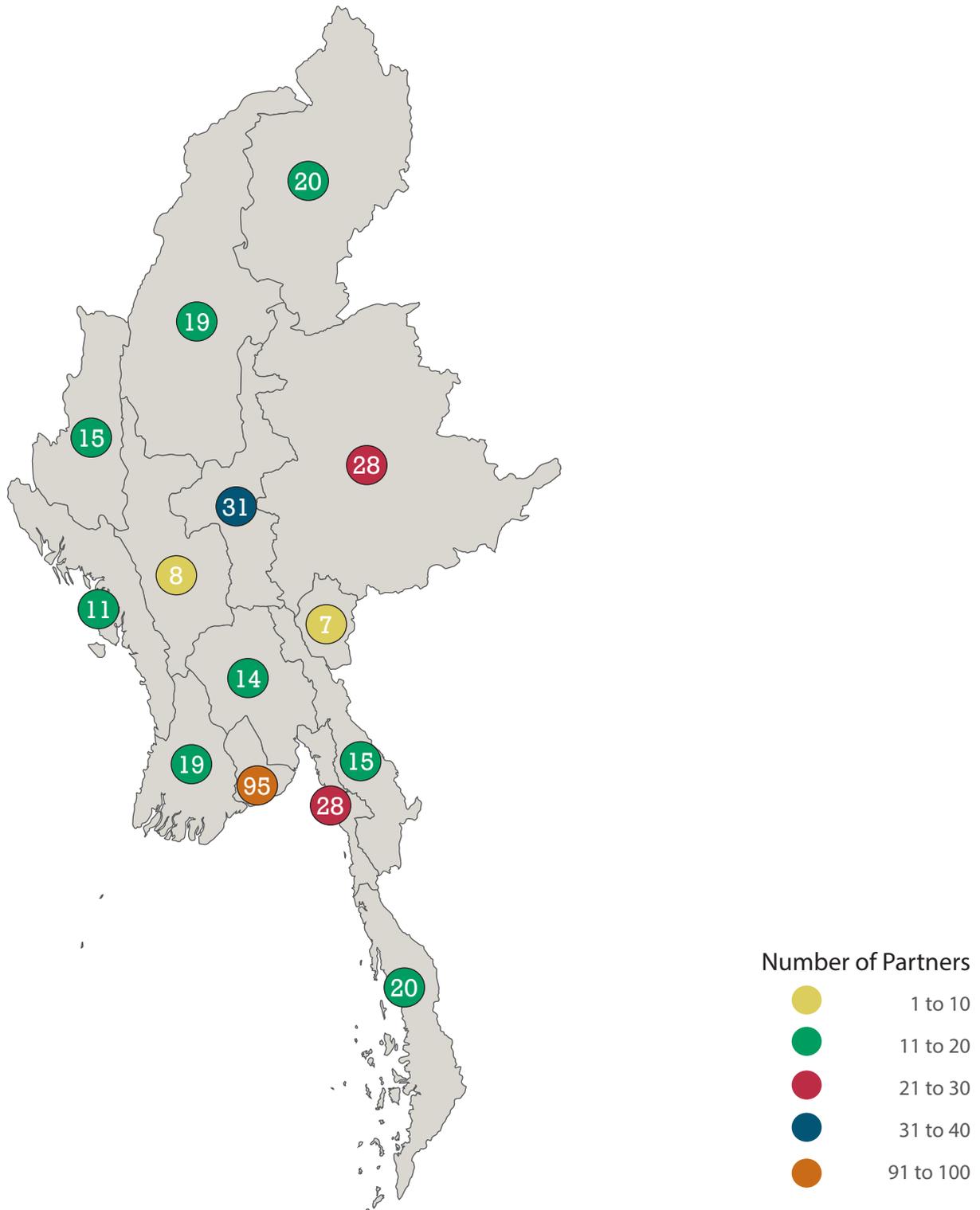
Contributors to Paung Ku's program for 2018 are listed in the table below. Paung Ku has accepted some small funding (of less than USD 10,000) this year as the work is programmatically relevant. Paung Ku will consider receiving such a small amount of funding the remaining years of this strategic phase as the donor dealing and reporting to 17 donors is beyond the capacity of Paung Ku program and support team with limited number of staff dedicated to financial and program reporting.

Paung Ku Funding Partners in 2018 (in USD)

	DONORS	BUDGET	ACTUAL
Swiss Development Cooperation		608,879	581,674
International Union for Conservation of Nature (Netherlands)		298,769	298,769
Norwegian People's Aid		350,000	349,999
MISEREOR		200,535	190,560
Open Society Foundation		175,000	175,003
UK Foreign Commonwealth Office		92,460	92,748
Euro Burma Office		86,624	91,938
Dan Church Aid		86,475	86,475
Family Health International-360		64,220	64,220
Development Alternatives, Inc (Gift in Kind)		51,847	49,209
Sanya Foundation		50,000	903
OXFAM		29,243	29,408
Civil Rights Defenders		19,800	19,585
Paung Ku Center (Misereor)		8,250	8,564
American Friends Services Committee		7,060	7,060
Asia Monitor Research Center		3,000	3,000
Tides Foundation		-	89
Total		2,132,162	2,049,203

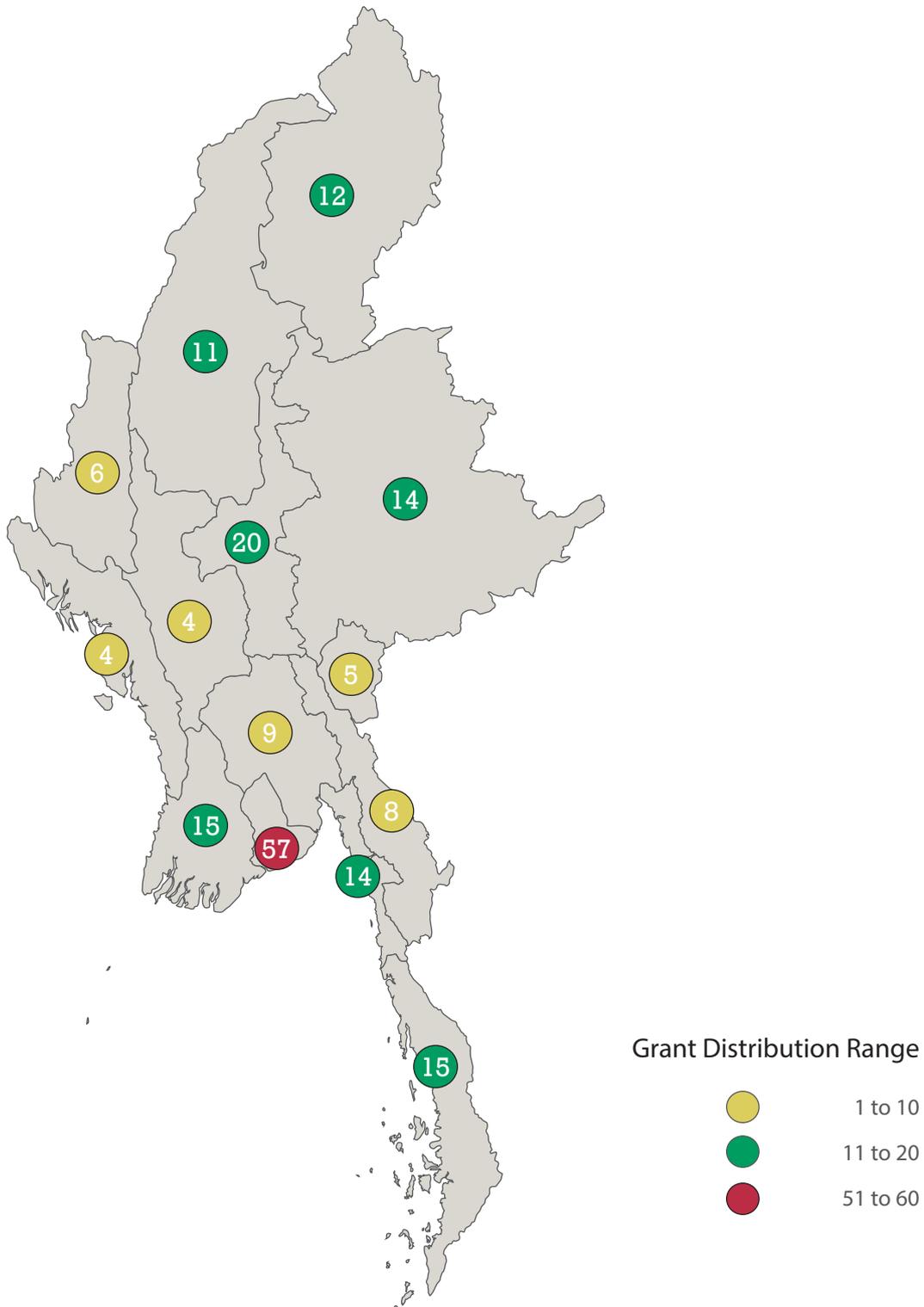
Annex: 1.

Map of partners working in states/regions in 2018



Annex: 2.

Map of grant distribution in states/regions in 2018





Contact

Head Office
No. 52, Thirimingalar 2 Street
Kamayaut Township, Yangon

Tel: (+95) 01 525 702
Email: contact@paungkumyanmar.org
www.paungkumyanmar.org



Photo by Khin Zarchi Latt