An analysis of elements of Communications for Development (C4D) incorporated into The Community Consultation Mechanism of the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative

Melissa Andersson
Abstract

The Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) was a program launched in March 2012, following a request from the government of Myanmar to the government of Norway to lead international support to the Myanmar peace process. The initiative was implemented over a period of three years bringing together and facilitating collaboration amongst various stakeholders in the peace process. The focus of this research was a case study that analyzed to what extent the MPSI, and more specifically the community consultation mechanism of MPSI, was able to successfully incorporate the key aspects of communication for development.

The method or approach used consisted of conducting a thorough document analysis, in depth focus interviews, and some limited observations. The study concluded that some limited elements of behavior change communication were incorporated into the MPSI but this was done more by the different partner organizations than by the MPSI mechanism itself. Communication for social change and communication for advocacy were central components of the MPSI initiative, including cross cutting issues. Factors to strengthen and enable communication however were conspicuously lacking which hindered the further expansion and success of the project.

This research has assessed the impact / effectiveness of the community consultations implemented by the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) was proportional to the extent that the initiative was able to incorporate the specific communications for development elements as defined by the UN and used as a standard measurement tool to define the elements from a unified developmental perspective. These findings could also potentially be generalized in order to improve the implementation of similar projects in other future peace support contexts that involve international governmental and organizational support.
Introduction

The Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) was a program launched in March 2012, following a request from the government of Myanmar to the government of Norway to lead international support to the Myanmar peace process. The MPSI was designed to come in just behind the political momentum of the peace process in Myanmar at the time, helping to support ceasefire agreements reached by the Myanmar government and the Ethnic Armed Groups (EAGs). The Myanmar context is unique, as was the initial MPSI arrangement. For Myanmar to allow and enable the international community to play a role was also a first for a country that traditionally has been very closed off and isolated from outside / international influences. The project was not and was never intended to be a mediation initiative, but rather an initiative that could show and build momentum to catalyze positive changes in communities most affected first by conflict and then by the positive changes brought about by the various ceasefire agreements that were being signed at the time between the government and the various ethnic armed organizations (EAOs).

In order to understand the MPSI initiative, it is also necessary to have at least a general understanding of the history and politics of the country, its regional neighbors, and the country’s past and changing relationships within the international community. A full review of these factors is far beyond the scope of this thesis. However in order to frame the context for those readers less familiar with the intricacies and complex history of the context a few basic/simplified explanations will be provided.

To understand the current context in Myanmar, it is most important to remember that the country has never been unified as a nation state, neither before nor after the colonial period. At the same time, Myanmar is a country with a rich and diverse history composed of a vast area with many different territories, ethnic groups and languages. One of the more simple ways to understand the conflict in Myanmar is to picture the country as a horseshoe. The largest and most dominant group, is the Bamar ethnic group, Burmese speaking, Buddhist practicing majority, that are
concentrated in the valley or in the middle of the horseshoe. Along the outside or the periphery you will find many other different ethnic groups (21 main ones) who occupy the hill countries, or the outlying territories. These groups have their own languages, traditions, and histories that are often times separate narratives from the Bamar narrative. Conflict and tension has existed since before colonial times, these were exacerbated by colonial practices, and continue to this day as these different groups vie over and fight for influence, control of resources, and political control over the different areas that make up the boundaries of the nation state currently referred to as Myanmar. The conflict has been termed the longest running civil war as it has continued now for over 70 years. Geopolitics have also affected the country, both historically and to this day as the country is located between two larger superpowers (China and to a lesser extent India). The country also has needed to interact with its South East Asian neighbors and with the West who is also vying for influence in the region.

After a brief period of democracy, following independence from the British in 1947, the country fell into the grasps of a brutal military dictatorship that has isolated the country from its neighbors and severely restricted economic group when compared to other countries in the region. After Cyclone Nargis but more connected to the countries own internal changes, an era of opening and reformation began around 2011 under the presidency of U Thein Sein. Part of this transition has included an attempt to seek peace both through ceasefires and discussions toward finding a political solution through the ongoing peace negotiations.

The literature review below includes some further general references to texts that help to summarize and provide a better understanding of the country’s past history that shapes its current context. The last thing that is important to remember though is that the history is very complex, and it is upon this background, in this political context, and within the framework of the governmental led peace process, that the MPSI was initially implemented from 2012-2014 (with legacy projects connected to this initial initiative still being implemented and continued to this day by many of the original stakeholders).
“The peace process that emerged in Myanmar in late 2011, represented the best opportunity in many decades to address issues that have structured armed conflict in the country since independence” (MPSI, 2014). “During his inaugural speech, the president made the peace process with the ethnic armed groups (EAGs) a top priority during his first year”(Johnson, 2014). The peace process emerged as a government-led initiative under the leadership of the president and his chief peace envoy, Minister U Aung Min.” (MPSI, 2014). By April 2012, ceasefires had been signed will all major ethnic armed groups except for with the Kachin (Johnson, 2014).

“The agreement of ceasefires was a historically important achievement of peacemaking. At the beginning of 2012, President Thein Sein requested the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs to help mobilize international support for the peace process. In positively responding to this request the Norwegian government took a considerable political risk that no other international actor was able or willing to take at the time. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided that Norway would launch a light and flexible initiative that would test the sincerity of all parties to the agreements being made. The Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) resulted from these decisions and was always envisaged as a short-term mechanism to provide support to the ceasefires and the broader peace process until other structures could take over. It was neither a donor nor an implementer but rather a means to create links between parties that previously either were in direct conflict or simply had little access to each other” (Johnson, 2014).

“An underlying principle of the MPSI was that it was to be responsive to the situation on the ground. Its consultants did not propose projects themselves but rather assisted EAGs in their formulation and development. Though often small in size, the projects were all in politically strategic locations, designed to test the commitment of all parties to the ceasefires and to the safe opening of access to previously unreachable communities. The project provided an unprecedented degree of engagement and communication between the different stakeholders and was considered to be a breakthrough by all sides” (Johnson, 2014).
Although many would say the country is now backsliding and the peace process is stalling, the positive changes made during this transitional period from 2012-2014 are still considered to be progressive and perhaps one of the more hopeful and positive eras that the country have experienced in many decades.

From 2012-2014, the MPSI facilitated projects to build confidence and trust in the ceasefires that were signed between the Myanmar government and the different Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) in the time leading up towards the implementation of the initiative.

Five years after the start of the initiative many things have evolved and changed in the Myanmar context. With the passing of time though, it is also possible to reflect and look backwards to consider and analyze if the project was able to achieve its original objectives and goals (MPSI, 2014). None of the individuals involved in the implementation of the project had a specific Communications for Development (C4D) background, nor did they specifically apply a Communications for Development lens to the design of the initial projects activities. However, the researcher thought it would be an interesting exercise and research question to go back and see to what extent the basic communications for development principles were applied in the implementation of the initiative. At the same time it would also be possible to analyze to what extent the additional incorporation of these principles would have potentially improved the overall successful implementation of the project.

The organization that the researcher currently works for in Myanmar, Norwegian People’s Aid, has been heavily involved in the implementation of this project since 2012. There are many elements of the project that prove to be a very interesting case study (or potentially a series of case studies in the future) especially if the initiative is approached and analyzed through a communications for development lens. The researcher is in a privileged position, working within one of the major implementing organizations, to have access to all of the initial project proposals and documentation, transcripts from the various listening exercises and field interviews performed, copies of evaluations and minutes from group discussions, workshops,
and past community consultation meetings, along with the access and possibility to interview many of the key players that were involved in the initial implementation of the project.

The MPSI consisted of multiple components / projects, but the element that the researcher believes would be the most interesting to focus on would be the community consultation concept. The idea behind setting up the community consultation mechanism was to create a platform to bring together local representatives from both the Myanmar Government, the Myanmar Military, leadership from the ethnic armed groups, and the local village leaders and villagers themselves from the communities whom they represent. The platform created a space for dialogue to occur between parties. Parties that until 2012 had been divided and considered by each other to be “the enemy”. Supporting the peace process on a grass roots level, building trust, and creating dialogue were some of the initial objectives of establishing the various community consultation mechanisms in the selected target areas.

**Literature Review**

**Com-dev Literature**

The discipline of communication for development has evolved and developed from its roots in Modernization theory, and the dependency theory towards the notion of participatory development that prioritizes horizontal and multi-directional communications methods that emphasize the importance of dialogue and facilitating trust and mutual understanding. This evolution has been defined and highlighted by McCall (2011).

Communication for development can further be defined as “a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. It is also about seeking change at different levels, including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change.” (World Bank 2007).
The United Nations defines communication for development as the need to support two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development (UN General Assembly Resolution 51/172).

Professor Wilkins, Tufte and Obregon’s edited handbook provides a comprehensive and critical assessment of the many roles that communication – both theory and practice - have played in development and social change over the past 60 years and highlights how to advance the rights and opportunities of historically neglected or oppressed communities. Although not Myanmar specific, many of the general concepts outlined in this handbook can be applicable to the Myanmar context and useful for those working in and around the peace process.

Lennie and Tacchi in their book, Evaluating Communication for Development, present a framework for evaluating communication for development (C4D). “This framework critiques dominant, accountability-based approaches to development and evaluation and offers an alternative holistic, participatory, mixed methods approach based on systems and complexity thinking. It maintains a focus on power, gender and other differences and social norms. The authors have designed the framework as a way to focus on achieving sustainable social change and to continually improve and develop C4D initiatives” (2013). This approach is relevant and embodies some of the same elements as were woven into the initial PMSI design.

Building on current arguments within the fields of C4D and development, the authors reinforce the case for effective communication being a central and vital component of participatory forms of development, something that needs to be appreciated by decision makers. They also consider ways of increasing the effectiveness of evaluation capacity development from grassroots to management level in the development context, an issue of growing importance to improving the quality, effectiveness and utilization of monitoring and evaluation studies in this field. This handbook is most useful for the examples / and case studies that it presents, and
the framework it establishes for participatory approaches, that are at the heart of the MPSI more specifically and peacebuilding more generally.

**General Context of Burma**

A contextual background and general understanding of the past history of the region is important for anyone seeking to understand the current situation in Myanmar. This is relevant both when it comes to understanding the period of transition that led up to the National League of Democracy (NLD) being allowed to play a larger role in the government of the country, and the limiting factors that still exist within the constitutional and institutional frameworks that are still very much under the control of the generals and the Tatmadaw.

As mentioned previously, a full analysis of the historical context and a proper presentation of the background leading up to the current situation today is well beyond the scope and length of this thesis, even though a general understanding of context would be useful for any readers of the text to have. Most important to note is that the current situation is extremely complex. The peace process has been internally driven with limited involvement from external stakeholders. Much more has been written about the country in Burmese than in English. However, specific authors have presented summaries from various perspectives that help western outsiders to understand at least in general terms some of the historical context that has shaped the current context. Classic general texts that are usually read by anyone with even a passing interest in Burma include the writings of Thant Myint U (The River of Lost Footsteps), Richard Cockett (Blood, Dreams and Gold) and the writings and reflections of Anng San Suu Kyi herself, to name just a few references. Mary Callahan also has numerous works on Burma that provide more general background information, with two of her more relevant works to this project being referenced below.

**Peace and Conflict Studies Literature and Theory**

There is also a large body of literature, connected to peace and conflict studies and research that is relevant in more general terms to form the basis and foundation of any thesis that will incorporate peace processes and peace and conflict elements of
studies, both Myanmar specific but also more generally as well. It is worth mentioning here some of the more basic / fundamental texts and authors that the researcher has drawn on for understanding and a contextual basis. These writers include Ian Kellas, John Paul Lederach, Johan Galtung, and Deutch and Ramsbotham.

Lederach's theories and methods of conflict resolution have been influential in the fields of political science, peace studies, international relations and conflict transformation. Drawing on his own extensive background he coins many examples from his specific experiences that can be generalized in many different peace building contexts.

Galtung on the other hand, takes a more academic approach, providing what can possibly be considered some of the founding doctrines for modern peace and conflict studies. Most prominent are the concepts for structural violence and for negative vs. positive peace, and the conflict triangle. Deutch and Ramsbotham both provide general overview texts connected to conflict resolution methodologies that are a good starting point for understanding the specific conflict resolution discipline.

**Myanmar Specific Peace and Conflict References**

Alongside general commentary, there is also a small group of researchers that have focused specifically on different aspects of the peace process in Myanmar, especially during recent years, after the country began to gradually open up to more international exposure. International attention has been more focused on the country’s potential quasi-democratic transition, while locally more attention has also been payed to the ongoing peace process, including the negotiation of a nation-wide ceasefire agreement that would formalize previously entered into bi-lateral agreements between the central government and the various ethnic armed organizations (EAOs).

Well known international researchers include Ashley South who focuses most on the views of the ethnic perspective, especially in the south-east regions of the country and along the Thai-Burma borders, Richard Horsey who applies more of a
human rights lens in his work, especially when he was working and writing for Human Rights Watch, is also one of the best political analysts in Burma. John Bainbridge provides a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and overarching structures of the ongoing peace process, and Kim Joliffe has done extensive recent research into both the peace process and the governing structures of the different ethnic armed organizations.

Researchers from the Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO), including authors Marte Nilsen, Stein Tønnesson, and Sven Erik Stave have also contributed to the body of contemporary research that exists around the Myanmar peace process that began gaining momentum in 2011.

The Karen Human Rights Group has done an incredible job for many years now documenting and highlighting human rights abuses in a similar way to what Human Rights Watch does on an international level in order to publicize and draw attention to the plight of the Karen people.

Quinn Davis has focused his research mainly on the building of peace infrastructures, and Tom Kramer has written extensively on ceasefire agreements and ceasefire monitoring.

Paul Minoletti’s focus has been on gender and women’s participation in Burma and is a good resources for this specific focus area. A few of these articles, which also provide specific historical contexts are cited below.

There are also a limited number of Burmese authors/activists who have translated some of their work into English. Most prominent are Min Zaw Oo and Aung Naing Oo whom have both been heavily involved in the negotiation process and thus can provide both insider accounts and a unique perspective to those who follow the process from the outside. Myanmar Egress, founded by Hla Maung Shwe, has also been an instrumental local think tank in providing independent and relatively unbiased analysis that has shaped the progression of the peace process in its early phase.
These texts and this body of research forms a firm foundation for further exploration, information gathering, and specifically focused research questions around the evolution of the Myanmar peace process.

**Methodology**

**Overall Research Paradigm**

The overarching research paradigm for this study is discursive realism. This is because it looks for the underlying mechanisms of change in the social order. The emphasis of this paradigm on power formation and the overarching contexts that can have influence in many aspects including the influence on the perceptions created by the media and public opinion, plus also focusing on and the procedures or the rules of interaction for many different aspects makes the approach a good fit for the research questions to be examined (Paolini, 1993).

As we have learned through our com dev studies this year, Foucault was the one that initially termed the idea of both discourse and discourse analysis. Foucault initially adopted the term ‘discourse’ to denote a historically contingent social system that produces knowledge and meaning. He notes that discourse is distinctly material in effect, producing what he calls ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’. Discourse is, thus, a way of organizing knowledge that structures the constitution of social (and progressively global) relations through the collective understanding of the discursive logic and the acceptance of the discourse as social fact. This is particularly relevant to case studies that are formed or based in a complex contextual analysis like questions connected or founded in the history of Myanmar / Burma. Discourses are produced by effects of power within a social order, and this power prescribes particular rules and categories which define the criteria for legitimating knowledge and truth within the discursive order. These rules and categories are considered a priori; that is, coming before the discourse. For Foucault, the logic produced by a discourse is structurally related to the broader episteme (structure of knowledge) of the historical period in which it arises (Foucault, 1969).
Quantitative vs. Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research is often used for exploring, while quantitative research is used to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data that can be transformed into useable statistics (Humphrey, 2018). In this instance a qualitative vs. a quantitative approach has been chosen by the author to answer the selected research questions. Although there are advantages of using a more quantitative or scientific approach at times, it has been decided that the specific nuances of the questions to be addressed would be better served by the flexibility of a qualitative approach that will allow for the more in depth exploration and dissection of many varied approaches and angles connected to the research topic.

In qualitative research there are three major focus areas including language and communication, societies and cultures, and individuals. The common assumption in qualitative research is that knowledge is subjective rather than objective, although there are many methods of inquiry in qualitative research. With this approach the researcher is expected to learn from the participants in order to understand the underlying meaning (Cresswell, 1998). To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, in the qualitative research process, the researcher has attempted to maintain a position of neutrality while engaging in the research process, although some level of bias and influence will always exist, since the researcher will still ultimately bring her own paradigms and conceptions naturally into the equation, as this cannot be avoided.

Document Analysis

One of the first steps for this degree project was to conduct a comprehensive document review and analysis. A full discourse analysis is outside the scope of this study, but a consideration of Michel Foucault’s “discursive Formations” is still relevant. Foucault’s notion of the “ways in which sets of ideas and concepts tend to cohere into determinate ways of seeing the world’ is worth exploring and considering further. The assumption is that there is an essential connection among documents (and their contents), practical action, and sites of action—all of which express aspects of a discursive formation. With this in mind, while analyzing the documentation produced during the project period, the researcher considered three
specific moments of documentation in social action: moments of production, consumption (or use), and circulation” (Prior, 2008).

Case Study
The main focus of the proposed research was a case study analyzing the presence or absence of communication for development elements in the community consultation process of the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) and the mechanisms / approaches of the different groups that were implementing the project. This also allowed for some comparison and contrasting between the slightly different approaches used by each ethnic armed group. Some benefits of employing case studies includes being able to focus in depth on just one instance or example than can then be generalized.

According to the Sage encyclopedia of qualitative methods, the general definition of a case study is a research approach in which one or a few instances of a phenomenon are studied in depth. However, it is still not easy to strictly define what a case study is because the term is also used in other contexts outside of the social sciences. However, those researchers who use qualitative case studies in the social sciences argue that one distinguishing feature is that cases must be seen as “configurational context- and/or path dependent entities. They advocate in-depth strategies such as “thick description” and “process tracing,” and they opt for a “case-centered” approach rather than the “variable centered” approach that otherwise dominates in quantitative/positivist research” (Blatter, 2008).

Choosing a case study approach has allowed for the pinning down of the specific mechanisms and pathways between causes and effects rather than revealing the average strength of a factor that causes an effect. This aspect has been very important in the analysis of the community consultation approach employed by the MPSI. The case study approach chosen has also provided for a depth of analysis that is not available in other qualitative research methodologies. This depth vs. breadth is the major strength of this case study approach, and is also where it can become complete and encompassing, even if it is only focusing on a specific situation that may or may not be so comprehensive (Blatter, 2008).
Although larger studies are better at gaining validity because they can use statistical methods in order to better establish neutrality and control, choosing to use the case study approach has allowed the researcher to rely on the internal validity and the strength of the construct of the case that has been chosen. The strength of analyzing this case is that it can be used to identify more diverse indicators, and inferences in order to provide the basis necessary for their proper interpretation and possible further generalizations.

**In-Depth Interviews**

Qualitative interviews were also used / conducted with some of the key individuals involved in the original group that was involved in implementing the MPSI in order to collect more targeted and detailed information about the original research questions and sub-questions outlined above. In the Sages encyclopedia, according to Cook, “In-depth interviews are interviews in which participants are encouraged and prompted to talk in depth about the topic under investigation without the researcher's use of predetermined, focused, short-answer questions.” Thus the researcher did not prepare an extensive list of questions beforehand. Rather, the researcher was aware of the major domains of experience likely to be discussed by the participant and then was able to probe as to how these relate to the topic under investigation” (Cook, 2012). These in-depth or semi-structured interviews were invaluable in gathering more detailed information about the specific areas of interest. In-depth interviews were chosen over focus group discussions in order to go into more specific and nuanced aspects with the different individuals that will be interviewed as part of the process on a one-on one basis.

**Direct Observation**

Direct observation or participant observation would also be a fascinating angle to take, however since this project has already happened during a specific time frame, it would be difficult to create an appropriate setting where this approach would still be possible. However, since portions of the project are still ongoing, albeit in a slightly different form, the researcher was able to participate in three community consultation meetings with representatives from three of the different Ethnic Armed
Organizations in order to have a better understanding of the concept. These meetings also gave the researcher a chance to speak with some of the participants on an informal basis, about their previous experiences, in order to gather more background an understanding of how the concept has been implemented in practice and some of the challenges and successes that have been faced in the past by the organizers and the participants in the sessions.

**Triangulation**

According to Denzen, triangulation is useful because “a single method can never adequately shed light on a phenomenon” (1978). Using multiple methods can help facilitate a deeper understanding. The reason for the researcher then choosing more than one research method to be applied to this degree project was to be able to triangulate the data that was collected from various sources and methods. This approach was helpful in order to ensure the validity and robustness of the results obtained. Triangulation was important in order to increase the credibility of the information gathered. When the same aspects were found through different methods it then strengthened the possibility that an accurate picture and solid representative information has been gathered with which to conduct further analysis and upon which to draw relevant conclusions.

**Research Methodologies Not Incorporated**

The other research methodologies that were considered but ultimately were not incorporated into the approach include grounded theory, and focus groups / surveys. Although these approaches are also valid the researcher did not feel that they were relevant for the proposed research approach above for the following reasons. For grounded theory, the approach can sometimes be a little bit too broad. Without identifying a research question in advance it would have possibly been a struggle to meet the requirements of the degree project in the timeframe allotted. The approach is an interesting and open one for some contexts, but some structure that was necessary for the limited timeframe allotted to the task.

Focus groups are similar to in-depth interviews, but the researcher settled with the in-depth interviews because those who were chosen to be interviewed come from
different backgrounds and different perspectives. Thus it was easier to capture the nuances of the different stakeholders if they were interviewed individually instead of collectively through the focus group approach. Again both approaches are valid, but the in-depth interviews were more effective for the level and amount of detail the researcher was interested in collecting, recording and analyzing through the course of the research period.

The proposed research topic provided many different angles to explore that are relevant to further the dialogue surrounding the incorporation of communication for development concepts into the broader development perspectives and approaches.

**Reflections on doing Research and Field Work**

Because I already had a relatively inside position within the organization I currently work with, I was easily able to set up interviews with the most relevant individuals and consultants whom were initially involved in the implementation of MPSI. I also had access to our organizational database where the majority of the major documentation connected to the project had been archived. This made the initial document review much easier to execute than it otherwise would have been.

Most interviews were conducted via phone or over skype, and those interviewed were very forthcoming with their opinions and interpretations. This was also likely to be because they had spent a considerable amount of time on the projects implementation and many were enthusiastic about sharing their experiences.

With more time, and perhaps with a more formal mandate, it would have been possible and interesting to set up more interviews with beneficiaries in the field from some of the main ethnic groups involved in the initial project implementation. There is a danger of having too much beneficiary evaluation fatigue, as many have already been back to the project sites for various reasons over the past few years. Instead of having this access (which would have been ideal but much more resource and time intensive) I was still able to review the full scripts from the listening exercise and from some of the interviews conducted with beneficiaries during the evaluation
process as well. This is a potential weakness that could be remedied through further research.

In the end one of the biggest challenge in designing the research question was to limit the scope and size of the research question in order to be able to thoroughly and effectively cover the most relevant areas.

**Findings**

**Research Question**

The focus of the proposed research question was to analyze to what extent the community consultation program has successfully incorporated the key aspects of communication for development. This research assesses the impact / effects of the community consultations implemented by the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI, 2014). This analysis will include what could have been improved as well. An assessment was made of how and to what extent the project has incorporated and embodied effective approaches to communication for development, when assessing the project through a C4D lens.

In order to accomplish this research study, it was first necessary to break down which specific areas would be of interest for further analysis. The United Nations has compiled a document that analyses the C4D approach in many of its different programs / agencies. This document, entitled *Communication for Development, Strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nation*, has been used as a frame of reference to shape the analysis of the proposed degree project, as it embodies the key elements of overarching C4D methodology.

This document has been invaluable to the research in question, as it frame quite succinctly exactly what is meant when we use the term C4D in the UN/NGO context. In this document the international community, including United Nations organizations, has recognized the importance of meeting the information and communication needs of marginalized and vulnerable people. It is a lot different from communications efforts that promote a specific organization or internal communication activities. Instead, Communication for Development activities
promote an understanding about the role that communication can play in empowering people to influence the decisions that affect their lives. This is one of the major aspects of the MPSI community consultation concept as well. “More than just a strategy, C4D is a social process that promotes dialogue between communities and decision makers at local, national and regional levels. Its goal is to promote, develop and implement policies and programs that enhance the quality of life for all” (McCall, 2011).

It is generally accepted that C4D can be broken down into four more specific focus areas. These focus areas include, behavior change communication (BCC), communication for social change, communication for advocacy and strengthening and enabling the media and communication environment. This last factor is probably the most overarching feature, creating an umbrella that enables the other three aspects. The UN refers to these as the four main strands of C4D while at the same time acknowledging that there is a lot of overlap between the strands (McCall, 2011). The first three strands are most relevant to this specific research question. In addition an analysis of C4D as it relates to human rights, gender, general capacity development and effectiveness was also examined and included.

A summary of the key findings first connected this framework, and then to the additional cross cutting elements relevant to the model can be found below.

**Behavior Change Communication (BCC)**

Behavior Change Communication (BCC) is an “interactive process for developing messages and approaches using a mix of communication channels in order to encourage and sustain positive and appropriate behaviors” (McCall, 2011). The first research sub-question was to identify and analyze what messages were given by the MPSI initiative to both the leaders and to the local communities involved in the consultation process, in order to encourage and enable further participation in the community consultation mechanism and the other peace building aspects of the initiative.
More specifically it has been examined to what extent messages were provided that encourage both the community leaders and the villagers to engage in the community consultation mechanism, and to assess to what extent these messages were effective. It is often noted that “a central aspect of the relationship between communication and behavior is ‘ideation’ – the spread of new ways of thinking through communication and social interaction in local, culturally-defined communities” (McCall, 2011). Thus an analysis to explore the extent to which ideation has occurred in the target communities in relation to these key BCC messages has also been conducted. It should be noted that classic BCC messaging, in this instance, might initially appear to be limited. The messaging that does appear is in most cases limited to the subcontractors that were implementing projects under the umbrella mechanism of the MPSI. Instead, in this case, BCC can been seen to encompass more broadly the Strategic Communication that leads to the desired ideation.

One of the main objectives of the MPSI was to help to build trust and confidence in the cease-fires and the emerging peace process on a grass roots level. This has been challenging though because many participants still have very limited confidence in the political process that is expected to come after the ceasefires. Delays in launching any significant political dialogue on a more central level, and the breakdown or continued fighting in some other areas of the country were a challenge to any further trust building measures.

One of the largest positive changes in behavior as a result of the ceasefires has been that freedom of movement has become possible. For those living in areas most affected by the ceasefires, this mean they have become free to move around without fear of interference, and that many now have the ability to access markets, return to their lands, and meet with family members living in government control areas. The messaging from the community consultation meetings has been to encourage people to become more confident and less fearful in order to allow them to participate and embrace these newly accessed freedoms, especially including freedom of movement.
At the same time the actual requests from the ethnic armed groups (EAGs) to MPSI to support the general consultation process also represents quite a large behavioral change in their approach and traditional governance style that in the past has not been so inclusive. The key message of the MPSI has been to encourage accountability along with a sense of responsibility for leaders towards those whom they either formally or informally represent.

One additional key message that has been realized and reinforced by the MPSI engagement, is that at a root level there is a renewed understanding that ethnic grievances are the key driver of the conflict in Myanmar. Thus is has been stressed that in order to address these issues through a political process there will first be a need to have and build confidence in this process in order for there ever to be sustained peace in the future.

It can be concluded through the analysis and interviews conducted, that traditional, specific BCC messaging incorporated into the MPSI was limited. However, when this narrow concept is expanded to include social change and ideation, then there are specific instances where these messages were incorporated into the underlying design and implementation phases of the MPSI, especially in connection to the community consultation mechanisms.

**Communication for Social Change**

“Communication for Social Change (CFSC) emphasizes the notion of dialogue as central to development and the need to facilitate poor people’s participation and empowerment. CFSC uses participatory approaches. It stresses the importance of horizontal communication, the role of people as agents of change, and the need for negotiating skills and partnerships” (McCall, 2011). Connected to the community consultation mechanisms of the MPSI program, this research sub-question has been to assess to what extent the consultation mechanisms were able to mobilize both the leaders and the communities to participate in horizontal (vs top-down) communication.
CFSC has been identified both in the documentation review and in the in-depth interviews as being one of the most central aspect of the community consultation concept of the MPSI. One of the consultants identified an indicator of this success being, that when they went out into the communities where MPSI was being implemented, the vast majority of the civilians and beneficiaries they started talking to had never actually heard of MPSI. However at the same time they would still mention that they had heard of or participated in the community consultation mechanism, and that they were beginning to understand better the concepts of representation and responsible / accountable governance as a result of the engagement of MPSI with local government and ethnic leaders, and the local NGOs and CBOs.

The MPSI encouraged communication for social change by promoting the central ideas or messages to demonstrate and encourage the government to shift from a top down approach, to incorporating and understanding that perceptions of government are important, and also to show that local government officials are willing to listen and address grievances and to be more accountable to those they represent. This was especially a key message received when local representatives from the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) were involved and present in the community consultation forums. Because they were previously one of the most mistrusted, feared, and avoided institutions, their presence and engagement in the consultation mechanisms when possible had an even stronger effect on increasing the confidence that the local population had that the process was credible.

The community consultation mechanisms also created messaging through specific moments that indicated and communicated that it was possible for relationships and interactions to occur between the Government/Tatmadaw and the EAO leadership. One local leader from Mon state quoted from one of the listening exercises, expressed the concept best when he said:

“The most important element of us all getting together is that it is possible.”

All of the consultants and those interviewed who were deeply involved in the implementation of the project recount narratives and moments of their own
amazement toward just witnessing the conversations and the interactions taking place. To have the military and the EAO representatives sitting together at one table, listening and responding to the needs and issues raised by those communities under their areas of influence itself was sending one of the strongest messages that the past status quo was changing, and just the meetings taking place created more confidence and added legitimacy to the process.

The role of the liaison offices that were established in part to coordinate the implementation of the community consultations were themselves also a demonstration of social change. Even though the offices were quite weak structures, lacking many capacities, they were still key in their ability to reach out, coordinate and engage with both the Myanmar government and the communities.

For the initiative to succeed in building confidence and trust it was also necessary for the assistance being provided to be linked and associated with increased security, freedom of movement and the establishment of a more responsive local government after the ceasefires came into effect. In the MPSI there was a danger that donor support and assistance provided in the conflict areas could be seen as “buying peace” or be seen as promoting the economic interests of the central Bamar government in terms of opening up greater access and in order to encourage “Burmanisation” of the ethnic areas. This concern was and still is one of the major concerns of the EAO leadership, and thus it was necessary to connect messaging, and structure the program in order to mitigate these fears and potential negative messaging as much as possible.

This was mainly done through engaging with local partners and local structures. However this proved to be one of the biggest challenges as well. Especially when it was realized by those implementing the initiative that civil society does not always act with one voice, that every organization considers itself to be a part of and a stakeholder in the overall process. However the community based organizations were the ones more able to tailor messaging and engage with the communities in order to mitigate their concerns and respond to their needs.
It can be concluded that in a time of both fragility and much social change, those involved in the implementation of the MPSI initiative, especially the community consultation mechanisms, were required to be extremely sensitive towards the messages that were communicated to the communities. Perceptions, engagements, and understanding through discussions were key principles that encouraged the horizontal flow of information exchange that is so crucial for real social change to occur. Participatory approaches and empowerment of the most vulnerable were the key aspects that contributed to the success of the community consultation concept.

**Communication for Advocacy**

“Advocacy communication involves organized actions aimed at influencing the political climate, policy and program decisions, public perceptions of social norms, funding decisions and community support and empowerment regarding specific issues. It is a means of seeking change in governance, power relations, social relations, attitudes and even institutional functioning.” (McCall, 2011). Connected to the community consultation mechanism of the MPSI program, the third research sub-question was to analyze how activities held at a local level have influenced the dialogue and more general advocacy efforts. “Through ongoing advocacy processes, which should be built into an overall C4D strategy, policy makers and political and social leaders at all levels are influenced to create and sustain enabling policy and legislative environments and to allocate resources equitably.” (McCall, 2011).

Through the documentation review and in most focus interviews, advocacy communication as identified as being one of the strongest elements that was incorporated into the implementation of the MPSI initiative.

The community consultation mechanisms have helped to build some trust between the EAOs and local civil society organizations. The consultations and project meetings enabled the communities to gain a better understanding of the national level political processes. Through needs assessments, project meetings and the consultation processes, a space was opened up for dialogue and allowed for
opportunities to articulate and advocate for the local populations needs and concerns.

One of the challenges encountered by the MPSI when it comes to communication to encourage advocacy was that it was sometimes difficult to get communities to be able to articulate their needs. Sometimes the capacity of both the local organizations and the EAO leadership themselves to articulate, quantify, and express ideas and opinions was limited and had to be encouraged. This was mainly identified by the MPSI consultants as being connected to it being the first time they had even been asked to engage or participate in such a manner. Often there was limited understanding of how international aid infrastructure works, including the need to adhere to accountability mechanisms. Thus it was sometimes a challenge to ensure that local ownership over the process still remained (instead of allowing others from the outside to take over the decision making processes).

Again the liaison offices, though weak, were a key factor in improving communication between the other actors and stakeholders, and advocating for and following up on some of the initial ideas raised in the consultation forums. The liaison offices also sometimes played a role in decreasing tensions and helping to find a middle ground or acceptable responses to issues from both sides.

In terms of advocacy efforts, a locally owned community based organizational approach was determined to be the most effective (vs using international or even national NGOs to implement communication and advocacy activities). These organizations helped to build trust between the other actors, the increased transparency, and they were able to increase information sharing efforts. Their role in the process was identified by many of those interviewed as one of the more effective and key elements of the MPSI initiative.

Communication for social change and communication for advocacy have been the two strongest elements that were successfully incorporated into the MPSI initiative. The makeup of civility society in Myanmar is very complex, and it was against this background that the initiative and the consultation mechanisms were implemented. There were of course some challenges, and differing viewpoints and opinions that
sometimes challenged the consistency of the messaging from the initiative. Although it might be argued that advocacy efforts could have been strengthened in the beginning, it was necessary to find a balance for the proper amount of engagement. This was successfully navigated by using grassroots and horizontal communication and advocacy strategies.

**Strengthening and Enabling Communication**

“This approach emphasizes that strengthening communication capacities, including professional and institutional infrastructure, is necessary to enable:

- a free, independent and pluralist media that serves the public interest;
- broad public access to a variety of communication media and channels, including community media;
- a non-discriminating regulatory environment for the broadcasting sector;
- media accountability systems; and
- freedom of expression in which all groups are able to voice opinion and participate in development debates and decision-making processes” (McCall, 2011).

Traditionally all of the areas listed above are areas in which Myanmar in general have struggled with and continue to struggle with especially in connection to having a free and independent media.

One of the reasons that the MPSI initially shied away from any mass media engagements for the implementation of the initiative is also because Myanmar has traditionally struggled with having a free and independent media. However, this may have been one of the major opportunities that was initially missed by those who implemented the MPSI.

It was acknowledged in the lessons learned exercise, conducted by an external facilitator, that the MPSI initiative could have highly benefited from having a solid communications strategy from the beginning. This aspect has been highlighted in all three review processes, but is most directly stated in the external evaluation that was conducted in 2014. In this document the evaluators highlight that:
“Perhaps the biggest problem for MPSI was the lack of a clear and comprehensive communications strategy. This came as a criticism even from those who were overall very positive about the initiative. In a project that is so sensitive and working in such politically contested territory, it is vital to work out from the beginning how you want to communicate and with whom. This was not just about dealing with the media, although that was part of it, nor was it just an outreach strategy. Rather, it was about deciding from the beginning how high a profile to have, how to manage criticism and, crucially in a project that is unusual and innovative, how to ensure that it was understood.”

It was evident from interviews and from the reviews that many people simply did not understand MPSI and often identified it only with the pilot projects, without having an understanding of the underlying approach and broader methodology / aim of the project. In part this problem can perhaps be explained by a lack of resources, and perhaps by having a small team that was busy with other things, but it is also an area that just was not consistently prioritized. The researcher would also argue that this was to the detriment of the initiative especially if a more refined com-dev lens would have been applied to the original project setup in order to guide the overall design.

One of the suggested roles of the MPSI was to bring voices from the ground to the attention of those who sit in positions of power, be it higher level ethnic leadership representatives, higher level of government officials or even to the international community and to donors. Due to the nature of the project and the consultative process, the MPSI team had access to a large amount of facts, feelings, and interpretations that were coming from the grassroots level. Much more could have been done by the MPSI during the course of the project to link and share this understanding with the middle and higher levels of leadership. Much more of this information could have been used to brief governmental officials, donors and the international community about the current situations in the ethnic communities and about people’s basic hopes and fears for the future. As the peace process evolves
and new challenges are arising this continues to be an important aspect that has not received as much attention of focus as it otherwise could have.

A reluctance to engage on a larger scale, especially in terms of a basic communications strategy, and interaction or engagement with the media is one of the greatest limitations of the MPSI project as identified by the researcher. As the projects implemented were only small pilot projects, the only way to multiply and increase their scale and impact would be to make sure that others, in other villages, towns, and in positions of power across the government and across the country were aware of the positive activities that were happening and the positive changes that were being facilitated and encountered on the ground. The only way to have done this better would have been though having a more solid communications strategy that could have involved greater media engagement.

There was still media engagement and interaction with the project, but this came mainly from the outside and through more critical angles. During the implementation of the MPSI much negative coverage and critique was also received and aired from many different angles. A news article review from major media sources in Myanmar easily produces many articles critical of the implementation of the MPSI. What is missing is any coverage that presents the positive aspects of the initiative, especially anything coming from the “inside” with accurate information. This is mainly because the MPSI itself did not prioritize presenting its own counter narrative or rather the narrative, with a positive voice through the media. This would have been useful both to increase the impact and spread of the project, and to counter any negative narratives that were also circulating at the same time with such a sensitive project.

In all interviews conducted with those close to the project, none of them considered exposure to the media, or media coverage, to be an integral part of the MPSI strategy. Furthermore, those individuals contracted to work on the initiative, although they had many other strengths, did not have extensive communications or media skills to draw on when shaping the implementation or structures of the initial initiative. Looking backwards they all also acknowledge that it would be one of the main areas for future improvement if the initiative were to be repeated again. The
researcher would also suggest that both more human capital and resources could have been invested into this aspect of the project.

The return on investment / reward for this limited use of resources would have been multiplied many times over, especially since one of the main focus areas of the initiative was to highlight, strengthen and reinforce the positive changes, experiences and messaging that were coming out through the ceasefire agreements.

Although the initial implementation and access to media was theoretically beyond the scope of the project it could be considered if these elements should have been incorporated in order to increase the effectiveness of the initiative. However, it should not be forgotten that the impacts of creating forums and spaces for the freedom of expression on a local level should not be discounted. This last aspect to reference and enforce freedom of expression was by far one of the most important aspect of the community consultation mechanism on a lateral local level. Giving local villagers the ability to express themselves freely in a forum where they are supported by and listened to by their local leaders is really quite a revolutionary idea in a context like Myanmar back in 2012 where such freedoms were just opening up and becoming cautiously more possible than before.

If these lateral connections between local communities could have been strengthened with more diagonal connections between the medium and upper levels the MPSI would have had a much greater initial impact. This impact could have been shaped through the greater employment of the communications for development principles that have been theoretically outlined by many development actors including NGOs and the UN.

This was an opportunity that was missed in this particular instance, but at the same time may have been beyond the scope and capacity of this specific initiative. However, it is an aspect that should be considered and reflected upon by those who may design similar initiatives in the future either in Myanmar or elsewhere.
The integration, and involvement of those with a solid understanding of these basic communications for development principles would have been be a welcome first step in the initial implementation of the MPSI initiative, and is also an aspect that should be considered when designing similar initiatives.

**Cross Cutting Elements**

In addition to these initial four focus areas that form the backbone for guiding the research question development and the initial research design for the case study, an analysis was also conducted as to what extent the cross cutting elements of C4D and the human rights based approach, capacity development for national ownership, gender equality, and development effectiveness were also integrated into the MPSI initiative.

**C4D and a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to development**

According to McCall, the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to development “identifies rights holders (individuals and groups with valid claims) and duty bearers (state and non-state entities with corresponding obligations) and focuses on strengthening both the ability of the rights holders to make claims and achieve their entitlements and of duty bearers to meet their obligations” (2011). Although again not stated from a specific human rights perspective, the objective to strength the roles and the abilities of both the rights holders and the duty bearers can also be seen as one of the key objectives of the MPSI community consultation mechanism.

This C4D approach “prioritizes the information and communication needs and interests of the poor and uses a variety of channels to enable disadvantaged people to understand and participate in the process by which they can realize their rights” (McCall 2011).

To give some more concrete examples, one of the Ethnic armed groups, The Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) agreed in the ceasefire negotiations with the government to hold community consultations and awareness training on the topics of human rights and democracy in Kayah state. These started in 2012 with support from Norway and NPA.
This consultation process included discussions on community-based ceasefire monitoring, and in its second phase established local human rights monitoring teams and committees. According to the leadership of the KNPP and those involved in organizing the first community consultation meetings, initially, the community members were afraid to discuss or express their concerns in a public forum. However over time they became more confident during the process. A wise decision by the implementers was also to use their local civilian ceasefire monitoring teams rather than former combatants or those with direct loyalties to the KNPP party to conduct the consultation sessions. This decision allowed the forum to be seen as less biased. The process also helped to build connections and relationships between the KNPP and other elements including those organizations that have been working on the other side of the Thai-Burma border (those who were initially most critical of the MPSI set-up working from inside the country).

Concrete examples of how the consultation mechanism was able to create positive change by employing com-dev principles includes the KNPP agreeing to reduce its arbitrarily leveled taxed by up to 50% after the issues was constantly raised by the Karenni communities through the consultation forum. In addition the communities and the KNPP leadership together were able to convince the central government to cancel a controversial dam and hydropower plant project that was scheduled for construction in Karenni areas. In addition a cement factory project that was also controversial was blocked after the KNPP shared the results of the community consultations with the government.

More generally, through the listening exercises, it has been identified that villagers in many ceasefire areas were most grateful for just being able to be able to travel and to move around more freely for either work or personal reasons without constant fear. This was not a direct result of the community consultation mechanism, as it was connected to the ceasefires, but it still illustrates the fact that it was important to strengthen the ceasefire agreements in these communities, through the initiative, if possible, in order to assure that the ceasefires continued to hold, and thus the improvement in the overall human rights situation would continue to hold as well.
One reflection made by Ashley South, one of the consultants involved in the MPSI implementation was that at that time, some of the most remarkable aspects of the consultation meetings was simply the fact that they were allowed to happen and that the different actors were willing and able to show up and to participate. He mentioned the changes and reflections, especially from some of the military participants from the government side, when they were able to have discussions and simply understand some of the hardships that the villagers had encountered, including major human rights violations. Understanding from a different perspective through dialogue was probably one of the best key elements in the consultation process. It is believed that this understanding ultimately led to greater respect for the basic human rights of the EAOs and the villagers by the military and the government at this specific local level, even though it would be a difficult indicator to measure quantitatively.

**C4D and capacity development for national ownership**

When it comes to capacity development in order to achieve national ownership, C4D principles are again important elements to support this transition. “These components include access to information, inclusion, participation, equity and empowerment. C4D approaches play a central role in creating the preconditions that are necessary for people to be able to speak out on issues and to participate in developing solutions to problems that concern them. To that end, these approaches identify and address the specific capacity requirements that people need to access, understand, and gain confidence to act on information.” (McCall 2011).

One of the challenges that was raised during one of the reflection sessions by the MPSI team, was the challenge of linking what was happening on the ground to what was happening at a middle / state level leadership, and what was happening with the national level peace process dialogue. There was a sense in many of the reflective / listening sessions that were reviewed, from the communities, that there was still a remoteness or a gap between what was happening at a higher political level and what actually affected the villagers on an every-day basis.
In order to combat this some of the leadership of the ethnic armed groups made an initiative or effort to share more transparently the decisions and discussions that were being held at a higher level. One aspect of the MPSI program, especially in the KNU areas outside of Kyaukkyii was to try to do basic education / information sessions on the peace process and the political dialogue.

In April of 2013, with funding from Norway, the Ethnic Peace Resource Project, was set up to try to provide relevant information and capacity building to enable leaders and members of the EAGs to actively participate in the peace process. To this end a web-based resource platform was developed and a series of workshops was carried out, including the provision of training to the liaison offices that were then expected to provide further briefings to the communities in order to help them to stay informed about the peace process.

Through both general observation and the literature review, the researcher concluded that one of the main barriers / obstacles to these initial education initiatives was the initially low levels of understanding and basic education levels encountered in the majority of the rural areas where the project was being implemented.

Basic critical thinking skills and conceptual skills are elements usually learned while growing up or while in school, and the majority of people in the areas closed off by conflict for many years lacked access to even such basic educational resources. One of the main and lasting impacts of the conflict will remain the educational opportunities lost, and this continues to directly relate to the ability for both the leadership and others to communicate, explain, and present at appropriate levels what is happening at higher levels of government and in the overarching peace processes. One small initiative alone cannot even come close in terms of trying to counteract or counter balance these factors. This is probably the main reason why this initiative struggled to produce concrete results in terms of changes in levels of understanding and engagement by the local population.

One of the conclusions to be drawn is that national ownership will only come hand in hand with the development of the right capacities to fully manage and handle
national ownership. Capacity building is often difficult, and a lack of local capacity can sometimes hinder the implementation of some activities fully, as was the case in the implementation of the MPSI. However it is still necessary to focus on building capacities, if even slowly at times, in order to eventually be able to achieve a state where there is the possibility for full national ownership.

**C4D and gender equality**

In order to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and in order to achieve gender equality, it will be necessary to employ a range of communication initiatives. To achieve equality it will be important “to work together with governments and with civil society to create opportunities for women to gain skills and confidence to lobby for change, to promote the case for equality and to stimulate collective action to overcome prejudice and inequality” (McCall, 2011). Although this is the end goal of gender equality initiatives, it is at the same time acknowledged that in many cases, especially in developing contexts, there is still a long way to go in order to achieve these objectives.

In Myanmar it is no different than many other developing contexts. Gender participation in both the community consultation mechanism, the EAO and government leadership, and in the overall peace process remains weak despite international involvement and pressure to influence the inclusion of women in the process.

The issue is twofold. Historically and culturally women have not previously been encouraged to engage civically or to have strong voices and opinions. Thus even when a potential space has been created there are not women who are ready to step up and fill the void.

Efforts were made by the organizers of the community consultation meetings to involve women in the process. Even when they were invited to the meetings, and encouraged to participate they still did not play as strong and engaging of a role as men who are invited to these same forums.
Within the leadership of the EAOs and government structures there are few strong women involved in the process. The ones that are usually have a paternal heritage / legacy that has secured them the role through birthright (as opposed to through their own legitimacy as leaders). This is the case even though some of them, as token women leaders, have grown quite substantially in their role.

In all three of the community consultation meetings that I was able to observe, all were still very much male dominated even though some efforts were made to include the women. The vast majority of the leadership of both the ethnic armed organizations and the governmental representatives on all levels were men. There were only one or two token females present, although this is also to be expected since the leadership remains traditionally male. Thus the panels for initial speeches / presentations were very male dominated and it was the men both in the leadership and in the audience that did the majority of the speaking. Women were still present in the meetings, but they typically sit towards the back of the forum/audience and although they are listening to what is being said they are not usually active participants. There was only one meeting of the three that I attended where a woman asked a question to the leadership and was quite vocal in her own opinions and responses. This mirrors what is usually the case in Myanmar more generally. In a context where women are not traditionally encouraged to participate or to be vocal there are only a few exceptions or “outlying” women who have gone against traditional expectations or norms to find their voices.

In order to counteract this slightly, one of the things the MPSI group did when conducting listening exercises, was that they would hold focus groups where only women were in attendance. These group discussions were also sometimes only facilitated by women as well if possible. In this forum women were encouraged to be more vocal, and they would share many more of their opinions when the men were not present. This was one small way that the MPSI group worked to include more women into the process.

It is still generally acknowledged by the international community, and locally as well, that there is a definite disparity and a lack of women’s participation in all levels of
the peace process, including in the projects and forums conducted through the MPSI initiative. Progress in the area will have to remain incremental, and changes will still happen slowly. Still the first step is at least acknowledging the need for more women’s participation. However there is still a long way to go before this becomes the norm of equal and balanced representation in Myanmar.

In the haste to implement and enter quickly into some communities with follow up projects, some of the projects implemented might not have been as gender sensitive and balanced as they otherwise could have been with a bit more time and attention to these aspects.

Coming back to the possibility of applying more com-dev principles to similar projects, if implemented in the future, it would have been useful, and has been acknowledged, that perhaps as part of a possible larger communications strategy for the project, this could have also involved more messaging to focus specifically on women’s issues. This messaging could focus both on the ideas that women have raised in the community consultation forums, and communication and messaging that would encourage and enable women to participate. It may have also been possible to involve more women’s groups in both the planning and the implementation of the different projects to ensure that their inputs were initially incorporated into the projects that were implemented under the MPSI umbrella.

C4D and development effectiveness

The international development community’s commitment to development effectiveness, is set out in the Paris Declaration and further elaborated in the Accra Agenda for Action (UNESCO, 2007). C4D approaches help to underpin and reinforce these key aid effectiveness principles (McCall, 2011). Triangular partnerships also help to reinforce the principles of both effectiveness and efficiency. Although the MPSI initiative was able to achieve a great deal in a small amount of time in many different areas of the country, some opportunities were also missed because it was not able to follow through on some of the initial initiatives, and ideas raised through the consultation mechanisms. This could again partially be due to
having a small team with a lot of demands being placed on it at the same time. However, these missed opportunities can also be examined on a more structural level. When applying a structural lens, it becomes readily apparent that some structural weaknesses, especially when they are connected to development effectiveness, can also easily be to blame.

During our com-dev studies, one of the concepts that we learned a great deal about was the idea of traditional north-south partnership, vs. south-south or triangular partnerships. According to the UNOSSC, “South-South cooperation is about developing countries working together to find solutions to common development challenges. Linked by similarities in their development contexts and challenges, the countries of the South have been increasingly active in sharing knowledge, exchanging technologies and forming common agenda and collective actions” (UNOSCC Website, 2018).

The MPSI can initially be viewed as being a typical North-South partnership. To the extent that it remained solely this type of partnership the results would not be expected to be very impressive. The key to the success of the initiative was its ability to incorporate more south-south partnerships in terms of engaging more on a local level with local government agencies, local NGOs and local civil society organizations that were able to further expand, buy into and contribute to the accomplishments of the overarching initiative. More important was the ability of MPSI to forge triangular partnerships between levels that included the international community, donors, national and local government structures, and the local populations in the communities where the initiative was being implemented. To the extent that the initiative was able to foster these partnerships the projects implementation was successful. At the same time it is acknowledged that more focus could have been put on strengthening and developing these partnerships further. Again it was a question of resources but also a question of implementation priorities.

One of the other weaknesses or missed opportunities of the MPSI is that it lacked a clear funding framework from the beginning. Thus it was almost impossible to obtain
resources to scale up to any significant degree of size, or to secure major funding for any follow-up projects. This conclusion highlights the flaws in the current donor structures that did not allow for or make provisions for funding that does not fall into typical or standard approaches of working with international NGOs or governments. The irony of the project, is that some of the most successful components of the MPSI were exactly the ones that did not fit into this frame work as they were the bottom up, grassroots led initiatives. Many of these initiatives were also led by organizations that were not formally recognized by the government and were not always the most organized or developed administratively. This can be acknowledged as a limitation but at the same time should also bring into question the traditional funding and development mechanisms that might not always be suitably applied to the actual conditions or the needs on the ground as identified by those who are most in touch with this reality.

**Evaluation**

The focus of this research case study was to analyze to what extent the MPSI, especially the community consultation mechanism of MPSI, was able to successfully incorporate the key aspects of communication for development. The analysis also included what could have been improved from a communication for development perspective as well. An assessment was made of how and to what extent the project has incorporated and embodied effective approaches to communication for development, when assessing the project through a C4D lens.

Through conducting a thorough document analysis, in depth focus interviews, and some limited observations, the researcher was able to conclude that only limited elements of behavior change communication were incorporated into the MPSI. Communication for social change and communication for advocacy were central components of the MPSI initiative. Factors to strengthen and enable communication however were conspicuously lacking which hindered the further expansion and success of the project.

The four cross cutting elements of communication for development and a human rights based approach, capacity development for national ownership, C4D and
gender, and C4D and development effectiveness were also analyzed and it was determined that all four elements were preset and incorporated into the implementation of the MPSI. These are the main factors that contributed to the overall success of the initiative.

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The MPSI was only successful in proportion to the extent that it was able to incorporate these different communication for development elements. The MPSI also could have been more effective if it would have been able to incorporate more of these same elements, especially elements to strengthen and enable the communication to a wider audience. This research has assessed the impact / effectiveness of the community consultations implemented by the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) was proportional to the extent that the initiative was able to incorporate the specific C4D elements as defined by the UN and used as a standard measurement tool to define C4D from a unified developmental perspective.

**Discussion**

The context for the implementation of the MPSI initiative, including as it relates to the C4D elements must also be framed around a basic understanding of the Myanmar peace process, especially is it evolved from the period of 2011-2015 under
the presidency of U Thein Sein. This context has been researched and analyzed by a small group of western researchers who are well known to those who work with and support Myanmar both on the national and the international level.

More generally, peace building initiatives like the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative, are best understood when grounded in an understanding of traditional peace and conflict studies literature and theories. One of the most respected and fundamental theories is that of the negative vs. positive peace framework (credited to Galtung) that forms the foundation for the discipline of peace and conflict studies. Johan Galtung's conflict triangle is also important and works on the assumption that the best way to define peace is to define violence, its opposite. It reflects the normative aim of preventing, managing, limiting and overcoming violence. An understanding of these basic principles and theories also helps to shape a better understanding of the Myanmar context through applying this model.

The main framework for the case study analysis and research questions examined, come from an outline for communication for development, that identified the four main “strands” within the C4D landscape, namely behavior change communication, communication for social change, advocacy communication and strengthening and enabling communication. These four strands are linked to a centralized broader empowerment mechanism through which people are able to “arrive at their own understanding of issues, to consider and discuss ideas, to negotiate, and to engage in public debates at community and national levels (McCall 2011). Although the MPSI initiative was not originally designed applying a com-dev lens, the success of the initiative was still dependent on the extent to which the initiative was able to effectively integrate the strands identified above including the cross cutting elements.

As highlighted by McCall, initiatives that incorporate communication for development principles should facilitate shifts in power relations and contribute to positive social transformation led by those most affected by development policies. McCall argues and the author would agree that a “holistic, “diagonal” approach that harnesses vertical as well as horizontal communication to infirm decision-making at
national and local levels” is the most effective approach for influencing change (2011).

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

**Overall Conclusions**

The general conclusion of the research question posed, as presented earlier is that the MPSI was successful in proportion to the extent that it was able to incorporate the different communication for development elements. The MPSI could have been more effective if it would have been able to incorporate more of these same elements, especially elements to strengthen and enable the communication to a wider audience. This research has assessed the impact / effectiveness of the community consultations implemented by the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) was proportional to the extent that the initiative was able to incorporate the specific C4D elements, including the cross cutting elements, as defined by the UN and used as a standard measurement tool to define C4D from a unified developmental perspective.

**Successful Methodology**

The research was successfully implemented in the specific timeframe allotted. However, if more time had been available even more research could have been conducted, especially on a field based level, including conducting many more interviews with beneficiaries and previous participants on a local level with the community consultation concept of MPSI. This would have also been dependent on the availability of travel permits, and the leadership for the different ethnic groups and local governmental leaders whom are often engaged with other initiatives and their daily activities.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

There is room for many more strands of future research connected to the initial research question that was posed. There is first of all space to expand the question of research to other elements of the overarching MPSI initiative, and/or to go more in-depth into each specific pilot project. A comparison study could also be undertaken by comparing the similarities and differences of the initial different pilot
projects implemented, especially as they relate to the differences in each Ethnic Armed Group’s own structure, their relationship with those that they represent or whom are considered to be informally under their jurisdiction. Elements of conflict sensitivity could also be assessed and analyzed from a C4D framework/perspective.

It would also be useful to use the results to further the discussion within and among the different stakeholders that were involved in the project at the time and especially those who are still involved in implementing projects that are part of the MPSI legacy. These discussions could perhaps even influence the success and direction of further peace support initiatives in the future.

As time has passed and the context has changed, especially in regards to the implementation of the peace process it would also be interesting to be able to do an analysis of the differences and similarities of the ongoing peace process as defined under the thein Sein Government in comparison to how the process has progressed, stalled and perhaps even faltered under the administration that is partially led by the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the lady herself, Aung San Suu Kyi. As even more time passes, and the results of the current peace process / initiatives become more evident, the impact of this initiative and other initiatives could also be researched and assessed from a historical perspective, as to their ultimate effectiveness and contribution to the final success or failure of this period of negotiations in Myanmar/Burma’s longer historical framework.
References


Appendix A – MPSI Background Information

From the Myanmar Peace Monitor (www.mmpeacemonitor.org)
MYANMAR PEACE SUPPORT INITIATIVE (MPSI)

Led by: Norway

Agreed in: January 2012, during a state visit by Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Store to Myanmar


MPSI Facilitated Projects

Lesson Learned from MPSI’s Work
Supporting the Peace Process in Myanmar

Background

The Myanmar Peace Support Initiative is a Norwegian-led international initiative to support the ceasefires in Myanmar through humanitarian and development assistance. In parallel with the continued political efforts, it provides communities in the ceasefire areas with the needed assistance in order to recover from conflict and build momentum for peace on the ground.

Norway is not involved in the ceasefire negotiations or peace negotiations. The initiative does not replace the process towards a broad political settlement with all the ethnic groups. It is instead positioned as a relatively short-term effort to support the on-going ceasefire negotiation process and the provision of peace dividends will in turn help in building confidence and establishing a conducive environment for the separate political processes.

In March 2014, the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative concluded a Lessons Learned report on its two years of work supporting the peace process in Myanmar. The report brings together research conducted in the last year, including an MPSI ‘Reflections’ report produced in early 2013 (see below), an independent review of MPSI undertaken in 2014, and is informed by field trips, discussions with peace process stakeholders, the insights of MPSI staff, meetings and workshops with Government and Ethnic Armed Groups, community meetings and project reporting. The report seeks to reflect on those two years of support, and suggest ways to frame and improve international support to the peace process and aid into conflict-affected areas. click here.

Role of Norway

The Myanmar Government has asked the Norwegian Government to help facilitate and coordinate the delivery of assistance to the conflict-affected communities in the ceasefire areas, where there has been minimal or no prior access provided for aid-delivery.

The Norwegian Government has also been asked to initiate a consultation process with a range of stakeholders, including potential donors, the government, non-state armed and political groups, civil society actors and communities in order to gather funds for the delivery of aid in these areas.

Main objectives:

To build confidence in the ceasefire agreements among communities, armed groups and the Myanmar government/Myanmar army.

Personnel

MPSI Team
Headed by Mr Charles Petrie, former United Nations resident and humanitarian coordinator.
Consultant: Ashley South

MPSI & PDSG Coordinating office: Peace Support Secretariat run by Norwegian staff, Matt Maguire in Yangon until June.

Funding

Peace Donor Support Group (PDSG)

Myanmar Peace Centre

Secretariat for the Myanmar Peace committee and reports to the Office of the President.
Was scheduled to open on U Wisara road, Yangon.
Sponsored by the EU
The centre coordinates all peace initiatives and acts as a one-stop service centre for donor governments and international NGOs

Ethnic-related Partners

Euro-Burma Office
To increase the space for aid activities in the former conflict-affected areas.
To contribute to positive interaction between the actors on the ground.
To support increased capacity of local communities, civil society, and government authorities.

Coordination Mechanism (as of 3 July 2012)

The MPSI works to assist both the government and ethnic militia groups in the peace process. It supports the government's peace plan through assistance for ceasefire implementation; and supports ethnic armed groups through training and capacity building. The Euro-Burma office is the MPSI's key liaison with ethnic armed groups that make up the Working Group for Ethnic Coordination (WGEC). Meanwhile, the International Peace Support Group (IPSG) formed of international NGOs involved in capacity building initiatives supports the ethnic armed groups negotiate a just and equitable peace.

Projects (as of June 20th, 2012)

Working Group on Ethnic Coordination
International Peace Support Group

Partner Armed Militia Groups

Substantive interaction include:
the KNU (Kayin/Karen), NMSP (Mon), CNF (Chin) and RCSS/SSA-South (Shan).

Preliminary discussions:
KNPP (Kayah/Karenni), SSPP/SSA-North (Shan), ALP (Rakhine/Arakan) and DKBA (Kayin/Karen)

Information exchange:
KIO (Kachin)

Co-ordinating structures
Pilot Implementation Coordination Body
Mine Action Technical Coordination Committee
MPSI initiates projects that are designed to build trust and confidence in - and test - the ceasefire agreements and provide learning to support the normalisation of domestic and international support to these processes and communities over time. Through these projects MPSI has interacted with conflict-affected communities, non-state armed groups, the Myanmar Government, and the Myanmar Army. To ensure that the projects are locally owned and that they have community participation the projects are defined by and requested by local actors, not prescribed by MPSI.

Within a one-year timeframe MPSI has initiated and/or supported a range of projects which vary depending on the local context and specific concerns of parties to the ceasefire agreement and affected communities. The projects aim to implement and test specific clauses within the ceasefire agreements e.g. providing basic services to the conflict-affected communities; opening liaison offices; securing freedom of movement and operations of NGOs, particularly local NGOs; and supporting public consultations on the peace process.

The projects focus on:

Providing assistance to conflict-affected communities, often alongside the creation of opportunities for dialogue between local Myanmar army commanders, non-state armed group commanders and the conflict-affected communities
Supporting non-state armed group leaders to conduct formal consultations with each other and their community members aimed to promote greater mutual understanding and cooperation regarding the peace process proceedings
Supporting pro-ethnic rights policy making
Providing national identity cards to conflict-affected persons
Joint development planning between a non-state armed group and local authorities
Kyauk Kyi Pilot

**Project area:** Ker Der Village Tract, eastern Bago Region

**Project start date:** June 2012

**Project fund support:** $160,000

**Donor:** AusAid

This first MPSI project was identified soon after the initial preliminary ceasefire agreement in January 2012 between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Myanmar Government. The objective of this project is to provide assistance to internally displaced communities in an area previously inaccessible from inside Myanmar due to conflict. The project aims to test and increase trust in the peace process through facilitation of humanitarian assistance to IDPs which also provides need and opportunity for interactions between the local Myanmar army commanders, KNU commanders and IDPs of the area. To learn more about the project’s activities and results, click [here](http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/mpsi?tmpl=component&print=1&print=1&page=4/7).

Kroeng Batoi Pilot

**Project area:** Kroeng Batoi area, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region

**Project start date:** January 2013

**Project fund support:** $85,675

**Donor:** Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Following the renewed ceasefire between the government and the New Mon State Party in February 2012, this project aims to create confidence in the peace process through support to the rehabilitation of infrastructure and services in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector and through civic mobilization and women’s empowerment trainings. To learn more about the project’s activities and results, click [here](http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/mpsi?tmpl=component&print=1&print=1&page=4/7).

Dawei and Palaw Pilot

**Project areas:** Two small locations south of Myitta and east of Palaw in Tanintharyi Region

**Project start:** November 2012

**Project fund support:** $266,260

**Donor:** Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In the context of the ceasefire between the Myanmar Government and Karen National Union (KNU), this pilot project is helping 1153 conflict-affected individuals rebuild and rehabilitate their lives. This project broke new ground in the arrangements made for implementation by a consortium of community organisations from inside the country working together with the border-based CIDKP, the KNU’s relief agency. To learn more about the project’s activities and results, click [here](http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/mpsi?tmpl=component&print=1&print=1&page=4/7).

Mon Education Project

**Project areas:** Thaton, Mawlamyaine and Dawei Districts in Myanmar

**Project start date:** January 2013

**Project fund support:** $136,496

**Donor:** Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
The director of MNEC responds to a question raised during the Mon Education Seminar. Location: Ye Township, Mon State

Representatives of various Mon civil society organisations are reading the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) and Union Peacemaking Working Committee (UPWC) joint press release statement, before sharing their views with the NMSP. Location: NMSP Liaison Office in Mawlamyine, Mon State.

The Mon Education Development Project is designed to protect and promote Mon language and culture: a very important element of the agendas of the Mon and other ethnic groups in their peace negotiations with the Government. The project involves public community consultation workshops in 8 areas, to raise public awareness of need for Mon Education policy and inform development of Mon education policy. The project supports curriculum development and includes a multi-stakeholder education seminar for policy development. To learn more about the project’s activities and results, click [here](http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/mpsi?tmpl=component&print=1&page=5).

**New Mon State Party Consultations Process**

**Project areas:** Mon populated areas in Mon State and adjacent parts of Karen State and Taninthayi Region

**Project start date:** June 2012

**Project fund support:** $190,925

**Donor:** Ministry for Development Cooperation of the Netherlands & Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) is organising a series of coordinated consultations related to the peace process with Mon communities, Mon civil society organisations, various NMSP departments and other Mon political parties. Overall, the project aims to promote greater mutual understanding and cooperation regarding the peace process amongst these actors. To learn more about the project's activities and results, click [here](http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/mpsi?tmpl=component&print=1&page=5).

**Trustbuilding for Peace Conference - Kayah and Shan States**

**Project area:** Lashio city, Shan State

**Project start date:** December 2012

**Project fund support:** $71,000

**Donor:** Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and British Embassy

This project enabled leaders and members of ethnic nationalities political parties and ceasefire armed groups in Shan State and Kayah State to come together, share opinions and build mutual trust and understanding among them. The project includes a process of community follow-up after the conference. To learn more about the project's planned activities and expected results, click [here](http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/mpsi?tmpl=component&print=1&page=5).

**Karen Consultations Process**

**Project area:** KNU districts in Bago Region, Kayin State, Mon State and Taninthayi Region

**Project start date:** February 2013

**Project fund support:** $13,329

**Donor:** Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Karen National Progressive Party Consultations Process**

**Project area:** Kayah (Karenni) State

**Project start date:** January 2013

**Project fund support:** $43,405

**Donor:** Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

This project aims to open a dialogue between KNPP and the general public about the current political situation and initial
The project’s overall objective is for the Karen National Union (KNU) and Committee for Internally Displaced Persons (CIDKP) - the humanitarian arm of KNU - to consult representatives from the townships within the seven KNU districts about the changes occurring from before the ceasefire until now. Workshops are being conducted to identify communities’ broad needs and concerns and how to address them and to gather communities’ views on the peace process to be taken into account by the KNU in the peace process agenda. To learn more about the project’s activities and results, click [here](http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/mpsi?tmpl=component&print=1&page=6/7).

### Chin Consultations & IT for Chin Schools

**Project area:** Chin State and Chin communities in other areas.  
**Project start date:** April 2013  
**Project fund support:** $ 831,630  
**Donor:** Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The project’s overall objective is for Chin communities to move towards sustainable peace through implementation of two specific ceasefire clauses. The project has a two-fold approach  
1) Chin National Front will conduct a series of public consultations  
2) Internet connections and computer centres will be provided in collaboration with the Chin State Government to 30 Chin High Schools in order to overcome isolation in Chin State. To learn more about the project’s planned activities and expected results, click [here](http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/mpsi?tmpl=component&print=1&page=6/7).

### Ceasefire Liaison Offices Stage 1

**Project areas:** All ceasefire areas  
**Project start date:** September 2012  
**Project fund support:** $ 525,000  
**Donor:** Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

As part of the ceasefire agreements, the Government and the NSAGs agreed to opening liaison offices. With funding from Norway, Euro Burma Office (EBO) has supported NSAGs to establish liaison offices and carried out an initial training in responsibilities and approaches. The aim of the project is to strengthen the capacity of liaison offices to provide support at ground level to the peace process. To learn more about the project’s planned activities and expected results, click [here](http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/mpsi?tmpl=component&print=1&page=6/7).

### ALP Capacity Support

**Project areas:** Rakhine, India and the Philippines  
**Project fund support:** $ 30,000  
**Donor:** Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Two projects have been supported to strengthen the capacity of Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) to engage in the peace process. One project provided funding for ALP internal discussions and strategy meetings which took place in India. A second project supported an exposure trip for the ALP to observe peace processes in the Philippines. This project was supported by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies and funded by Norway. To learn more about the project’s activities, click [here](http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/mpsi?tmpl=component&print=1&page=6/7).

### Identity Card Programme

**Project areas:** Kayin, Kayah, Mon and southern Shan States, and Tanintharyi and eastern Bago Regions  
**Project start date:** July 2012  
**Project fund support:** $ 1,594,000  
**Donor:** Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, AusAid, SDC and EuropeAid

This project is an accelerated procedure to issue Citizenship Scrutiny Cards. The NRC, as a partner of MPSI, has developed a model of setting up a temporary “one-stop shop” which covers, free of charge, all the steps involved in issuing the Citizen Scrutiny Cards on the same day. To date, approximately 60,000 people have received national identity cards in Kayah and Kayin States. To learn more about the project’s planned activities and expected results, click [here](http://www.mmpeacemonitor.org/stakeholders/mpsi?tmpl=component&print=1&page=6/7).

### Ethnic Peace Resource Programme Stage 1

**Project areas:** All ethnic communities  
**Project start date:** April 2013  
**Project fund support:** $ 236,000  
**Donor:** Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
This project contributes to the development of capacity and confidence of ethnic leaders to achieve practical solutions to long-standing problems of ethnic communities. The project develops a web-based resource platform and a series of workshops and seminars for ethnic leaders and in communities around liaison offices. There is also a gender dimension to the project, which aims to explore how to achieve greater representation of women in the peace process and ensure greater acknowledgement of issues of importance to women. To learn more about the project's planned activities and expected results, click here.

Controversies:

The initiative has proved controversial with Thailand-based organisations, particularly given the Norwegian government’s decision to cut funding to border-based NGOs in early 2012. In an attempt to allay some of these concerns, Mr Larsen visited Chiang Mai on May 30 to discuss the initiative with the organisations.

Issues raised:

1. Lack of transparency of a process they say has systematically excluded them.
2. Suspicions over Norway’s economic motives and its “neo-liberal agenda”
3. Fear it could coerce rebels into joining the government under the 2008 constitution.
4. Doubts over the speed of the project
5. Concerns that it risks derailing, rather than consolidating the fragile peace processes in Myanmar’s ethnic regions. The reason being that the initiative prioritises economic development ahead of political dialogue. It conceptualises aid as a strategic tool to simultaneously “test and build confidence” in the nascent peace processes, though ostensibly without supplanting political resolution.

Karen Community Based Organisations issued a statement that claims the fund lacks transparency and community support. It called on the MPSI to:

1. Stop their current activities for long enough to review their process and procedures for implementation.
2. Immediately release the fund design documents including the local languages translations. These documents should include sector targets, criteria and plans.
3. Issue clear rationales for how each of the projects supported by the funds will contribute to conflict resolution.
4. Develop and release project risk analysis and mitigation, and ensure that accessible monitoring and accountability mechanisms are in place.
5. Develop and execute a robust consultation strategy both with local community members and with community-based organizations.

30 Aug 2012: Five organizations concerned with the Karen peace process in Burma say they will not attend a meeting organized by Norway’s MPSI because of its “flawed, untransparent peace-fund consultation” process. The group sent an open letter to Norwegian Ambassador Katja Nordgaard outlining its concerns.

1. Karen Women Organization
2. Karen Environmental Social Action Network
3. Burma Partnership
4. Human Rights Education Institute of Burma
5. Women's League of Burma