



# Civilians protecting civilians through ceasefire monitoring

## Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring in Myanmar: 2012 - 2016





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**Nonviolent Peaceforce**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This paper contains the observations and analysis of Nonviolent Peaceforce on civilian ceasefire monitoring projects that have been carried out between 2012 and 2016. The outcomes and data presented in this report, however, are the result of a collaborate effort by Shalom (Nyein) Foundation, Gender and Development Institute Myanmar, Karen Women Empowerment Group, Karen Development Network, and Nonviolent Peaceforce as well as all the civilian monitors that have participated in these projects. NP wishes to thank its partners and the monitors on the ground for gathering and sharing the data that is included in this paper. NP also wishes to thank Ellen Furnari and Ryan Sullivan for reviewing and providing suggestions that improved this paper. Finally, NP wishes to thank the Peace Support Fund, the European Union, USAID and DAI/Kann Let, the German government, and the Swiss government for the financial support that made these projects possible.

## **ABOUT NONVIOLENT PEACEFORCE**

Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) is an International NGO that supports peace by facilitating dialogue and protecting vulnerable civilians in situations of violent conflict. Its programmes build on more than 12 years of experience in Georgia, Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Guatemala, the Philippines, and Myanmar. NP is currently part of a ceasefire monitoring structure between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). In Myanmar NP has been engaging key stakeholders and partners since 2012 at the request of local civil society organisations as well as the Myanmar government. It currently supports civilian protection and ceasefire monitoring efforts in Thanintharyi Region and Chin, Mon, Kayin, Kachin, Shan, and Kayah States. In addition to working with civil society groups, NP has provided training to Liaison Offices of Ethnic Armed Organisations in ceasefire monitoring and implementation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“...we heard a few messages again and again. First, the journey from war to sustainable peace is not possible in the absence of stronger civilian capacity. Without this capacity, there may be breaks in the fighting but resilient institutions will not take root and the risk of relapse into violence will remain.”

Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Chair to the Senior Advisory Group to the UN Secretary General on Civilian Capacities in the Aftermath of Conflict, March 2011

Ceasefire agreements play an important role in the journey from war to sustainable peace. They are often the primary tool to stop or reduce violence and create space for peace negotiations (Muehlenbeck et al., 2016, p.2). Ceasefire talks have been historically exclusive processes among state or non-state military actors and have focused mainly on military matters. In recent years, however, more attention is given to civilian protection matters within ceasefire agreements as well as the inclusion of civilians as monitors of these agreements. The peace panels in the Philippines created a specific committee within their ceasefire monitoring architecture to better address civilian protection issues (2009); peace negotiators in Myanmar included 17 civilian protection provisions in their Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (2015). In both countries civilians have been invited by the ceasefire parties to co-monitor their agreements.

Long before civilians were invited to become part of the official monitoring mechanism of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), civil society groups in Myanmar, like their counterparts in the Philippines, developed their own civilian ceasefire monitoring (CCM) initiatives. Concerned with the protection of civilians, civilian ceasefire monitors (CCMs) focus their efforts mainly on monitoring the impact of ceasefire violations and armed clashes on civilian populations in conflict-affected areas. In addition to documenting and reporting (non-) compliance to ceasefire agreements, they also raise awareness among communities about ceasefire agreements and identify community security concerns, proactively communicate and coordinate with influential actors to prevent, stop, or reduce violence against civilians, and facilitate humanitarian assistance to survivors of violence. Civil society groups in Myanmar have applied CCM since 2012.

This paper has five objectives. Firstly, it aims to provide a conceptual understanding of civilian ceasefire monitoring (section 2). Secondly, it aims to clarify the functioning of CCM mechanisms in Myanmar (section 3). A mechanism refers to a group of trained monitors that have organised themselves to monitor ceasefire agreements. Thirdly, it aims to highlight the main successes and challenges of CCMs between 2012 and 2016 (section 4). Fourthly, it aims to demonstrate the on-going relevance of CCMs in the context of the emerging ceasefire monitoring mechanism of the NCA (section 5). Finally, it provides a road map for CCMs to further strengthen civilian capacities in support of Myanmar's peace process (section 6).

## 2. KEY TERMS: CCM, CPM, AND HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING

“Even though our activism got media attention, I felt very frustrated as nothing changed. Now as part of the CCM I feel like we are doing something tangible and people and the government are taking notice.”

### Local monitor from Kayah State

To understand Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring (CCM) efforts and their relevance to Myanmar's peace process, it is important to understand what CCM is and how it differs from other types of monitoring, including formal ceasefire monitoring and human rights monitoring. Monitoring is essentially the practice of observing compliance to a standard. The purpose of monitoring is to help all those involved to make appropriate and timely judgments and decisions that will improve the quality of the work, ensure accountability, and encourage implementation according to plan. In the context of ceasefire monitoring, that standard is the ceasefire agreement, in the context of human rights monitoring, it is human rights law. Ceasefire monitoring is applied to observe the implementation of a ceasefire agreement as well as verify and report alleged ceasefire violations to improve ceasefire implementation. Similarly, human rights monitoring, as defined by the United Nations, is "the active collection, verification and immediate use of information to improve human rights protection" (United Nations, 2001, p. 3). Though the standard or the source of guidance differs, both ceasefire monitoring and human rights monitoring is applied through the collection, verification, and communication of information.

Civilian ceasefire monitoring, as practiced by Nonviolent Peaceforce in the Philippines and introduced in Myanmar as CCM, differs from formal ceasefire monitoring both in focus and in application. Ceasefire monitoring efforts carried out by military personnel or experts tend to focus predominantly on military matters and major breaches of the agreement, leaving many civilian protection needs unaddressed. Civilian monitors may have limited knowledge on technical military matters, but are often in a better position to engage with communities about their security needs and concerns. Therefore, complementing the efforts of mandated ceasefire monitors, CCMs mainly focus their efforts on monitoring the impact of ceasefire violations and armed clashes on civilian populations in order to increase the safety and security of civilians.

Besides a different focus, CCMs have a different approach to ceasefire monitoring. Not merely relying on the reporting of ceasefire compliance to inform decision makers, CCMs use their field presence to directly protect civilians under threat or encourage influential actors at the local level to intervene. As the institutions tasked to receive and respond to reports in situations of prolonged armed conflict are often weak or non-existent, especially at the start of the ceasefire monitoring process, the activities of documentation, verification, and reporting are often insufficient. In fact, if responses to reports are not forthcoming, the trust of communities in the monitors will likely decrease. By addressing immediate security concerns of vulnerable individuals and groups, CCMs can directly contribute to the protection of civilians. These direct protection efforts have in many cases strengthened the ability of monitors to collect and report information about civilian protection needs and concerns to the ceasefire parties (see section 4.4 for more information).

Formal ceasefire monitoring is usually a top-down process, directed by the leadership of the ceasefire parties. CCM, on the other hand, is a bottom-up process, tailored to the context at the grassroots level and the needs of conflict-affected communities. It is not sur-

prising, therefore, that the application of CCM by various civil society groups in the ethnically diverse ceasefire areas of Myanmar, has led to the emergence of different systems and approaches. As mentioned in a previous paper by Nonviolent Peaceforce, the “ability [of civil society groups applying CCM] to formulate their own models in accordance with the local context is a strength that suits the different pace at which the peace process is progressing in the different areas of Myanmar, and a sign of an increasingly home-grown peace process.” (Nonviolent Peaceforce 2015, p. 3). Nevertheless, the fluidity of approaches to CCM has created confusion among insiders and outsiders, especially after some CCM mechanisms began to label their efforts as Civilian Protection Monitoring (CPM).

CPM can be defined as the practice of deploying civilian monitors before, during, and after violent conflict, to prevent or reduce violence, provide direct physical protection to other civilians, and facilitate humanitarian assistance. The term CPM was initially coined to address the concerns of monitors who felt that the word ‘ceasefire monitoring’ was too sensitive and made authorities reluctant to support them. In 2014 and the beginning of 2015, many emerging CCM mechanisms were faced with local authorities that were averse to the idea of civilians being involved in ceasefire monitoring. Some of these mechanisms felt that the direct protection of civilians was a more effective strategy than the reporting of ceasefire violations, as their reports would not be accepted by the ceasefire parties. As a result, they increased the emphasis on the practice and/or on the term of civilian protection and labelled their work CPM. Methods such as providing humanitarian corridors to evacuate civilians caught in crossfires or accompanying injured civilians to hospitals were prioritised over the documentation and reporting on ceasefire implementation.

Though Civilian Protection Monitors (CPMs) (temporarily) abandoned the term ceasefire monitoring and de-prioritised reporting to ceasefire parties, ceasefire agreements remained a key source of guidance in their work, as they reflected the commitments of the conflicting parties to protect civilians. After the signing of the NCA by the Myanmar government and eight Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) in October 2015, it became easier for civilian monitors to talk about ceasefire monitoring, as the NCA created momentum behind the peace process. In response, some CPMs started to re-insert the term ‘ceasefire monitoring’ into their outreach efforts and increase their attention to the practice of reporting on ceasefire implementation. Others kept using the term CPM and broadened the scope of their monitoring efforts to include human rights abuses that are not referenced in ceasefire agreements. Nevertheless, these CPMs kept their main focus on the direct physical security of conflict-affected communities, rather than, for example electoral issues, religious discrimination, socio-economic issues, or freedom of speech.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Though CCMs may not report non-ceasefire related human rights violations or abuses to the ceasefire parties, they may still monitor them as they are often indirectly related and could have an impact on the peace process. What’s more, some of the bilateral agreements speak in broad terms about ‘guaranteeing the human rights and safety of all civilians’, which has made it hard for monitors to distinguish ceasefire related from non-ceasefire related human rights abuses.

Attempts to create more clarity about the various efforts of civilian monitors have delineated CCM and CPM as two distinct practices; CCM as “monitoring troop movements and other incidents constituting the breaking of a formal ceasefire agreement” and CPM as incorporating a “broader focus on human rights issues affecting members of the community” (Kamler, 2016, p. 11). This representation seems to equate CPM with human rights monitoring and CCM with formal ceasefire monitoring, albeit carried out by civilians. It misses two crucial points: firstly, it ignores the shift CCM has made from monitoring military actions to monitoring the impact of military actions on civilian populations; secondly, it ignores the shift that CCM and especially CPM have made from a reliance on documenting and reporting to the use of direct interventions to protect civilians. Ignoring these two points clouds the added value of CCM and CPM. It could also negatively impact the security of monitors and stifle their ability to respond creatively to the complex realities on the ground.

Taking the civilian protection component out of CCM may reduce the (perceived) complementary value of CCMs in regards to official ceasefire monitoring mechanisms such as, for example, the Joint Monitoring Committees of the NCA. It may also reduce opportunities for monitors to make a direct impact on the security situation of conflict-affected communities and collect relevant information about ceasefire implementation in conflict-affected areas. Moreover, a perceived focus on monitoring military matters may increase the security risk of CCMs.

Associating CPM with human rights monitoring makes CPMs appear more threatening to the ceasefire parties, as human rights monitoring is understood by many as the practice of promoting human rights and justice by documenting and publicly reporting human rights abuses as well as advocating for specific solutions. Many ceasefire parties in Myanmar have been reluctant to involve civil society in the ceasefire monitoring process because they fear civilian monitors will use sensitive and confidential information to publicly shame them for human rights abuses, related or unrelated to the ceasefire agreement. On several occasions they have warned the monitors “not to act as human rights monitors or watchdogs”. If authorities view CPMs (and CCMs) as human rights watchdogs, it may negatively impact the monitors’ security as well as their ability to proactively engage and negotiate with the ceasefire parties to minimise violence against civilians.<sup>2</sup>

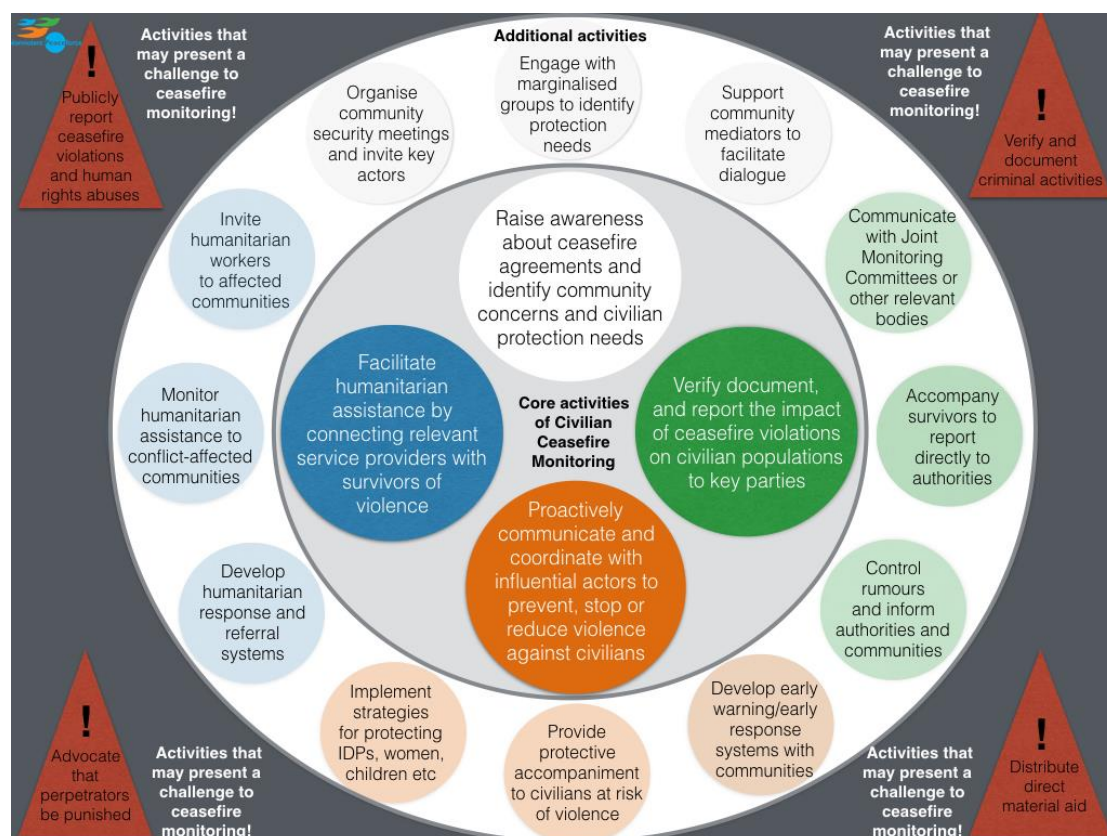
This paper brings CCM and CPM efforts together as a spectrum of methods that are used by civilian monitors to proactively increase the protection of civilians in the context of Myanmar’s peace process, at the stage of ceasefire negotiations and implementation. Depending on the local context, the stage of the peace process, the strengths of the monitors, and the needs of communities, one mechanism may prioritise the reporting of compliance to the ceasefire agreement, a second direct protection efforts, and a third the facilitation of humanitarian assistance. For an emerging mechanism, raising awareness

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<sup>2</sup> Though CPMs (and CCMs) have engaged in some form of human rights advocacy, they have generally adopted a nonpartisan, non-confrontational, and low profile approach that de-emphasises public advocacy efforts in order to maintain acceptance as well as access to conflict areas and key actors.



and identifying community protection needs and concerns may be the only feasible activity. For experienced mechanisms, there are additional strategies that can be used to further increase the safety and security of conflict-affected communities. In this paper we will refer to this spectrum of mutually reinforcing efforts as CCM. It is visualised in the diagram below (figure 1) and functions as the guiding structure for this paper (section 4 outlines the successes and challenges of CCMs in the four core strategies of CCM) and as a roadmap for CCMs (section 6 describes this road map in more detail, including the additional activities).



**Figure 1: The spectrum of civilian ceasefire monitoring**

### 3. THE FUNCTIONING OF CIVILIAN CEASEFIRE MONITORING MECHANISMS IN MYANMAR

#### 3.1. Monitors and areas of monitoring

As of September 2016, around 405 civilian ceasefire monitors (101 women and 304 men) are operating in 62 townships and 139 villages in Chin, Mon, Kayah, Kayin, Shan, and Kachin States as well as Tanintharyi Region (see table 1). Most areas that are currently covered have been identified in consultation with local communities. In some cases, the proximity of Liaison Offices (LOs) of Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) played a role in the process of identification. In other cases, existing peacebuilding and human rights networks were transformed into civilian ceasefire monitoring mechanisms and thus influenced the identification of areas. Some important areas have not yet

been covered (sufficiently), because they are difficult to reach or because authorities have not (yet) granted access. As the monitoring mechanisms are set up and managed in various ways, 'coverage' is interpreted differently from mechanism to mechanism. For some mechanisms 'coverage' means the existence of physical offices or at least the presence of monitors residing in the area.<sup>3</sup> For other mechanisms it means that monitors regularly visit the designated areas, without necessarily residing there.

The monitoring mechanisms consist of a variety of civil society representatives. Project managers and leaders of the mechanisms have made efforts to safeguard the diversity of civilians participating in their mechanism in order to demonstrate inclusiveness and non-partisanship. Trying to mirror the diversity of their respective communities, they have included village leaders, youth leaders, CSO representatives, religious leaders, women leaders, and other respected persons in their mechanisms. Diversity has also been emphasised in regards to gender, age, levels of education, and ties with either the state government or to Ethnic Armed Organisations. Surveys among monitors from the Karen Women Empowerment Group (KWEG) and the Gender and Development Institute Myanmar (GDI) found that 60% (KWEG) and 40% (GDI) of monitors are women, 40% (KWEG) and 70% (GDI) have secondary education, 50% (KWEG) and 30% (GDI) are over 35 years, 45% (KWEG) and 35% (GDI) between 25 and 35 years, and a quarter are involved in community welfare projects (KWEG and GDI).

Despite significant achievements in maintaining diversity across the civilian monitoring mechanisms, there are gaps. Of the initial 66 members of the Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (CCMC) in Mon State 10 were women, though 70% of the women were in leadership positions. Of the initial 50 members of the Civilian Ceasefire Team (CCMT) in Chin 6 were women, though 67% of the women were in leadership positions.<sup>4</sup> Other gaps include a lack of ethnic diversity among monitors of a particular mechanism and/or within their coverage of certain areas. Most mechanisms focused their monitoring efforts in the early stages predominantly or exclusively on communities that corresponded with the ethnicity of its monitors. In some cases this is the result of a deliberately narrow mandate that focuses on the monitoring of a bilateral ceasefire agreement between the government and a particular EAO. In other cases the monitoring mechanisms chose to focus their monitoring efforts on communities of a particular ethnicity.

Maintaining appropriate levels of diversity is a work in progress. Skills, experience, and positions of influence have in some cases been prioritised over diversity. Attempts to increase diversity have sometimes been hindered by the direct selection of monitors by their own community leaders or by pre-existing networks that were utilised as a basis for the establishment of the monitoring mechanisms. Recent assessments indicate that civilian monitors are increasingly aware of these gaps and are making efforts to increase

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<sup>3</sup> There are 5 CCM offices in Chin, 6 in Mon State, 1 in Kachin State at the State and township level.

<sup>4</sup> 2 state committee members, 4 township committee members, 1 township coordinator, and 3 village monitors were women in the initial set up of the mechanism in Mon State. 1 female State Committee Member, 3 township committee members, and 2 village monitors were women in the initial set up of the mechanism in Chin State. Though Initial numbers were low, the numbers of women in these mechanisms have increased in the course of the past two years.

diversity either by adjusting their own mechanism or by collaborating with other mechanisms. Monitors from Karen and Mon-based mechanisms, operating in border areas between Mon and Kayin State, for example, have begun to collaborate with each other to make sure that Mon communities in Kayin State and Karen communities in Mon State are included in the monitoring process. Monitors supported by GDI and Zin Lum in Kachin State explained that focused activities on sharing experiences about collectively overcoming challenges of acceptance and inter-ethnic tensions had allowed them to engage with a broader range of civilian populations.

Monitoring Mechanism	State/Region	# Townships	# Villages	# Monitors*	#Female Monitors	# Male Monitors	Supporting Organisations***
<b>CCMT Mon</b>	Mon	5	38	66**	56	10	SF, NP
<b>CCMC Chin</b>	Chin	9	23	50	44	6	SF, NP
<b>CCM N-Shan</b>	Shan	15	?	31	26	5	SF, NP
<b>CCM Kachin</b>	Kachin	10	?	75	13	62	SF, NP
<b>GDI Chin</b>	Chin	1	2	10	5	5	GDI, NP
<b>GDI Kayin</b>	Kayin	3	35	30	23	7	GDI, Hsar Muh Taw, Thwe, NP
<b>GDI Kachin</b>	Kachin	3	4	30	19	11	GDI, Zin Lum, NP
<b>KWEG</b>	Kayin	4	12	40	18	22	KWEG, NP
<b>KDN Kayin</b>	Kayin	2	10	19	14	5	KDN, CA, NP
<b>KDN Tanintharyi</b>	Tanintharyi	3	15	33	17	16	KDN, CA, NP
<b>Kayah CCM</b>	Kayah	7	-	26	26	6	KSPMN, MC, NP
<b>New Generation Shan State</b>	Shan	0	0	0	0	0	NGSS, WPAN, SPAS, NP, Ar Yone Oo
<b>Total: 12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>14</b>

**Table 1: facts and figures on CCM mechanisms**

\* Includes township and village monitors as well as secretariat and committee members, but not project staff of supporting organisations

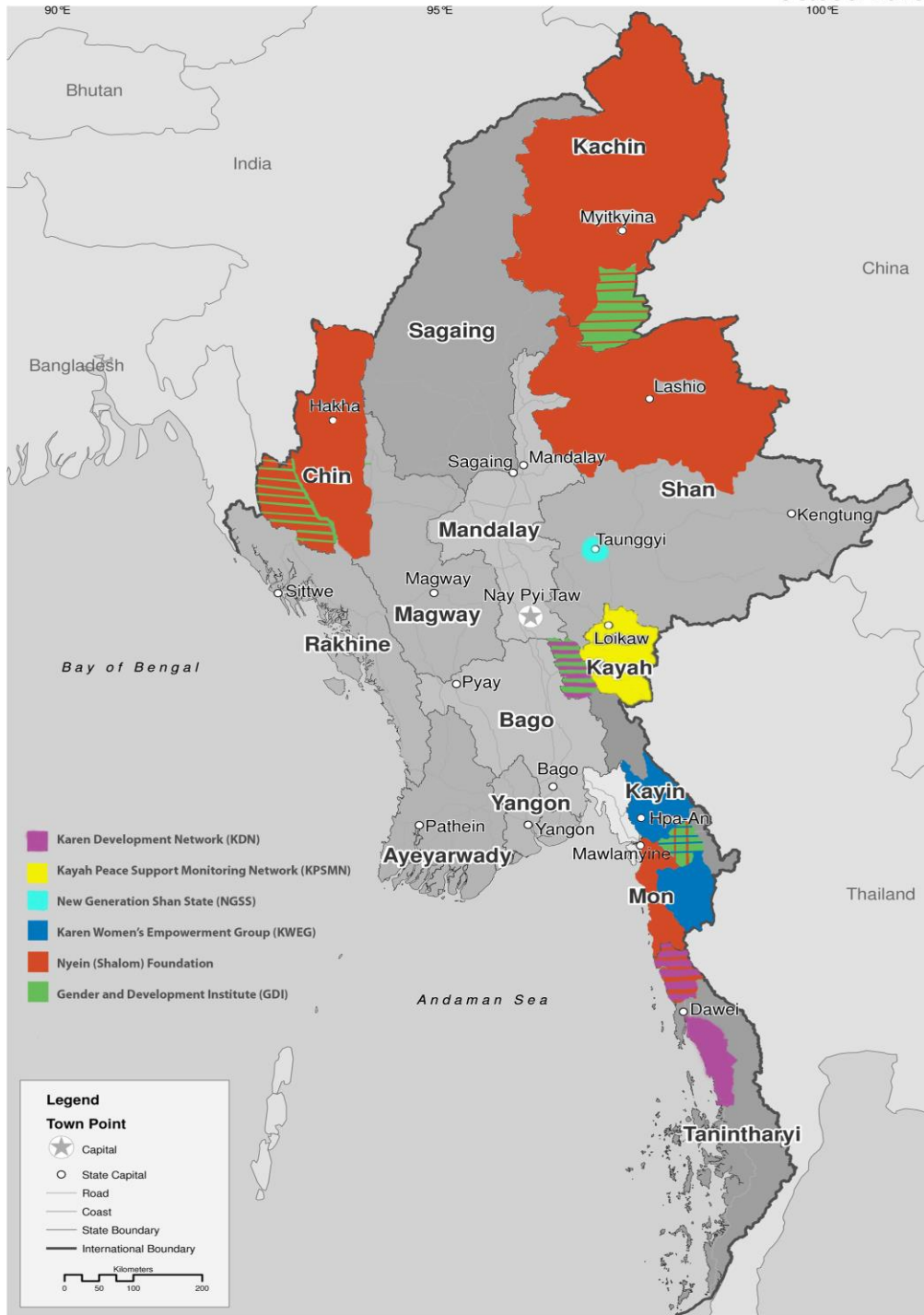
\*\* 11 monitors reside in Kawkareik Township, Kayin State

\*\*\* Supporting organisations refers to national and international NGOs that provide various levels of support to CCMs, including the active management of CCM mechanisms, training, and/or technical assistance.

CA= Christian Aid; GDI = Gender and Development Institute Myanmar; KDN = Karen Development Network; KSPMN = Kayah State Peace Monitoring Network; KWEG = Karen Women Empowerment Group; NGSS = New Generation Shan State; NP = Nonviolent

Peaceforce; MC = Mercy Corps; SF= Shalom (Nyein) Foundation; WPAN = Women Peace Action Network

October 2016



**Figure 2: map of local partner organisations of Nonviolent Peaceforce that have established and are currently managing, overseeing, and/or supporting civilian monitoring mechanisms in Myanmar.**

### 3.2. Systems and structures

The diversity of civilian ceasefire monitoring mechanisms is not just reflected in the composition of monitors, but also in the various systems and structures that have been put in place. Some of the mechanisms (e.g. in Chin, Mon, Kachin, Northern Shan, and Kayah State), most of them established and supported by Shalom (Nyein) Foundation, are led by an autonomous or semi-autonomous secretariat and a board or committee that consist of local community leaders. Other mechanisms (e.g. in Kayin, Chin, Kachin State and Tanintharyi Region<sup>5</sup>) are more directly managed by NGOs, like GDI, KWEG, and the Karen Development Network (KDN). These NGOs either work through local CBOs or are supported by a broader civil society network at the state level. In Kayah State, it is a network of state based NGOs and CBOs, called the Kayah State Peace Monitoring Network (KSPMN) that manages, or rather oversees, the civilian ceasefire monitoring mechanism.

As the set-up of the monitoring mechanisms varies from place to place, so reporting, security management, and incident response systems also vary. The mechanisms that are more directly managed or overseen by NGOs at the union level tend to have more developed documentation and reporting systems as well as better access to influential political actors and international donors. They have also been able to utilise the legal status of the supporting NGO to obtain the permissions required to organise workshops or events. On the other hand, the managing role of NGOs has raised expectations of support and direction among monitors and created a certain level of dependency. They have been very effective in situations, where the leadership of the NGO utilised its position of influence as well as its access to resources and networks to respond to the urgent needs of monitors and communities at the field level. However, in situations where the NGO leadership was unwilling, unable, or slow to respond to requests for support from the field, monitors have felt abandoned and frustrated.<sup>6</sup> In addition, mechanisms that are operating under a more top-down and centralised leadership have made limited use of the available resources and support structures at the local level.

The more autonomous and locally driven mechanisms have been able to engage and collaborate with a broader range of actors at the field level. This has strengthened their acceptance at the local level. On the other hand, without external support, they have struggled to secure sufficient financial resources, which has limited their monitoring efforts as well as their access to decision makers. Moreover, lacking some of the checks and balances that more experienced NGOs have in place, the locally driven mechanisms are more at risk of engaging in activities that are not directly related to ceasefire monitoring. Many monitors feel an obligation to respond to a broad range of urgent community needs and concerns, especially when community members start approaching them, but

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<sup>5</sup> The mechanisms in Chin and Kachin mentioned in this sentence refer to the mechanisms managed by GDI, whereas the mechanisms in Chin and Kachin mentioned earlier refer to the mechanisms overseen by the Shalom (Nyein) Foundation.

<sup>6</sup> The presence of dedicated NGO staff at the field level has made a significant difference in this regard.

they are not always fully aware of the expectations that may be raised among communities as well as the implications this may have on their own security and their level of acceptance by authorities.

### **3.3 Capacity and confidence building: the role of Unarmed Civilian Protection methodology as a connector among CCM mechanisms**

“Unarmed civilian protection (UCP) is a methodology for the direct protection of civilians and violence reduction that has grown in practice and recognition. In the last few years, it has proven its effectiveness to protect women and girls.”

Global Study on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2015), page 153.

Capacity building has been a crucial part of the establishment of civilian ceasefire monitoring mechanisms. Though the mechanisms have adopted different systems and approaches in the course of their establishment, there is an underlying uniformity among them that originates in the capacity building process. As Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) has provided on-going training and technical expertise to monitors of all CCMs (and CPMs) across the country, every monitor has been exposed to the same basic methods and principles. This provides some counter-balance to the diversity in systems and approaches that has emerged. It also presents opportunities for coordination and collaboration that can strengthen the broader peace process.

NP has developed its training curriculums based on the theory and practice of Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) as well as its assessment of the local context in Myanmar. “UCP is the practice of deploying unarmed civilians before, during, and after violent conflict, to prevent or reduce violence, to provide direct physical protection to other civilians, and to strengthen or build resilient local peace infrastructures” (Oldenhuis et al., p.11). Key aspects of UCP include a focus on proactive engagement with all key actors before, during, and after incidents of violence (1); a focus on encouraging potential perpetrators to minimise harm to civilians rather than blaming them for their actions (2); and a focus on direct physical protection of civilians by civilians (3). Though the monitoring mechanisms may decide to adopt different methods and principles, the application of UCP in civilian ceasefire monitoring has generated significant results. The constructive approach of CCMs in working together with the ceasefire parties, instead of adopting the role of a confrontational watchdog, has increased the credibility of civil society to be part of the ceasefire process and contributed to the inclusion of (more) civilians into the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) structure. Likewise, the actions of CCMs to provide humanitarian corridors, in coordination with armed actors, have increased CCMs’ acceptance by authorities and empowered communities and monitors alike.

NP, in collaboration with 5 partner organisations, has provided 1416 hours of training in 50 workshops for 404 monitors (101 women and 304 men) of 12 different monitoring mechanisms in 7 States and Regions since the beginning of 2012. The on-going training and coaching sessions have been a crucial part of the capacity building process, allowing the monitors to debrief responses to incidents, discuss challenges, and find solutions together with other monitors as well as learn additional skills on issues of their

choice. In addition to acquiring knowledge and skills, the capacity building activities have increasingly become a safe space, where civilian monitors engage directly with civilians of different ethnic identifications as well as influential actors to build relations, exchange views, and even resolve actual cases of civilian protection.<sup>7</sup> In the aftermath of trainings many monitors showed an increased willingness to meet with government authorities or armed organisations and ability to see their humanity. This is a striking outcome because it demonstrates that participants have internalised foundational UCP principles such as nonviolence and non-partisanship.

"You can't be biased in this work. I know this already, but in this training I realise that I am still very biased and other people still see me as biased."

Monitor at a training provided by Nonviolent Peaceforce and Gender and Development Institute Myanmar

Local organisations that have implemented CCM projects, such as the Shalom (Nyein) Foundation, GDI and KWEG have in the course of project implementation increasingly taken the initiative in developing capacity building activities that could further strengthen the capacity of monitors. They have, for example: provided voter education to monitors leading up to the November elections; provided training on UN resolution 1325 as well as responses to gender based violence;<sup>8</sup> or invited experts to brief the monitors on land rights, rule of law, the Myanmar Constitution, first aid, and the Code of Conduct of the NCA. Monitors in Kayin State reported that they had incorporated some of these issues into their outreach and training efforts among communities. These initiatives show the increasing local ownership of the projects as well as the increasing confidence of local monitors to make an active contribution to the peace process.

"The training, advisory and financing roles of international NGOs, combined with the local knowledge and reach of local NGOs and other grassroots actors to mobilise and support citizens, were clearly a hallmark of the Bantay Ceasefire's success."

Nat. J., Colletta, on the role of NGOs and broader civil society in ceasefire monitoring in Mindanao, the Philippines (Colletta, 2006, page 30).

#### 4. SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

"This evaluation has found encouraging evidence that the CCM contributes to more public participation in the peace process, better protection for communities in the ceasefire areas, improved relationships between armed actors and has been successful in addressing specific incidents."

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<sup>7</sup> During a training of monitors in Northern Shan the training itself served as a platform for directly addressing a civilian protection issue. Local police approached the monitors during the training about an incident that the monitors had reported earlier and engaged in a discussion, which resulted in the resolution of the issue.

<sup>8</sup> The sessions on gender sensitivity that organisations like GDI and KWEG have incorporated in the trainings and coaching workshops have led to a greater awareness of gender inequality and the challenges of women and of female monitors. Many monitors, men *and* women, have commented positively on training sessions about gender and requested more training on this issue.

Stefan Bächtold, Swisspeace, in his evaluation of a CCM project implemented by Shalom (Nyein) Foundation and Nonviolent Peaceforce in Chin and Mon State (Bächtold, 2016, p. 23)

Projects on civilian ceasefire monitoring have made important achievements in five areas: They have increased the participation of civilians in the peace process (1); increased the engagements between civilians and ceasefire parties about the peace process (2); increased the reporting on ceasefire implementation and civilian protection concerns to relevant authorities (3); prevented and reduced violence against civilians by directly responding to security threats and incidents (4); and minimised the impact of armed clashes by facilitating humanitarian assistance to conflict affected communities (5).

#### **4.1. Increasing participation of civilians, especially women, in the peace process**

“I always hoped for a role in participating in the peace process and now I know I can be a better monitor because I know how to strategise and prepare.”

Monitor from Kayin State

Projects on civilian ceasefire monitoring have been initiated not only to strengthen the implementation of the ceasefire agreements, but also to increase the participation of civilians at the grassroots level in the early stages of the peace process. Studies show that between 1975 and 2011, only 125 peace agreements out of 216, worldwide, were followed by the termination of violence for at least five years (Högbladh, 2012). One reason why peace agreements collapse is the lack of awareness, involvement, and support among communities and constituencies of armed groups and communities at the grassroots level (Stedman, 2001, p 19).

88% of monitors of the CCMC in Mon State, interviewed in June 2015, stated that there were no civilian peacebuilding activities in their areas prior to the project (i.e. before 30 December 2014). 61.5% of monitors of the CCMC in Chin State, part of the same project and survey, stated that villagers in their areas had not been involved in any peacebuilding activities prior to the commencement of the CCM project.<sup>9</sup> Asked for reasons why civilians were not involved in the peace process, these monitors quoted a lack of interest (38.5%, Chin), being punished by the government for activities related to peacebuilding (15.4% in Chin and 40% in Mon), orders from the government that such activities were the responsibility of the government (60% in Mon), and a general feeling that peace efforts would not improve their situation (28% in Mon and 15.4% in Chin). Assessments among monitors from other areas show similar responses.

The various CCM projects have succeeded in increasing the participation of civilians in the peace process, especially women. 405 people are currently supporting the peace process as civilian ceasefire monitors and many others are supporting them as advisors, and resource persons. Though the first CCMs in Chin and Mon combined only included 12% women (14 out of 117), gender focused organisations such as KWEG and GDI have

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<sup>9</sup> While 38.5% maintained that they *had* been involved in such activities, only a third of this number actually described activities that relate to peacebuilding



addressed the gender imbalance by including 60% and 40% women respectively in their monitoring mechanisms. Female monitors in Paletwa township, Chin State, supported by GDI, went on and transferred their knowledge and skills to their untrained female peers to carry out their monitoring activities as a group. This allowed them to more effectively contribute to the CCM mechanism as monitors *and* as women, and expand the outreach of the mechanism to women in their communities. In Kayin State, two monitors supported by KWEG became aware how their inclusion as women in the monitoring mechanism had strengthened their position in their village, when they were asked by their communities to head 10 and 100 households respectively.

These examples show that the civilian monitoring projects have an empowering effect. Possibilities for participation in politics or the peace process in ceasefire areas have been limited. “The CCM thus conveys a sense of empowerment not only to the communities with monitors, but also to the monitors themselves. While being largely powerless in face of the Myanmar army or EAO soldiers before, the mechanism gives them a more important role, and a certain standing to act on the armed actors’ behavior by monitoring and reporting incidents. This is especially the case for women, who typically bear the brunt of the consequences of armed conflict, but have even less possibilities to act compared to men in the same communities” (Bachtold, 2016, p.11).

“In this training exercise I became aware that the Chin people have always blamed the military for oppressing us, but we, men, have also oppressed our own women”

Monitor from Chin State at a training of Nonviolent Peaceforce and the Gender and Development Institute Myanmar

Finally, CCM projects successfully highlighted calls for the increased participation of civilians in the formal peace process mechanism. Leaders of CCM mechanisms, in particular from the Shalom (Nyein) Foundation and the Gender and Development Institute – Myanmar, have advocated strongly for the direct involvement and formal acknowledgement of civilians within the architecture of the NCA. They were supported in their efforts by influential actors in CCM project areas who had come to value the contribution of civilian monitors in supporting the implementation of the bilateral ceasefire agreements. It reaffirms the lesson from CCMs in the Philippines that civilian participation in the official process is best obtained by civilian initiatives that demonstrate their value to the ceasefire parties.

#### **4.2. Increasing proactive engagement with authorities and communities**

“If we are diplomatic they will listen”.

Representative of the Kayah State Peace Monitoring Network (KSPMN)

Project managers and monitors across Myanmar have made extensive efforts to proactively engage with communities and authorities. These efforts include individual meetings, discussion forums, community workshops, presentations at civil society forums and State parliaments. Between September 2014 and September 2015 the CCMT Chin, for example, organised 21 events to raise awareness among 861 community members at the grassroots level in Chin State. CCMC Mon organised 28 events with 1155 people in

Mon State in the same period. Together, they engaged with an additional 636 representatives of the government and EAOs. Though criticised by some to be biased towards EAOs, the monitoring mechanisms have made an effort to engage equally with both ceasefire parties. The total number of meetings convened by the CCMT Chin with the two parties in their area, for example, is almost equal (51% with Myanmar's armed forces and 49% with CNF).

The proactive engagement efforts of CCMs have generated acceptance and support among communities and authorities. Project evaluator Stefan Bächtold writes that the activities of CCMT Chin seem to have led to a high level of recognition for the need of CCM that was evident in his conversations with the Border Affairs and Security Minister, the chief of the police, and the representatives of the CNF (Bächtold, 2016, p.17). Assessments in other areas show similar sentiments. Engaging with the Myanmar military has been the most challenging task for all civilian monitors, but through local government administrators, police, and religious leaders, various CCMs have managed to establish some relationships with the army, either directly or indirectly. Monitors from Kayah explained that even though the military had not been responsive to their efforts to engage, they managed to gain trust of Border Guard Forces and paramilitary groups, who are controlled by the military.

In addition to increasing acceptance, the interactions of the monitors with authorities and communities have increased the information flow and provided opportunities for communities to talk about sensitive (security) issues and concerns about the peace process. Monitors from KWEK and GDI reported that these interactions have led to swifter and more appropriate responses from the monitors, stakeholders, and other service providers. At the same time, the more timely and effective responses by CCMs or by ceasefire parties as a result of CCMs' interventions or reports have also led to more credibility and acceptance of CCMs among conflict communities. Observing these effects unfolding, some of the monitors concluded that they have a more positive influence on the peace process and on armed actors than before they were part of the monitoring mechanism.

Gaining acceptance and support from authorities and communities has been a difficult task that hasn't been fully completed. Ceasefire parties in most places initially appeared reluctant to support the involvement of civilians in ceasefire monitoring. Some of them didn't see a role for civilians in security matters or perceived civil society involvement as a potential threat. Others feared that CCM would create parallel systems to official monitoring mechanisms and urged CCM project managers to hold off their activities until the leaders in the peace process had ironed out the terms and conditions of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). Since the signing of the NCA in October 2015 and the recognition of civilian participation by Joint Monitoring Committees (JMCs) of the NCA, it has become easier to talk about ceasefire monitoring and to gain acceptance for the participation of civilians in the ceasefire process among authorities. However, with

the establishment of the JMCs and its inclusion of civilian representatives, CCMs are yet again challenged to justify their existence.<sup>10</sup>

Gaining acceptance among communities has been a challenge as well. Many of them viewed the monitors as spies or feared that support to the monitors would have negative repercussions to their own security. Civil society groups in Shan State explained that some villagers were even afraid of reading the NCA text – published by the government in one of the national newspapers shortly after the signing of the NCA - as the government may consider it a political activity. Project managers and monitors across CCM mechanisms recognised the challenge of building trust and have intensified their outreach efforts in the course of project implementation, constantly re-explaining the project and sharing information in ways that resonate with communities and authorities. These outreach efforts have been and continue to be an important contribution to the process of building trust and initiating dialogue. Sometimes this means taking one step forward, two steps back.

More challenging for civilian monitors than gaining (informal) acceptance has been obtaining (formal) endorsement from the ceasefire parties. Though the CCMT in Chin State has been the only civilian monitoring mechanisms with a mandate to monitor the 2012 bilateral ceasefire agreement, it took the mechanism more than six months before their Terms of Reference (ToR), presented to the Border and Security Affairs Minister and the Liaison Office of the Chin National Front (CNF) in September 2012, was endorsed by both parties in April 2013. Some other mechanisms have attempted to get their ToRs officially endorsed by the ceasefire parties, but none of them have succeeded thus far. The recent agreement to allow individual civilian ceasefire monitors to be endorsed by the JMCs at the local level is a major step towards the endorsement of CCMs and the result of sustained advocacy efforts as well as the positive work of monitors on the ground. Though many monitors feel it is not sufficient and some perceive it as a threat<sup>11</sup>, putting it in perspective it is a significant achievement. In the Philippines, the Bantay ceasefire groups, civil society groups monitoring ceasefire agreements in Mindanao, operated for seven years alongside the official ceasefire mechanism, before they were invited to become part of it.<sup>12</sup>

### **4.3. Increasing reporting about ceasefire implementation and civilian protection concerns to relevant authorities**

“Without the CCM mechanism, we would not get the information we need”.

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<sup>10</sup> See section 4 for more information about the continuing relevance of CCMs

<sup>11</sup> Those perceiving it as a threat feel that by allowing only individual monitors to join the JMC-L, the ceasefire parties separate the CCM mechanisms and supporting organisations from their monitors and bring individual monitors under the control of a top-down, government-led mechanism.

<sup>12</sup> The Bantay ceasefire groups started their monitoring efforts in 2002 and became part of the official ceasefire monitoring mechanism in 2009, when a civilian protection component was added to the architecture.

Member of the Mon State Parliament (Bächtold, 2016, p.21)

A key aspect of ceasefire monitoring is regular reporting of (non-) compliance.<sup>13</sup> Reports by the various CCMs have gradually increased and improved between 2014 and 2016. Information provided in the reports is more often verified, ceasefire provisions are more accurately referenced, and the reports are more frequently submitted to relevant stakeholders. More importantly, reports have increasingly been accepted by the ceasefire parties and elicited formal or informal responses that have strengthened the protection of civilians.

Together, the monitors from CCMT Chin and CCMC Mon submitted 37 regular reports to relevant authorities as well as 31 incident reports between 27 March 2014 and 13 December 2015. According to the leadership of these two monitoring mechanisms, 83% of regular and incident reports (CCMC Mon) and 69.5% (CCMT Chin) were verified with multiple sources before they were submitted to relevant authorities.<sup>14</sup> Their 31 incident reports describe a variety of issues including: explosions, armed clashes, increased presence of troops, entrance of armed forces in restricted areas or in camps of the other party, relocation of army bases, the establishment of a new armed group, recruitment of child soldiers, extortion and illegal taxation, torture of civilians, killing of livestock, occupation of temples and pagodas, and rape. Out of these 31 reported incidents, the monitors identified 20 alleged violations of the bilateral ceasefire agreements. Some of the reported incidents don't relate to ceasefire agreements, but are reported nevertheless, as the relation may not be immediately clear or to dispel rumours that imply a relationship. Other incident reports describe actions that may constitute regular military operations, like the movement of military bases or the increase in troops, but are reported because they had an impact on the (perceived) safety of communities in the area.

The increasing acceptance of the monitoring reports by the ceasefire parties across the country is the result of sustained outreach efforts and shows that the civilian monitors don't have to be formally endorsed or mandated in order to contribute to the implementation of the ceasefire agreement. Representatives of the Chin State government and Chin National Front (CNF) welcomed the reports of civilian monitors of the CCMT, not merely because they had endorsed the mechanism, but because they realised the civilian monitors had relevant information about the security situation in communities. Representatives of the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) encouraged civilian monitors to unilaterally report their own violations of the bilateral ceasefire agreement as well as community concerns about the actions of their armed forces in Kachin State to the Conflict Resolution Team. KNU not only invited CCMs to report on NCA violations and community concerns about KNU actions, but also to act as a bridge between communities and authorities, strengthen the information flow, and help resolve inter-communal tensions that may emerge as the peace process progresses. State governments in Kachin

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<sup>13</sup> Monitors tend to focus on non-compliance and ignore or forget to report on compliance. Reporting on the progress that ceasefire parties have made in implementing the ceasefire agreement can help to build confidence and strengthen relationships.

<sup>14</sup> Establishing a functional internal reporting mechanism in mountainous Chin State has been a particular difficult task because of poor infrastructure.

and Kayin State have also encouraged the CCMs to continue their efforts in support of the peace process.

The reports of civilian monitors have in some cases led to fact finding missions and even direct interventions by the ceasefire parties on both sides, including the transfer of military personnel engaged in abuse of civilians, compensation paid to victims, and the release of child soldiers. Nevertheless, such responses are limited. Monitors from Chin and Mon mentioned that only two or three percent of the reports of monitors has led to fact finding missions by the ceasefire parties, who in most cases claim that verification is not necessary as “they already know what is going on”. Monitors from Kayah explained that it is difficult to understand the extent to which reports are utilised, as the ceasefire parties never inform the monitors about any follow up action they take.<sup>15</sup> However, on a few occasions they had observed direct action being taken in response to their reports. It is worth mentioning that almost all successful interventions by the ceasefire parties in response to civilian monitoring reports directly relate to cases of violence against civilians. This seems to indicate that civilian monitors are more likely to have an impact when they report on civilian protection concerns and the impact of ceasefire violations on civilian populations.

Though reports of civilian monitors have increased in quantity and quality, their submission to relevant authorities is still limited for a number of reasons. The lack of detailed provisions as well as functional monitoring bodies for most bilateral ceasefire agreements has made it difficult for the monitors to report (non-) compliance. The fear among ceasefire parties that (independent) civilian monitors would publicly report sensitive military issues, publicly shame and blame the ceasefire parties for non-compliance, and demand punishment for perpetrators, may also have limited opportunities for submitting reports. Geographical barriers, climate conditions, and limited infrastructure have in some areas made it difficult to obtain or report (timely) information. Finally, a lack of capacity or habit as well as existing fear of being held accountable for written reports among (village) monitors have limited the number of cases documented and written reports submitted. Many monitors prefer to talk in person or over the phone with relevant authorities, which makes it more difficult to assess progress of the reporting process.

Reporting by CCMs has increased since the signing of the NCA. The establishment of Joint Monitoring Committees, the removal of signatory EAOs from the Unlawful Association Act, and the 17 civilian protection provisions outlined in chapter 3, section 9 of the NCA text have made it easier for CCMs to report. Utilising UCP methods, monitors have also learned to be more nonpartisan, less confrontational, and focus specifically on civilian protection issues, which has made it easier for ceasefire parties to accept their reports. The leadership of various CCM mechanisms also increasingly understand that quietly resolving issues at the local level before or instead of submitting reports at the

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<sup>15</sup> As most civilian ceasefire monitoring mechanisms are not officially endorsed by the ceasefire parties, it is understandable that the latter keep a certain amount of distance and are not willing or able to establish closer communication with the civilian monitors.

State or Union levels builds trust and opens doors for future engagements. For observers (at the Union level) this may create the wrong impression that little reporting is being done.

Finally, a lot of informal reporting takes place within the process of proactive engagement that has been described in the previous section. Representatives of CCMT Chin and CCMC Mon, for example, engaged in dialogue with the leadership of the Myanmar Peace Center and shared their observations about the implementation of the bilateral ceasefire agreements in Chin and Mon State in 2015. CCMT Chin later had earlier organised a meeting with both CNF and representatives of the government at the State level, in which they discussed the 14 ceasefire violations that CCMT had documented thus far.<sup>16</sup> Monitors from KWEG and GDI as well as representatives from KDN engaged in dialogue with Liaison Officers of KNU, DKBA, KNLA-PC about the implementation the NCA in Kayin State. Representatives of the Joint Monitoring Committee in Tanintharyi visited a training of monitors held by NP and KDN and discussed with the monitors the various types of violence that communities experience as well as their concerns about the peace process. Assessing the reporting process based on the numbers of written reports submitted through official channels ignores the informal exchange of information that is taking place on all levels.

#### **4.4. Responding to incidents to prevent and reduce violence against civilians**

“This activity allows us to reflect on what is powerful about civilian protection monitors – while other agencies would still be asking for reports on what is going on, civilian protection monitors were able to go and negotiate for her release. Civilian protection monitors are on the ground they know the people who are involved in these activities, and this is where the power of civilian protection monitors comes from”.

Nan Mya Thida, founder and director of Research institute for Society and Ecology (RISE)

One of the most meaningful contributions of the civilian ceasefire monitors in Myanmar thus far is the response to incidents and threats of violence that provides direct protection to vulnerable civilians. These responses tend to be particularly meaningful in areas where ceasefire agreements have not (yet) been signed or have been ignored as well as in areas where ceasefire implementation and reporting systems are not (yet) fully functional.<sup>17</sup> Instead of merely reporting civilian casualties after armed clashes have taken place, in the hope that relevant authorities will respond appropriately, the monitors

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<sup>16</sup> The meeting was described by the media under: “Chin peace group reviews Govt-CNF agreement implementation,” *Chin Human Rights Organization*, 11 May 2015, <http://www.chro.ca/index.php/resources/chro-in-the-news/512-chin-peace-group-reviews-govt-cnf-agreement-implementation>

<sup>17</sup> Experiences from bilateral ceasefire implementation processes show that orders from above have priority and are also brought up as a justification for violations of the ceasefire agreement. In this sense, the military representatives that receive reports on the State or local level are also subjected to constraints that they can manipulate only to a very limited extent.

proactively respond at the first signs of imminent threats to prevent or minimise harm among civilian populations.

Direct protection efforts have been reported from across the country. When a number of civilians were arrested and tortured in August 2014, monitors in the CCMT Chin engaged with the survivors and with military commanders to resolve the issue and facilitated the accompanied return of civilians that had fled the area<sup>18</sup>. In July 2015, monitors and staff members of KWEG in Kayin State negotiated with army commanders for a pause in fighting to rescue an injured woman caught in crossfire. Monitors and GDI staff members in Kachin State convinced fighting parties in April 2015 to move away from civilian areas and in September that year facilitated a humanitarian corridor that allowed 200 civilians caught in cross fire to evacuate the area. Civilian monitors from various mechanisms have also been involved in accompanying displaced people to safe places, controlling rumours, and negotiating the release of civilians wrongly accused of supporting armed conflict. These examples show that the mechanisms have the capacity to act fast on serious incidents and to find solutions that increase the protection of civilians.

The success of these civilian protection efforts is to a certain extent the result of effective application of UCP methods and principles, as explained in section 2.4. Before proactively responding to threats and incidents, the monitors built relationships with a broad range of actors, which allowed them to quickly identify and approach the most influential actor to intervene. And, rather than accusing the military actors of violating the rights of civilians and trying to stop the fighting, the monitors asked the military actors to collaborate with them to get civilians out of harm's way. From these efforts monitors have learned that their inability to stop armed conflict from happening doesn't mean that there is nothing they can do. Many of them have also changed their perceptions of the military and become more aware of opportunities to engage with military actors, one at a time. As one monitor accounts at her second training "One time [before CCM existed] I was in Kachin in a workshop and security forces arrived to ask me all kinds of questions and my first reaction was one of hatred, maybe because I was scared. I now realise that I could have done better to build a relationship with them."

For every success story, there are many efforts that have not led to immediate results. Direct protection efforts are difficult and not without danger. Monitors across the country report their difficulties in engaging with authorities, especially state security forces. Often times their requests for meetings, collaboration, or interventions are met with silence and at least one monitor has been threatened by a member of the security forces during an effort to protect civilians. Many monitors still feel uncertain about proactively responding in the face of incidents, especially incidents between armed groups or incidents of rape. More work needs to be done to build the capacity of monitors in responding to the diverse protection needs of women, children, and displaced people among

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<sup>18</sup> The colonel addressed in this issue assured he would act on this incident and transferred the responsible officer.

others. More work needs to be done as well in building internal security management systems that assist the monitors in better assessing and reducing the risks of CCM work.

Though many monitors still feel uncertain about responding to incidents, they tend to feel more confident in responding to disputes within their communities, especially on land issues and inter-religious tensions. Negotiations by monitors with key government stakeholders and other influential actors are being reported with increasing frequency as monitors utilise the relations they have built on the ground. Monitors supported by KWEG in Kayin State reported how they engaged with various authorities to support villagers in obtaining certificates of land ownership. Monitors supported by GDI in Kachin State reported how they engaged with military personnel that occupied their houses for a certain period of time. According to these monitors, this has led to a more constructive dialogue between the security forces and their communities than would have existed had the monitors not been acquainted with the civilian monitoring project.

Recognising the risks and challenges involved, direct protection efforts tend to be the most powerful source of empowerment for communities *and* monitors. They also reinforce data collection, verification, and reporting efforts. Instead of merely taking information from communities, direct protection efforts give communities something back. It comes as no surprise that community acceptance of civilian ceasefire monitoring has most dramatically increased after monitors directly responded to incidents to protect civilians. These interventions have also reduced the perceptions among communities of the civilian monitors as spies, which, in turn, has made data collection easier. Finally, these efforts show communities that civilians, ordinary women and men just like themselves, can step out of the shadows and make a meaningful contribution to the security situation of conflict affected communities.

“To reiterate, it is important to highlight that perhaps the greatest contribution of this work will be the many civilians who have changed their beliefs and behaviors. They are becoming less governed by a ‘culture of fear’ and less limited by traditional roles. They are more accepting and promoting women’s leadership, and actively engaged in civilian protection. These are easy words to write, and very hard shifts to accomplish.”

Ellen Furnari, PhD, Transforming Matters, in her paper on the projects implemented by Nonviolent Peaceforce with the Karen Women Empowerment Group and the Gender and Development Institute Myanmar (Furnari, 2016, p.28).

#### **4.5. Facilitating humanitarian assistance to minimise the impact of violence on civilians**

“My reflection after this training is that monitoring is not just about observing the situation, but it is also about helping people, showing empathy, and providing support services. If there is an incident we always think who is to blame, but it is better to focus on vulnerable people.”

Ja Ra, Director of the Gender and Development Institute – Myanmar (GDI), at a training conducted by Nonviolent Peaceforce and GDI

Another way that civilian monitors have responded to incidents is by facilitating humanitarian assistance to survivors of violence. Some times instead of, or in addition to, re-



sponding before incidents take place to prevent violence or during incidents to stop or reduce violence, monitors respond after incidents have taken place to reduce the suffering of survivors. Like the direct protection actions, described in the previous section, the remedial actions of facilitating humanitarian assistance provide opportunities for the monitors to directly assist their communities. This has the side benefit of reducing reduce community perceptions of monitors as spies. These remedial actions tend to be easier for monitors to carry out, as, unlike the direct protection action before or during violence, they don't necessarily involve engagement with military actors or authorities. It can be as simple as holding a survivor's hand.

CCMs across the country have facilitated humanitarian assistance in the past few years. Representatives from GDI and Zin Lum in Kachin, for example, started their work as monitors by visiting the relatives of two teachers that were raped and shot in January 2015 to provide moral support and assess their security situation. Monitors from GDI and KWEK in Kayin State helped relocate over 700 Internally Displaced People (IDP) households in July 2015 and then facilitated the distribution of relief services in coordination with local monasteries. Some of these monitors took a leadership role in registering the IDPs and initiated local fundraising efforts among neighbouring communities to support them. Other monitors visited prisons to verify the conditions of prisoners, accompanied displaced people back to their homes in the aftermath of armed clashes, and facilitated assistance to survivors of landmines. Monitors that were involved in rescuing people caught in cross fires, mentioned in the previous section, went on to accompany the injured to nearby hospitals. A representative of GDI in Kachin explained how this posed its own challenges, as they had to negotiate with hospital personnel that initially refused treatment to these survivors of armed conflict.

These efforts have greatly increased the trust of communities in the CCMs and given the monitors a greater sense of purpose, as the impact of assisting a survivor is more visible than the impact of sending a report. However, the facilitation of humanitarian assistance by CCMs has not been without challenges. It has been difficult for monitors to manage the expectations of conflict-affected communities that easily perceive the monitors as the providers of assistance, especially material aid. On more than one occasion that monitors have accompanied injured civilians to hospitals, they were expected to pay for the medical bills. Apart from not possessing the means or the expertise to provide appropriate support services, the act of providing humanitarian assistance could easily compromise the nonpartisanship of CCMs. Even if services are provided in a professional manner and don't harm the beneficiaries, the action may raise expectations about the roles and responsibilities of CCMs or even create tensions among communities that feel excluded from such services. The fact that some of the NGOs that manage the CCMs projects are providing humanitarian assistance through other projects further complicates the matter. The autonomous CCM mechanisms have an advantage in this regard as their sole function is CCM, but as their leaders often wear multiple hats and may represent CBOs or local businesses, the issue concerns them as well.

"Before I didn't know much about CCM. I feel happy, if there is a problem happening in an area, even if I cannot help, I can provide support telling them where to go."

## 5. THE RELEVANCE OF CIVILIAN CEASEFIRE MONITORING MECHANISMS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NCA

“We thank the CCMT because you have been working on the ceasefire monitoring work for 2 years which has not ever worked in Myanmar. You are not working only in the peace process, but also in mediation work. Please participate also in JMC work.”

Pu Nang Lian Thang, CNF leader

CCMs across Myanmar have worked since 2012 to monitor bilateral and multilateral ceasefire agreements. Despite initial concerns about civilian involvement in ceasefire monitoring, external project evaluators have emphasised that “all stakeholders unanimously stated the high relevance of the civilian ceasefire monitoring mechanisms for the peace process. Given the range of different stakeholders interviewed, ranging from armed actors over government to village level monitors, this unanimous appraisal of the mechanism – both in Mon and Chin state – is noteworthy.”<sup>19</sup> Though CCMs mainly focus on civilian protection issues, in places where they have had an official mandate, they have demonstrated their ability to deal with military matters as well. The secretary of CCMT in Chin State, for example, convened a meeting in 2015 between CNF and the government/military to discuss alleged ceasefire violations related to troop movements and incursions of troops in each other’s territories. According to a representative of CNF, ceasefire violations decreased in the period following this meeting.<sup>20</sup>

“Instead of just having only big government and ethnic armed group related organisations observe themselves, if we could have watch groups monitor what is really happening here on the ground and submit it, it would be more effective and different, respective groups can also see it.”

U Moe Zaw Naing, Ye Township Administrator, Mon State.

CCM mechanisms have never claimed a leading role in the official ceasefire monitoring process. CCM projects emerged in response to the lack of functioning monitoring mechanisms for the bilateral agreements and have been designed to complement monitoring efforts undertaken by the ceasefire parties. As the spokesperson for Kachin’s Peace Creation Group’s explained: “the 2013 bilateral agreement envisioned a Joint Monitoring Team, but it was never established. Hence, the CCM mechanism filled that gap.” Now that serious efforts are being made to establish a formal monitoring mechanism under the NCA, which incorporates the bilateral ceasefire agreements and includes civilian representation, one may ask the question: is there still a need for CCM mechanisms?

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<sup>19</sup> Stefan Bächtold, “Final Evaluation Report on Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring Project,” Swisspeace, January 2016, page 9.

<sup>20</sup> Though CCMT has made a positive contribution to ceasefire implementation in Chin State, it must be noted that the security situation in Chin State seems to have improved before the CCMT started their monitoring, after the ceasefire agreement was signed.

CCMs continue to be relevant for a number of reasons. First of all, the NCA's Joint Monitoring Committees (JMCs) have not yet been established at the local level, where monitoring efforts are most needed. CCMs currently manage a system of proactive field monitors at the local level, which is the backbone of any functioning monitoring mechanism. It makes sense to utilise this resource, at least until the official mechanism is fully operational. Looking at the time and effort it took for relatively small, informal CCMs to become operational in one particular area, it is unrealistic to expect a large formal mechanism to be set up, capacitated, and fully functioning at three levels in seven States any time soon. Besides, local-level JMCs will be established in only one or two areas per State, at least in the first phase of the NCA's implementation process. This leaves many areas out of the NCA's monitoring mechanism's direct reach.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, armed clashes involving NCA signatories continue to occur, affecting the security and livelihood of communities and undermining their trust in the peace process. CCMs have an important role to play to respond to incidents, reduce tensions, and build confidence in the peace process at the local level, while the JMCs are in the process of becoming operational. In addition, CCMs can accelerate this process by sharing experiences or even encouraging experienced individual CCM members to become part of the emerging JMC structure at the local level.

Secondly, CCMs remain relevant because they can build confidence in the official monitoring mechanisms at the local level. The experience from CCM projects shows that the establishment of a functioning monitoring mechanism is not merely a matter of designing systems and structures, drafting Terms of References, and training monitors. Gaining trust and acceptance from all parties is equally important, if not more so. JMCs may not need to gain acceptance among authorities as they represent them, but their acceptance among civil society groups and conflict-affected communities is less certain. If CCMs, established by and for civilians, struggled to gain acceptance among communities, it is expected that the JMCs will face an even bigger challenge. The inclusion of civilian representatives within the JMCs will make trust building efforts easier, but as the civilian representatives are selected by the ceasefire parties, they may not immediately be perceived by communities as representing their interests. CCMs can support these trust building efforts by facilitating dialogue between JMCs and civil society, sharing accurate information about the efforts of JMCs to conflict-affected communities, and reducing unrealistic expectations communities may have about the JMCs.

The relevance of CCM goes beyond preparing the ground for JMCs. Even in a situation where JMCs are fully functioning and broadly accepted at the various levels, CCM mechanisms remain relevant, especially in the areas of providing direct protection and facilitating humanitarian assistance. The JMCs are expected to focus their efforts mainly on the verification, reporting, and resolution of major ceasefire violations and assess the

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<sup>21</sup> Though the State-level JMC may directly monitor the ceasefire areas that are not covered by local-level JMCs, the intensity of its efforts will undoubtedly be limited. Moreover, as the endorsement of individual civilian monitors only takes place at the local-level JMCs, the inclusion of civilian monitors within the NCA mechanism will be limited to one or two ceasefire areas per State.

roles and responsibilities of military actors. Assessing the impact of these violations on communities or dealing with individual civilian protection issues will be lesser priorities, while rescuing civilians from cross fires or accompanying survivors of armed clashes to clinics not likely to be part of their job description. Experiences from other countries reaffirm the need for broad support on this issue. The ceasefire parties in the Philippines, for example, attached a specific body to the monitoring mechanism that was tasked to respond to civilian protection issues and managed by Nonviolent Peaceforce and local NGOs. But even this additional body at times struggled to address the wide variety of civilian protection needs of vulnerable individuals and groups affected by the conflict and hence relied on collaboration with various government and non-government agencies.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, CCMs remain relevant, because the ceasefire monitoring mechanism of the NCA is currently not covering every ceasefire area in the country. A significant number of EAOs have not (yet) signed the NCA. This leaves many ceasefire areas out of the NCA's monitoring mechanism's reach. As has been described earlier, various CCM mechanisms are operating in these areas, including Kachin, Kayah, Mon and Shan State, to monitor bilateral ceasefire agreements. It is important that CCM efforts in these areas continue, as they include areas where the protection needs of civilians are most urgent. Sustained CCM efforts in these areas can also provide some counterbalance for the increasing gap of attention and support that is being given to NCA signatory and non-signatory areas. Moreover, CCMs can play a role in facilitating dialogue and increasing trust among ceasefire parties and communities in these areas, which may help to prepare the ground for the signing and timely implementation of additional (more comprehensive) ceasefire agreements and build the capacity of actors that may later be appointed to monitor these agreements.

In summary, the relevance of CCMs is not diminished in the face of an official ceasefire monitoring mechanism that is emerging under the NCA. On the contrary, it may actually be amplified, as it no longer operates in relative isolation and finds a clear point of reference in the emerging JMCs. Instead of a parallel mechanism that is interfering with the official mechanism, CCMs should be viewed as a community driven bottom-up mechanism that is connecting with a top-down mechanism led by military actors. The potential collaboration between CCMs and JMCs allows JMCs to utilise experienced monitors and existing networks to collect and disseminate information at the grassroots level as well as increase their legitimacy among conflict affected communities and perhaps even non-signatory EAOs. At the same time, it allows CCMs to increase their own security, their access to influential actors, and ultimately their ability to protect civilians.

“To be successful in peacemaking, the government needed to connect the top-down strategy with a bottom-up initiative, shifting attention to building a civil society constituency for peace and security from below.”

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<sup>22</sup> Other bodies established under the International Monitoring Team included: security; humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and development; and socio-economic issues

Nat. J., Colletta, on the role of NGOs and broader civil society in ceasefire monitoring in Mindanao, the Philippines (Colletta, 2006, page 25).

On the ground, the collaboration between CCMs and JMCs has already started. CCMs in Kayin State and Tanintharyi Region have invited JMCs members to workshops and discussion forums to initiate dialogue about communication and coordination, while JMC representatives in Tanintharyi have accompanied CCMs in their outreach activities to raise awareness about the NCA among communities. When tensions between ceasefire parties over the jurisdiction of a toll-gate in Tanintharyi Region recently created anxiety among communities in the area, civilian monitors, supported by KDN, immediately engaged with State-level JMC about the issue. While the JMC set out to resolve the issue with the ceasefire parties, civilian monitors went back to the communities to reassure them and inform them about the steps that were being taken to resolve the issue.<sup>23</sup> It shows how CCMs and JMCs can work hand in hand to strengthen the implementation of the NCA and create a safe space for political dialogue.

“From the start of the peace process, we should have had this [Civilian Ceasefire Monitoring] already, it should have been part of formal mechanisms already. Civilians are the most important party, only when we have mechanisms, will there be this focus...”

Member of the Mindanao Islamic Liberation Front, Philippines<sup>24</sup>

## 6.A ROAD MAP FOR CCMs

"Before I had no confidence to engage with elders or leaders. I was scared, now I feel more confident, by engaging with stakeholders I can understand my responsibility and give support to the community."

Village monitor in Kayin State at a coaching workshop conducted by Nonviolent Peaceforce and the Karen Women Empowerment Group

CCMs have made an important contribution to the peace process in its early stages by increasing civilian participation, building relations between communities and ceasefire parties, communicating relevant information about ceasefire violations and community security concerns, providing direct protection, and facilitating humanitarian assistance. As the peace process progresses, or in some areas perhaps regresses, CCMs may need to adapt their strategies in order to meet the challenges and address emerging needs. The ways CCMs respond to these challenges and needs will depend on the pace and dynamics of peace process in different parts of the country, the types of violence local communities may face as well as the interests, expertise, and available resources of the various CCM mechanisms. Therefore, there is no pre-determined set of steps that will steer CCMs through the various stages of Myanmar's peace process and it will certainly differ by region and even community.

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<sup>23</sup> According to KDN, the issue was eventually resolved by a KNU officer of Palauk Township.

<sup>24</sup> Taken from not a yet published paper by Ellen Furnari on 'Unarmed Civilian Protection/Peacekeeping in Mindanao'

Nevertheless, there are a number of issues CCMs are encouraged to reflect on as well as a number of strategies that could provide direction. The diagram shown on page 9 depicts recommended strategies and can be used as a road map for CCMs. Instead of a linear road map that forces each CCM mechanism to go through the exact same steps towards a pre-determined outcome, the diagram shows four core strategies as well as three sub-strategies for each of the core strategies that can be used flexibly. CCMs can expand from the core strategies towards the sub-strategies in various directions depending on their interests, the local dynamics of the peace process, and the needs of communities. The diagram also depicts four actions, in the form of warning signs, which may complicate ceasefire-monitoring efforts. This section provides some broad recommendations and clarifications for each of the strategies depicted in the diagram.

### **6.1. Raise awareness about ceasefire agreements and identify community concerns and civilian protection needs**

“Given the levels of awareness and coverage reached now, it is recommended to further intensify and increase coverage of awareness raising activities, and especially to give the village monitors a greater role in it...”

Stephan Bachtold (Bachtold, 2016, p. 23)

Raising awareness is not a warming-up exercise for the actual ceasefire monitoring. It is an intrinsic part of the ceasefire monitoring practice and needs to be sustained. As CCMs move forward, awareness raising efforts may shift from establishing relationships, building trust, and increasing understanding about the ceasefire agreement and the role of CCMs towards maintaining those relationships and providing regular information about the latest developments in the ceasefire implementation and political dialogue process in order to build confidence. CCMs are also encouraged to evaluate their outreach efforts and map the places and the people they have approached or ignored thus far. In particular, they should identify areas and actors that are harder to reach, which could include communities in isolated areas, but also military commanders or militia groups. Finally, CCM project managers and leaderships should make an effort to gradually increase the role of village monitors in awareness raising activities to decrease the dependency on experienced individuals.

#### *6.1.1. Organise community security meetings and invite key actors*

Thus far CCM mechanisms have focused their awareness-raising activities more on providing information than on obtaining information. As communities become more aware about the ceasefire agreement and the role of CCMs, they are in a better position to communicate how ceasefire implementation (or lack thereof) impacts their communities. CCMs are encouraged to make better use of their outreach activities to gain more information about the security needs of communities. CCMs should be careful not to assume that they already know what these needs are and provide opportunities for communities to voice their own needs and concerns, while being careful not to raise expectations that these needs and concerns will be addressed. As CCMs gain confidence in en-

gaging with ceasefire parties, JMC representatives, and other influential actors, they are in a good position to facilitate dialogue between these actors and conflict-affected communities. CCMs can facilitate such dialogue, for example, by inviting a JMC representative or a military commander to a community meeting or discussion forum to directly engage with community members. In areas, where tensions are rising or where ceasefire violations have significantly affected civilians, such engagements could help to de-escalate tensions and increase confidence in the peace process.

#### *6.1.2. Engage with marginalised groups to identify protection needs*

Thus far CCM mechanisms have focused their awareness raising efforts mostly on communities as a whole, less on specific groups within these communities. As CCMs move forward, they are encouraged to reflect on the inclusiveness of their outreach efforts as well as the strategies that allow marginalised individuals or groups to speak out about their needs and concerns. Increasing the participation of such groups in public forums or meetings is often not sufficient. Women may not speak about their security needs in the presence of men. Youth people may remain silent in the presence of elders. Representatives of religious minorities may feel safer meeting only among themselves. CCMs need to be sensitive and creative in their approach to draw out the voices of marginalised groups. As trust increases CCMs may find it easier to obtain sensitive information from communities about their protection needs, but it also increases their responsibility in sharing this information to the relevant actors in appropriate ways, without increasing the risks for already vulnerable civilians.

#### *6.1.3. Support community mediators to facilitate dialogue*

The implementation of a ceasefire agreement often changes the conflict dynamics in ceasefire areas. As the overarching armed conflict subsides, military actors step out of the limelight, and law enforcement responsibilities are not yet clearly defined, militia groups and criminal elements may try to occupy the perceived vacuum of power and latent (inter-communal) conflicts may rise to the surface. In addition, ceasefire violations that are not addressed in a timely manner may create conflict as the victimised parties retaliate. Though CCMs are not tasked to resolve conflicts, sometimes they are expected to respond, especially if they are affiliated with the official monitoring mechanism. Rather than trying to resolve emerging conflicts themselves, it is better if CCMs involve influential actors and experienced mediators to take on this task. They can however, support these mediators by engaging with various actors to prepare the conflict resolution process, accompany mediators to meetings if needed, providing presence during the mediation efforts, and monitor the implementation of agreements.

## **6.2. Verify, document, and report the impact of ceasefire violations on civilian populations to key parties**

The verification, documentation, and reporting of ceasefire violations is perhaps the most essential part of ceasefire monitoring. If CCMs want to be taken seriously, they need to deliver reports that are relevant, comprehensive, and factual. As CCMs mainly focus on the impact of ceasefire violations on civilian populations, they can demonstrate their added value by becoming experts in the verification, documentation, and reporting of civilian protection provisions. They can start this process by unpacking the civilian protection provisions outlined in chapter 3, section 9, of the NCA and asking basic questions such as: What is understood by 'forced conscription', 'sexual assault', or 'inhumane treatment? What are typical 'acts that cause the disappearance of individuals' or 'actions that lead to the destruction of schools'? What should monitors look for when they assess cases of unlawful arrest? An in-depth understanding of these issues will not only allow CCMs to improve their reporting, but also to better prevent violence, as monitors will better understand the contributing factors to specific acts of violence.

#### *6.2.1. Communicate with Joint Monitoring Committees and other relevant bodies*

As formal ceasefire monitoring mechanisms are becoming increasingly prominent at various levels, CCMs are encouraged to establish appropriate working relationships with these mechanisms. First of all, CCMs need to learn more about the interests and operating procedures of the official bodies. Depending on the outcomes of initial assessments, CCMs can support official ceasefire monitoring bodies by reporting on ceasefire implementation and community concerns, providing information to communities about the efforts of official ceasefire bodies, and coordinating on the response to armed clashes or other incidents. They may also arrange meetings for JMC members at the grassroots level, invite them to community security meetings, or assist them in resolving conflicts or de-escalating tensions. Furthermore, CCMs could brief verification teams, accompany them to conflict affected areas, and assist them in gathering information.

#### *6.2.2. Accompany survivors to report directly to authorities*

As CCMs mainly focus on the protection of civilians, they will frequently engage with civilians that have witnessed or have been impacted by armed clashes or ceasefire violations. CCMs can report these incidents to the JMCs or other ceasefire bodies, but in some cases survivors or witnesses may wish to report directly to relevant authorities. JMC verification teams may also want to interview them to get a first hand account of a particular situation. Though survivors and witnesses may wish to report the abuses they have experienced or witnessed, they may fear to engage with authorities about these issues. CCMs can play a role by facilitating the encounter and accompanying the survivors or witnesses to increase their confidence. At the same time they should be careful not to force any testimonies and increase the insecurity of already vulnerable people.

#### *6.2.3. Control rumours and inform authorities and communities*

Rumour control refers to the verification of rumours about imminent threats. It includes



the timely sharing of factual information with various parties within and across conflict lines in order to prevent escalation of conflict and displacement (Oldenhuis et al., p.105).

In a climate of mistrust and limited coordination between ceasefire parties, a simple rumour of troop movement has the potential to trigger retaliation by the opposing forces and create panic among communities in the area. This panic may lead to mass evacuation, even before the rumoured clashes have occurred. CCMs are in a good position to identify rumours and provide rumour control. They live within conflict-affected communities and, at the same time, have connections to the ceasefire parties. In some cases, CCMs may be able to use verified information to engage in shuttle diplomacy and clarify perceptions and intentions of conflicting parties about (and to) each other in order to avoid violent confrontation.

### **6.3. Proactively communicate and coordinate with influential actors to prevent, stop, or reduce violence against civilians**

CCMs have engaged in protection efforts by rescuing civilians from crossfires and negotiating the release of civilians that were arrested arbitrarily and, in some cases, subjected to physical abuse, often with the support of religious leaders, local government administrators, or community leaders. Despite a few successes, direct protection efforts have been limited and not systematically applied. CCMs can do more to use their physical presence, networks of relations, community acceptance, and positive engagement to prevent, stop, or reduce violence against civilians. The effectiveness of direct protection methods comes primarily from coordinating and communicating, engaging with key actors, and building multi-layered relationships. Effective coordination and communication with relevant actors and stakeholders at various levels of society opens up channels of communication that can be used to protect civilians (Oldenhuis et al., p.42).

“In my experience, engaging even the worst abusers in this manner may yield unexpected results: you give a fellow the choice between solving the issue quietly, among ourselves, based on a gentleman’s agreement or putting him on the line by raising the case with his superiors. Not only may you solve the issue, but you may create a bond of confidence with the fellow, an ally who does not perceive you as an enemy, and who may be useful to solve future cases.”

ICRC protection officer (Mahony 2006, p.50)

#### *6.3.1. Provide protective accompaniment to civilians at risk of violence*

We are more careful in our movements, knowing that we are watched”

CNF representative, Chin State

The visible presence of monitors in conflict-affected areas can make armed groups or individuals more careful in their interactions with each other and with communities. Utilising their ground presence more strategically, CCMs can provide physical accompaniment to civilians that perceive a threat either during their journey from one place to another, or upon arrival at their destination. This so-called protective accompaniment is

a preventive, not a defensive strategy. Monitors use their physical presence, visibility, and relationships to prevent threats from being realised. They coordinate and communicate their movements carefully to the key actors. Though protective accompaniment involves close physical presence and visibility, monitors make sure that they are not perceived as involved in the activities of those whom they accompany (Oldenhuis et al., p.99). It could be provided by CCMs to displaced people that wish to return to their homes, to civilians that wish to report abuses to authorities, but also to community mediators or even military actors that visit areas controlled by the other side to de-escalate tensions or address sensitive issues.

### *6.3.3. Develop early warning early response systems with communities*

Thus far CCMs have provided protection to civilians mainly in response to particular incidents. Though these *reactive* efforts to stop violence are very valuable, CCMs are encouraged to become more *proactive* to prevent violence as well. Instead of waiting for incidents to occur, they can increase their efforts in identifying and assessing events and dynamics that are likely to trigger the rapid escalation of violence. When CCMs observe signs of increasing tensions they can warn the JMCs or other relevant bodies, especially if these are not present at the grassroots level, so that the responsible actors can respond in a timely manner to prevent violence (i.e. early warning and early response). CCMs can also work with communities to help them to better protect themselves from violence that cannot be prevented. If communities are better prepared to respond to armed clashes, i.e. if they know what to do or not do, where to go, whom to contact, what the safest places are etc., casualties can be minimised.

### *6.3.1. Implement strategies for protecting IDPs, women, and children*

Another way that CCMs can become more proactive and strategic in their efforts to protect civilians is by developing and implementing strategies that address the protection needs of specific populations, including displaced people, women, and children. Women may have different security needs than men; children may face different threats than adults or may experience the same threats in a different way. By better understanding the security needs of the most vulnerable populations as well as their capacities to protect themselves, CCMs can become more accurate in reporting and more effective in addressing these needs. They can start this process by assessing the vulnerable populations listed in the NCA text, which mentions explicitly: students and teachers (9h), women (9m), children (9n), and displaced people (10), and less explicitly: sick or injured people (9i), and religious groups (9l). Using the NCA text, CCMs could also assess what individuals or groups in their areas are most at risk of, for example, arbitrary arrest (9e), land confiscation (9f), or forced labour (9o). Following such an assessment, CCMs can start engaging with these individuals or groups to develop and implement strategies that strengthen their security.

#### **6.4. Facilitate humanitarian assistance by connecting relevant service providers with survivors of violence**

CCMs have facilitated humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected communities in various ways. Though these efforts have reduced the impact of violence on civilian populations and increased trust among communities, they have also raised expectations. As civilians increasingly approach monitors with requests for assistance and some NGOs managing CCM projects also provide material aid, CCMs must be careful not to become humanitarian aid workers. Not only would it draw them away from their core tasks, it would also jeopardise their nonpartisanship. CCMs are also encouraged to become more systematic and strategic in their approach to facilitating humanitarian assistance. The NCA text can once again be used as a source of guidance, as CCMs could identify the desired as well as the available support services for each civilian protection provision. Assuming a proactive approach to the facilitation of humanitarian assistance, CCMs should not only consider remedial, but also preventive assistance. Instead of merely engaging with ambulance personnel to facilitate medical assistance for a survivor of a mine explosion, CCMs can also engage with mine risk educators that teach communities how incidents with mines can be prevented.

##### *6.4.1. Develop humanitarian response and referral systems*

An important strategy for CCMs to maintain their role as *facilitators* instead of *providers* of humanitarian assistance is to increase their connections with available service providers and develop a functioning service referral system. Various CCMs have already started to map local, national, and international service providers that could provide medical aid, food and shelter, trauma counselling, and other services that conflict-affected communities may need. In this way the CCMs not only provide avenues for conflict-affected communities to get timely assistance, they also make aid agencies more aware about the needs of communities and draw them into the ceasefire implementation process. It is not enough, however, to make a list of service providers that have offices in a particular area. CCMs should engage with these service providers, build relationships, understand what they actually do, and inquire if they are willing and able to provide assistance in emergency situations. They are encouraged to engage first and foremost with local service providers, especially the government and EAOs. Their involvement may help to increase confidence of communities in the peace process as well as strengthen the relationships between CCMs and the ceasefire parties.

##### *6.4.2. Invite humanitarian workers to communities*

Increasing connections with providers of humanitarian assistance and establishing service referral systems may be difficult if there are little or no services available in the area. In such a case CCMs could facilitate humanitarian assistance by inviting humanitarian workers to the conflict-affected communities, for example as a guest speaker at community security meetings or awareness raising events. Depending on the NCA provision that is of most relevance to a particular community, such guest speakers could

include legal experts with knowledge on land rights (Chapter 3, 9f) or child protection (Chapter 3, 9n), trauma counsellors (Chapter 3, 9b, m, n, o), mine risk educators (Chapter 3, 9p, 5e), or health providers (Chapter 3, 9b, i, k, m, n). The presence of humanitarian workers at the ground level and their engagement with local communities may build confidence among communities in the peace process. It may also help aid agencies to develop more appropriate projects that are based on the needs of communities. Furthermore, it may strengthen the position of CCMs as facilitators of humanitarian assistance, leaving the responsibilities of its provision to professionals.

#### *6.4.3. Monitor humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected communities*

The improvement of livelihoods, health, and development as well as the provision of humanitarian assistance are among the commitments the ceasefire parties have made in the NCA (Chapter 3, 5g, 9a and 10). As the peace process progresses more humanitarian assistance and development aid is expected to flow into ceasefire areas. Though these services aim to address some of the root causes of the armed conflict, they may create tensions or conflict as well. Some communities may feel they are not benefiting as much from humanitarian assistance as other communities or that large development projects are damaging the environment and jeopardising their livelihood. Living among communities at the grassroots level, CCMs are in a good position to monitor if aid and assistance are evenly distributed and benefiting the most vulnerable populations. Making a connection to early warning and early response strategies, CCMs are encouraged to timely inform the ceasefire parties if they observe that certain humanitarian assistance and development aid efforts are a source of tension and decrease the confidence of communities in the peace process.

### **6.5. Setting priorities**

The roadmap presented in this section is not an exhaustive list of strategies that CCMs can apply nor are CCMs expected to apply all of these strategies (at once). It is intended to provide direction and assist CCMs in becoming more effective in their work. In the application of the roadmap CCMs are encouraged to prioritise strategies that are most likely to increase the security of conflict-affected communities in their respective areas. Priorities may be different from place to place or shift at different stages of the peace process. As CCMs move towards the application of the sub-strategies, such as implementing strategies on the protection of women or the development of early warning systems, they may need to rely more on organisations or individuals that are specialised in these issues. If the required expertise or support is not available or fighting suddenly intensifies, CCMs may find themselves overwhelmed by a multitude of tasks. Under such conditions they are encouraged to return to the four core strategies and their shared objective: preventing or reducing immediate threats of direct physical violence to the most vulnerable civilians.

As mentioned in the opening quote, the journey from war to sustainable peace is not possible in the absence of stronger civilian capacity. CCMs are an important part of the

emerging civilian capacity for peace in Myanmar, but their efforts need to be nurtured, supported, and strengthened, especially at the grassroots level. Nonviolent Peaceforce has supported the establishment of the various CCM mechanisms and provided training, mentoring, and technical assistance ever since. It is committed to continue to support civilian monitors in their efforts to protect civilians, and provide technical assistance as CCMs design and implement their own roadmaps towards sustainable peace.

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## **ANNEX OF CCM RELATED MEDIA LINKS**

U.S. Ambassador Mitchell Meets CNF and CPTC–The Chin Star:

<http://www.thechinstar.com/index.php/chin/92chin/5023derekcnf>

Karen Women’s Group Training Communities To Understand Ceasefires–Karen News:

<http://karennews.org/2015/06/karenwomensgrouptrainingcommunitiestounderstandceasefires.html/>

Chin peace group reviews govt-CNF agreement implementation–Chin Human Rights Organization:

<http://www.chro.ca/index.php/resources/chrointhenews/512chinpeacegroupreviewsgovtcnfagreementimplemation>

Villagers stranded in conflict zone as fighting flares once more in Kachin State–Myanmar Times:

<http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/nationalnews/16703villagersstrandedinconflictzoneasfightingflaresoncemoreinkachinstate.html>

Civil Ceasefire Watch Committee Office opens in Ye Township –Mon News Agency:

<http://monnews.org/2015/08/27/civilceasefirewatchcommitteeofficeopensinyetownship/>