

The Role of Civil Society in Myanmar's Democratization

Dr. Thin Thin Aye

Professor of Department of International Relations, Yadanabon University, Myanmar

Abstract

Myanmar is in the process of transition to democracy. Therefore, Promoting the culture of democracy and National harmony is of utmost importance. Democratic Culture is a culture in which all citizens can participate and feel that they have a stake. Civil society moved quickly to Democracy. The promotion of democratizing in Myanmar has become the main dominant theme in current situation. Myanmar's democratization efforts have encountered many pitfalls contradictions and dilemmas that have forced the government to alter its approach. Social capital serves as intermediaries between the state and private citizens and sometimes exercises delegated authority in specific areas (such as education, development and resource management). Civil society actors are non-profit and non-government. Civil actors build social capital. The civil society organization of horizontal accountability can help respecting law and exercised properly state authority.eg. President respected public opinion and suspended the construction of the Myitsone dam (Ayeyarwaddy river). The government openly invited International Organization for promotion and protection of human rights, cooperation with UN agencies and partners already held a number of workshops and seminars since 2000, so as to promote public awareness on Human Rights problems and promotion. The most prominent one is a vibrant and developed civil society is the bedrock of democracy. In accordance with the abovementioned factors, several research questions have been raised. How does civil society support Myanmar Democratization process? How much democracy can we legitimately and realistically expect from civil society? How does Myanmar government get political pact from civil society? This paper will be used qualitative research method based on case study. The government has embarked upon a series of reforms such as expansion of civil and political space allowing civil society to function freely.

Key words: Civil Society, Political Culture, Horizontal Accountability, Democratization

Introduction

The promotion of democracy in Myanmar has become the main dominant theme in today's political reform process. Myanmar's democratization efforts have encountered many pitfalls contradictions and dilemmas that have forced the government to alter its approach. Social capital serves as intermediaries between the state and private citizens and sometimes exercises delegated authority in specific issue areas (such as education, development and resource management). Civil society actors are non-profit and non-government. The debate on democratizing and civil society has important consequences for public policy and international relations. Both external actors (government and non-government) and the government of democratizing country must take into account the relative legitimacy and representativeness of civil society of organization which make policy decisions. Civil actors build social capital. To be a democracy, a civil society must be

International Conference on Burma/Myanmar Studies
Burma/Myanmar in Transition: Connectivity, Changes and Challenges

University Academic Service Centre (UNISERV), Chiang Mai University, Thailand, 24-25 July 2015

representative, accountable, and pluralistic, and it must respect human rights. Although many supporters of democratization are reluctant to criticize emerging civil societies, it is important to recognize that civil society can also undermine itself through its own democratic deficits and that the role of civic actors have shifted during the different phases of the democratic transition. In the era of the regime transformation, demonstration, consolidation, uneven globalization, institutions and civil society make more than ever. For an organization to be democratic it must accountably represent its members for civil society as a whole, it must be pluralistic. Civil society must mobilize vigorously to generate broad societal demand for institutional reforms. They also can provide an additional and independent arena for monitoring government performance.

What does democracy mean for civil society? While the term 'deepening' is usually associated with consolidated liberal democracies, the democratization of civil society also has a variety of roles to play in promoting democratic consolidation. Therefore, the President personally met people from civil society and recognized the important role of civil society organization (CSO) in Myanmar's Political Reform Process. Moreover, the government promotes political openness and democratic practices. The most prominent one is the freedom of press and association, which has been recognized by the international community. The media is regarded as the fourth pillar and aimed at providing a watchdog for the government, big business and other sources of power in society as well as to provide the information and analysis to the public.

In accordance with the above mentioned factors, several research questions have been raised. How does civil society support Myanmar's democratization process? How much democracy can we legitimately and realistically expect from civil society? What does democracy means for civil society? Which freedoms of civil society impede the democratization process? Why does the Myanmar government favor the public opinion and attitudes of civil society? What are the motivating factors? Why are Myanmar's political reforms slowing? Why does the Myanmar government foster and nurture trust, collaboration, and constructive engagement? How does the Myanmar government get political pact from civil society?

Civil Society and Democratization

As Myanmar is in the process of transition to democracy, promoting the culture of democracy and national harmony is of utmost importance. Democratic culture is a culture in which all citizens can participate and feel that they have a stake. The government has embarked upon a series of reforms such as expansion of civil and political space allowing civil society to function freely. Meanwhile, civil and political societies sharing common with the government have extensively engaged in promoting social capital and societal problems. e.g. They can freely engage in activities in different parts of the country. Prioritization of communicable diseases such as TB, Malaria and HIV/AIDS are regarded as national concern. In controlling these major diseases, health education is one of the most cost effective intervention Public awareness can be done by a large number of NGOs. A large number of diseases can be prevented if people are adequately informed about these diseases and they were encouraged to take necessary precautions. As an introduction of democracy in a country is a tough process and takes time, the government and civil society be wise in promoting the culture of democracy. To sum up, democratization and social capital are closely related and

International Conference on Burma/Myanmar Studies
Burma/Myanmar in Transition: Connectivity, Changes and Challenges

University Academic Service Centre (UNISERV), Chiang Mai University, Thailand, 24-25 July 2015

Mutually interdependent .

Under the leadership of president U Thein Sein, the government has sought to re-open trade with Western countries and international organizations and to end sanctions on the country. Moreover, the new government is seeking to balance China's influence in Myanmar. Therefore, the President respects public opinion and suspended the construction of the Myitsone dam on the Ayeyarwaddy River. The Myitsone project faced a broad campaign by an anti-dam project (environmental and some political parties) due to the potential environmental impact of the project. The government openly invited International Organizations for the promotion and protection of human rights, cooperation with UN agencies and partners already held a number of workshops and seminars since 2000, so as to prevent public awareness on Human Rights problems and promotion.

The concept of 'civil society' is closely related to political culture. A vibrant and developed civil society is the bedrock of democracy. Without them, politics become a murderous grab for power. Civil society moved quickly to Democracy. Without a civil society, democracy may not take root. As Myanmar continues to open up and provide more space for civil society to voice their concerns, it is necessary for government, civil society to cooperate together to discuss not only for development of country but also for full-fledged Democratic country. Civil society groups and political parties have become increasingly worried about their lack of participation in the peace process. A number of questions remain unresolved, regarding the role of civil society actors in the peace process. While many civil society actors will demand a seat at the peace negotiation table, others may be more effective in a 'watch dog' role, monitoring process and attempting to pressure for key actor to reach agreements if it is necessary.

Civil Society Organization can play a vital role in making the Elite and the mass public more committed to democracy. Sometimes, the term civil society is used more general sense of "the element such as the freedom of speech, an independent judiciary etc that make up a democratic society". According to the western thinkers, Civil Society is seen also as a concept of Civic Value. The concept of civil society is closely related to political culture. A vibrant and developed civil society is the bedrock of democracy e.g Central Europe, especially Poland has some CSO moved quickly toward democratization .Without Civil society, democracy cannot be rooted.

Civilian government under U Thein Sein had done a lot of reforms but Myanmar Democratization did not become full-fledged one why? A lot of reforms had been done by President U Thein Sein are(1)Political reforms(2) Economic and Social reforms(3)Administrative reforms. Under political reforms, a series of reforms have been done. They are: releasing political prisoners, welcoming some political dissidents from abroad, Releasing Daw Aung San Su Kyi from home Arrest, releasing media censorship and giving permission of freedom of associations such as student union, teacher union, labor union and worker union. Peace talks for the cease-fire is also included. Civil society actors have shown a lack of awareness regarding the variety of role they can adopt in the transition process. They, therefore and overlook a range of other functions that they could engage in such as protection, advocacy, providing expertise, civic education or facilitation failing this multiplicity role, they could demonstrate a lack of knowledge about different type of potential inclusion mechanism

International Conference on Burma/Myanmar Studies
Burma/Myanmar in Transition: Connectivity, Changes and Challenges

University Academic Service Centre (UNISERV), Chiang Mai University, Thailand, 24-25 July 2015

in participatory process. Democracy to be consolidated, five inter -connective and mutually reinforcing condition must also exist.

- The development of civil society freely and lively
- A relatively autonomous political society (parties and organized groups)
- Rule of law to ensure legal guarantee for citizen independent associated life
- A state bureaucracy usable by new democratic government
- An institutionalized Economic society (Lukemcbain,2014,p.4)

Civil society involves private citizen acting collectively to make demands to the state or to express in the public sphere their interests, preferences and ideas or to check the authority of the state and make it accountable. With this in mind, civil society may encompass a wide range of organizations concerned with public matters. They include civic, issue-oriented, religious, and educational interest groups and associations. Some are known as nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs; some are informal and loosely structured. The first and foremost function is to limit and control the power of state. Civil society actor should watch how state official use their power. They should lobby for access to information, laws and rules and institution to control corruption. The second function is to expose the corrupt conduct of public official and lobby for good reforms. A third function of civil society is to promote political participation by educating people about their rights and obligation as democratic citizens and encouraging them listen to election campaigns and vote in elections. Fourth, civil society can help to develop the other value of democratic life. Practice participation and debate, without this deeper culture of accommodations, democracy can't be stable. Fifth, CSO help to develop programs for democratic civic education in the school as well. Civil society must be constructive partners and advocate for democracy and Human Right training. Sixth, civil society is an arena for the expressions of diverse interest groups and lobby for the needs and concern of their members such as women, students, environmentalists, trade union and lawyers A seven way of civil society is to strengthen democracy as new forms of interest and solidarity that cut old forms of tribal, religious and other identity ties. Eight, civil society can provide a training ground for future political leaders. Ninth, CSO can inform the public about the important public issues. It is the role of mass media and forum for debating public policies and submit issues before parliament. Tenth, civil society can play in mediating and resolving conflicts through bargaining and compromising. Eleventh, civil society can play a vital role in monitoring the conduct of election. In fact counting is entirely the voting and vote counting free, fair, peaceful and transparent. Finally, CSO make the state at all level to be more accountable, responsive, inclusive, and effective.

The first important role of civil society in promoting governance is to limit and control the power of the state. First, civil action widens participation by mobilizing marginalized groups into public life, especially the poor, women, and minorities (Blair, 1993b, 6-8). Second, the institutions of civil society protect citizens against excesses by the state by acting as a buffer against possible predatory behavior and by monitoring public performance on human rights abuses and corruptions. So civil society has the mandate to expose the corrupt conduct of public officials and lobby for good governance reforms. Even where anti-corruption laws and bodies exist, they cannot function effectively without the active support and participation of civil society. Additionally, these organizations, mobilize particular constituencies, particularly the vulnerable and marginalized sections of masses, to participate more fully in politics and public affairs. "The move will increase

International Conference on Burma/Myanmar Studies
Burma/Myanmar in Transition: Connectivity, Changes and Challenges

University Academic Service Centre (UNISERV), Chiang Mai University, Thailand, 24-25 July 2015

transparency of voting among the visually impaired who have, for a long time, faced difficulties in the exercise.”(Post Newspaper, 13th September, 2011) .It is also widely acknowledged that civil society has an important contribution to make in reducing poverty, complementary to the role played by government and “is considered to play a significant role in strengthening the multi-sectoral response to HIV, TB and STIs” (NASF 2006-10). Areas for civil society involvement in HIV include: building voice and accountability; service provision and; promoting awareness and understanding of development through advocacy.

Civil society helped to inform the public about the important public issues. This is not only the role of the mass media, but of NGOs which can provide forums for debating public policies and disseminating information about issues before parliament that affect the interests of different groups, or of society at large. After 50 years of Military rule, Myanmar is now undergoing an exceptional period of transition. President Thein Sein’s semi-civilian government has initiated a number of political and economic reforms to open Myanmar up to outside world. These measures include:

- Releasing up to 45136 political prisoners.
- Dismantling monopolies, vehicles and telecommunications.
- Removing restrictions on the media (freedom of association and expression).
- Creating a National Human Right Commission complaints relating to acts which take place after 5 September 2011.
- Removing names from immigration black lists and allowing freedom fighters and activists to return to the country (well- known scholars and experts to political reform).
- Passing a number of new laws, including relating to labor, land, peaceful assembly, foreign-direct investment and special economic zones.
- Allowing opposition parties to run in the 2012 parliamentary by elections, resulting in the NLD, led by Daw Aung Sun Suu Kyi winning 43 out of 45 seats on offer; and
- A pledge by president U Thein Sein to eradicate forced labour by 2015.

In response to these changes, a number of governments including the European Union, the United States of America, Australia, Norway and Switzerland removed and suspended their sanctions. Similarly, the International Labor Organization eased its measures against Myanmar and the World Bank approved the resumption of aid. On 23 June students leaders Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Gyi and Htay kywe, the trio who found the 88 Generations is a locally organized group primarily advocating for political reforms, Democratization, National peace and reconciliation in Myanmar immediately after their release from prison (Lin,2013).

Moreover, one of the NGOs which was founded by a Kachin woman with a connection to the KIO made ceasefire with regime. In some towns, interfaith councils bring together Buddhists, Christians, and sometimes Muslim and Hindus to promote religious tolerance and joint solutions to shared problems. Civil society are highly restricted and has not been opened to play significant role in promoting democracy. But there is no doubt that a strong link between a vibrant civil society and a vibrant democracy. But in looking forward to democratization in Myanmar over the longer term, a clear understanding of the nature of that link is needed.

There are six types of civil society out of them are found inside the country while the other two are active in areas outside the control of the military regime, on the border areas and in other countries (Sai Thet Naing Oo,2012,P 7-9).

1. Compliant civil society

These are government organized NGOs created for several purpose including promoting civil society, humiliating the opposition, and supporting the military regime's agenda. Examples include USDA, MMCWA.

2. Opposition groups

NLD led by Daw Aung San Su Kyi, the ethnic political forces, students and monks are the second type of civil society. They have no space to act overtly in politics .they sought to curve out some space for independent actions and instead many have chosen to engage in social welfare, community health and Education to keep their organization alive.

3. Type three civil society comes from traditional ,social ,religious and cultural organization and local self-help groups. The deepening economic crisis and dropping living standards and the state's failure to meet the basic need of community are important factor for these local self-help groups to become more active in the last decades. The organization in urban areas focus on provisioning of education and basic health care while the non Myanmar ethnic minorities in ceasefire areas focus on food security, income generation and acute intervention in basic healthcare and education support(lorch 2006).For example-Byamaso- A Thin, that provide ambulance and medical services .

4. Type four civil service society is International NGOs .International NGO does play a role in the development civil society network. The present of INGOs in Myanmar have two ends. For the regime, having the INGOs in the country means improving its images as the government that being open and cooperate, as well as gaining foreign currency through the NGO workers and project activities. They are mainly engaged in the field of Humanitarian services and development projects have been working closely with local organization.

5. Type five civil society is cross-border civil society Movement, Many thousands of people have left their country in search of jobs and most has gone to Thailand.

6. Type six civil society comprises Some political activists and refugees who has taken asylum in those countries ,UK , USA,EU and Australia. In 1990, more than 40 groups emerged in such countries (kyaw Yin Hlaing,2009,p.408).

The role of CSO in Education in Myanmar

Education should be a priority sector for international engagement, as it is a key to national development, along with improvements in other important welfare sectors such as a health. Moreover, if donors were able to engage with civil-society actors in the education sector, this could be a starting point for gradually changing Burma/Myanmar's authoritarian political culture. The continuing engagement of the Un International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in Burma/ Myanmar's education sector provides evidence that the donor community takes the importance of education for development seriously. The role of the international aid community in the field of education has, however, so far been limited, as the government is highly suspicious of international involvement this sector, which despite poor resource allocation it considers an area of national interest. In particular, there is almost no institutionalized cooperation between donors and local

civil-society actors in the field of education and information about the state of civil-society activities in this area remains scarce. Even though civil-society groups have managed to bridge some of the gaps that exist in the formal education sector, they lack the capacity to provide a substitute for a functioning state-run education system.

At the same time, 'traditional civil society', which comprises mostly informal groups such as religious and ethnic organizations, can be quite strong as it provides coping mechanisms for state failure such as alternative, community-based schooling.

Since 1989, the regime has concluded cease-fires with most of the armed ethnic resistance groups, thereby granting them some degree of autonomy. As a result, civil-society actors can perform in the welfare-provision sector and in certain territories with a degree of ethnic autonomy. Traditionally, monastic education is characterized by non-formal and lifelong learning. In this sense, it can be said to represent the unity of life and religion, which still exists in many rural regions of Buddhist Burma/Myanmar. In its pure and traditional form, monastic education can thus be considered fundamentally different from the formal secular education system, which considers education as a preparation for life rather than a form of life itself. Civil Society groups in Myanmar, China and internationally, President U Thein Sein in 30 September 2011 decided to suspend Myitsone Dam until 2015.

Suspension of Myitsone Dam

An evidence of the role played by the civil society in democratization process of Myanmar was the suspension of Myitsone Dam Project. The Myitsone Dam is located a mile below confluence of Mekha and Malikha rivers in Kachin state. The dam's reservoir will submerge important historical and cultural sites at the Malikha and N'mailkha recognized as the birth place of Myanmar. The dam is also located in a region that is recognized as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots and a global conservation priority (<http://www.internationalriver.org/campaign/irrawaddy/myitson.dam.O>). If it was built, the Ayeyarwady Myitsone Dam would inundate approximately 66 square kilometers of forested area and cause irreversible damage to Myanmar's key river system as well as to do damage to rice paddy communities. Groups within Myanmar opposed the dam not only because of environmental impacts, displacement and threats to cultural sites but also because the dam is located less than 100 kilometers from a major fault line posing a risk to basin inhabitants should an earthquake weaken the dam structure and cause landslides in the reservoirs. If the Myitsone Dam were to break during an earthquake it would endanger the lives of hundreds of thousands of people by flooding Kachin State's largest city, Myittha. In 2013 twelve expert opinions were sought on the validity of the conclusions of the Environment Impact Assessment completed by the Chinese developers, China power investment. Experts found serious flaws in the methodology and structure of the report, a total neglect of the temporal and spatial scale of the social and environmental impacts of the dams superficial analysis of the dams impacts on freshwater biodiversity and inadequate public participation.

Ethnic minorities in Kachin State also opposed the dam project. Because 6000mw produced by the dam was to be sold to China, not to be used in Myanmar where there are chronic energy shortages.

International Conference on Burma/Myanmar Studies
Burma/Myanmar in Transition: Connectivity, Changes and Challenges

University Academic Service Centre (UNISERV), Chiang Mai University, Thailand, 24-25 July 2015

In March 2011 the KIO wrote to the chairman of the PRC warning that it will not be responsible if civil war broke out when Myanmar troops entered KIO controlled areas to provide security for the dam construction. In June 2011 a 17-year ceasefire was broken and there arose active fighting between the KIO and the Myanmar Army.

The role of Media and Journalism is equally important in the Myitsone Dam suspension. One of the journalist and artists, Ko Myint Zaw was awarded "The Goldman Award" by an American Environmental Protection group for his achievement "Save the Ayeyarwaddy" Campaign and awareness raising for environmental protection (<http://burmese.voanews.com/content/myint-zaw-gold-man/2728211.html>). Objections to the project are many and varied. Daw Aung San Su Kyi wrote an appeal against it in 2011 which also cited a lack of sound planning, the failure to enforce necessary conservation lands and a poor ecological awareness (<http://www.rfa.org/Burma/myitson-dam-project-hold.f>). The environmental impact assessment (EIA) report published in 2011, has generated intense concern, in particular with regard to safety aspects due to the dam's proximity to fault lines. Others such as the Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (BANCA) claimed that EIA was rushed and that CPI did not wait for its completion before starting construction and resettlement. Due to the pressure of civil society groups in Myanmar, China and internationally, President U Thein Sein decided to suspend the construction of the Myitsone Dam until 2015 on the 30 September 2011.

The Role of Students in the Democratization Process

Together with democratization process and relaxation of laws on organizations, student unions are formed in Myanmar in 2014 student organizations and independent education experts prepared detailed suggestions for the much anticipated Education law in order to herald of a new era of education in Myanmar. But the government and parliament including Daw Aung San Su Kyi pushed through an education law on 30 September. Students and experts believed that the law grants the government tight control over higher education

Institutions undermine their independence. Students repeatedly called for an overhaul of the law and they began organizing demonstrations nationwide. Due to the government's unwillingness to consider their demands, student demonstrators attempted to march to Yangon. Hundreds of students began a 644 kilometer march in January 20 from Mandalay to protest the controversial education law (<http://www.irrawaddy.org/Burma/studentprotest-march-conti>). The student call for Decentralization and democratization of education law with specific demands to recognize the student union as legal entities, to allocate student budget in line with UNESCO principles and to remove the clause that bans students from taking part in politics. The march became as Myanmar's parliament announced it would consider changes to the National Education Bill, which restricts the formation of student unions and creates a commission to oversee the country's education system, based on a request by President Thein Sein (<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/Myanmar/March-0120201516>). Ko Ye Yint Kyaw, a spokesman for the All Burma Federations of Student Unions (ABFSU), said that his and other students groups had given the government a two-month moratorium since earlier protests to discuss their concerns over the bill, but had not been contacted for talks. On September 2014, four party talks bill was brought before the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

International Conference on Burma/Myanmar Studies
Burma/Myanmar in Transition: Connectivity, Changes and Challenges

University Academic Service Centre (UNISERV), Chiang Mai University, Thailand, 24-25 July 2015

According to the bill committee, hearing drew nine representatives from Democratize Education Movement leading committee and twenty members from NNER(National Network Education Reform)to discuss the bill at the debate which was attended by media.(The new light Of Myanmar,18 and 21 march 2015) It was the one of the process of Openness and Transparency in Democratization. Civil society organizations offered suggestions on National Education law Amendment bill at the Amyotha Luttaw with the Chairman Detailed matter relating writing law on Education and participating Group in the process. Four Social Organizations, Myanmar Christian Council of Churches, Rakhine fellowship organization, free funeral services society (Yangon) and Myanmar Disabled and leading groups shared their opinion on Education Amendment Bill(The New light of Myanmar,15 march 2015). After extensive talks between the government, law makers and student organizations and independent civil society experts of NEER an apparent breakthrough agreement was reached over a new bill that bill was replaced the education law. Student groups agreed to suspend their demonstrations and most decided to break off their march and returned home. The draft incorporate principles concerns of student protesters, broadly seeking to loosen government control over educational institutions and expand access to education specific provisions include a decentralized curriculum for native language instruction in classrooms in ethnic minority regions. At the time government representatives and law makers also agreed to include students and other education professionals in referendum and education law draft.

The role of the Labour Union in Political Reform

Setting a national minimum wage established by the 2012 minimum wage law required a parliamentary committee to be established with representatives from employers and workers' organizations to collect data and make recommendation for minimum wages. The consultative of progress was resulting from efforts by the ILO and labor organizations. MTUF leaders were participating actively in consultations on government's policy both in discussion on the national minimum wage where the union had conducted its own surveys of living costs and was represented on the parliamentary committees. Among the workers' representatives, Three of the TUF members are representing in the minimum wage committee. Together in the student unions, trade unions were demanding to be treated as stakeholders who should be by October 2014 the MTUF had affiliated 120 in -agricultural sectors in the a combined total membership of 15,000 workers. Under the men legal framework, more than 900 basic trade unions was registered in January 2014 and 1240 by November 2014. Total numbers of unions are about 1600 now consulted in Education policies. The strategies pursued by Myanmar trade union groups in 2014 demonstrate their participation in contentious policies thus pushing ahead towards democratization.

As part of political reforms in Myanmar since 2011 there has been a major expansion of freedom for working people to organize Trade Unions. Under the 2011 Labour Organization Law, Unions are formed at the local level before affiliating together into regional federations. These are connected by three Unions: The FTUB renamed Federation of Trade Unions Myanmar (FTUM), the Agriculture and farmers Federation of Myanmar (AFFM) and the Myanmar Trade Union Federation (MTUF). The Myanmar Trade Union Federation (MTUF) was formed in November 2013 at the initiative of the University Leader Dr. Sai Khaing Myo Tun. By October 2014,MTUF had 120 affiliated unions in the non agricultural sector combined with a total membership of 15,000 workers. Under the new legal

International Conference on Burma/Myanmar Studies
Burma/Myanmar in Transition: Connectivity, Changes and Challenges

University Academic Service Centre (UNISERV), Chiang Mai University, Thailand, 24-25 July 2015

framework, there were more than 900 basic trade unions in January 2014 and 1240 in November 2014.

Total number of Unions is about 1600 now (Interview with Dr. Sai Khine Myo Tun). Despite the lack of Legally registered national union bodies Unions Leader's have successfully pushed for recognition from government as legitimate participants in policy consultation. (Interview with Dr. Sai Khine Myo Tun)By working together with international trade union movement and making strategic use of opportunity provide by the structure of ILO, local union activist made a significant contribution to political change in Myanmar, securing a significant improvement in compliance with International standards. Ending the International sanctions regime seem as a key goal within the political agenda that would bring material and strategic benefit as well as domestic and international legitimacy of new government. Myanmar today is a society in which the experience of political life independent from control of state is almost completely new to both Official and ordinary people. Under the leadership of president U Thein Sein, Myanmar Civilian Government initiated negotiation with ILO in 2011 in a bid end on the Sanction on the Country. In seeking to re-open Trade with Western Countries and International organizations, The new government was seeking in part to balance China's influence in Myanmar.

Conclusion

In the current political climate, with only limited options available for national-level transition, the re-emergence of civil society networks represents an important vehicle for long-term, bottom-up democratization in Myanmar. Local NGOs and CBOs promote grassroots social mobilization and have the potential for increasing political participation. As well as their intrinsic value, these local networks can form the basis for democratization at the national level and help to ensure that the political transition is sustained, and takes root in local communities (Ashley South,2004,254).

The voluntary sector in Myanmar is still underdeveloped; changes coming from civil society will be gradual, and need to be supported. International donors should therefore foster supportive, long-term relationships with local associations. Efforts should be made to avoid working only with elites: analysis and planning should focus on the participation of women, ethnic and religious minorities, and other marginalized and potentially vulnerable groups. Myanmar needs better efforts to empower civil society and support bottom-up democratization in Myanmar. For a long time these have been hostage to other political agendas in particular, the struggle for national-level political change. I the NLD and other stakeholders want to see a national/elite-level political settlement in place, it is important they consult with these networks before they endorse local development activities.

Different actors can play different roles, based on a shared vision of a future democratic Myanmar. Some agencies will take a hard-line position, campaigning against the regime from outside Myanmar, while others adopt a softer mode, to work inside the country. However, local NGOs and CBOs have limited capacities, and it is important to re-state that most are focused on welfare initiatives (including – but usually implicitly social change), rather than political goals. The most substantial constraint on the growth of civil society in Myanmar is government distrust.

Myanmar presents a structured and highly dynamic environment of conflict. Democratization of civil society also has a variety of roles to play in promoting democratic consolidation. Civil democratic deficits include unclear representation, unaccountable leadership, lack of autonomy (from the state, political parties, or international forces), and lack of respect for universal human rights. Strengthening state institutions alone will ensure the role of law or control of corruption for an effective reform strategy. It is also important to strengthen the capacity of professionals and civil associations, think tanks, the mass media and independent interest groups. These actors in civil society must mobilize to generate broad societal demand for institutional reforms.

Myanmar's reform faces many challenges. Years of economic mismanagement have left the country impoverished, with weak infrastructural, poor health and education services, and massive economic disparity. In order for reforms to reach their full potential, Myanmar leaders need to coordinate substantial assistance, both financial, and technical while combating systemic issues such as corruption. The hope is that reform and its outcomes will help drive political settlement for ethnic conflicts, address human rights violations and resolve religious tensions. In his New Year's address on 2 January 2014, President U Thein Sein stated:

I would like to emphasize that if the political demand made by the public are larger than what the current political system can accommodate, we can all end up in a political deadlock. If this happens we could lose all the political freedom we have achieved. I would therefore like to urge all of you to handle such situation with care and wisdom.

The re-emergence of civil society networks is not in itself sufficient to bring about a national-level political transition. This will require concerted, explicitly political actions by political elites. In the meantime, civil society networks can prepare the way for democratic participation. As Myanmar is in the fourth year of implementing political, socio-economic and administrative reforms, visible progress has already been achieved. At the same time, Myanmar has been striving to overcome the challenges common to a young democracy. At this critical juncture, only constructive contributions and advice are necessary for further progress toward reaching the goal of genuine democratization.

References

Ashley South, *Ceasefire and Civil Society: The case of the Man Michael Gravers* (ed) Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Burma (Nordic institute of Asian Studies) 2007, Chapter six.

Ashley South, *Political Transition in Myanmar: a new model for Democratization*, contemporary SEA, 2004, (p.2 33-55)

David I. Steinberg, *A Void in Myanmar: Civil Society In Myanmar*. (<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs3/steinbergpaper.doc>)

Education in transition: a preliminary study of capacity development for civil society actors in Myanmar, Institute for Human Right Vs Peace Studies

International Crises group (ICG) *Myanmar: the role of civil society*, Asia Report Bangkok, 6 December 2001

Jasmin Lorch, *The (re)emergence of Civil Society in Areas of state weakness: The case of education in Burma/Myanmar*

Jasmin Lorch, *Myanmar's Civil Society - a Patch for the National Education System? The Emergence of Civil Society in Areas of State Weakness*, Burma Studies Conference 2006 "Communities of Interpretation" in Singapore, 13-15 July 2006

Kyaw Thu, *The impact of censorship on the development of the Private Press Industry in Myanmar*, Reuters, Institute for the study of Journalism, Oxford University

Kyaw Yin Hlaing, *Challenging the Authoritarian State : Buddhist Monks and Peaceful Protests in Burma*, Volume.32:1 WINTER 2008

Kyaw Yin Hlaing (2004) *Civil Society Skirting Regime Rule*, in "Civil Society and political Change in Asia", edited by Muthiah Alagappa, Stanford University Press, California, 2004

Mary Kaldor, *Civil Society and Accountability: journal of Human Development*, Vol. 4 no. 1, 2003

Sai Thet Naing Oo, *University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), Cross border civil society for Burmese Democratic Struggle*, UTS, 2012

Sonu Trivedi, *Contemporary Myanmar : Challenges to political process and reconciliation*, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), India, 2013

Strengthening Civil Society in Myanmar, Paung Ku Annual Report 2010/11, Aus AID

Lukemc bain *The role of civil society in the Democratization process in the MENA region what way forward*, discussion paper, 2014

The Role of civil society in peace building: SEA in focus. (<http://www.eplo.org//civil-society-dialogue-network.html>.)

The role of civil society in peace building: SEA in focus. (<http://www.eplo.org//civil-society-dialogue-network.html>.)

Newspapers

The New light of Myanmar, 4 March 2015
The New light of Myanmar, 7 March 2015
The New Light Of Myanmar, 8 March 2015
The New light of Myanmar, 9 March 2015
The New light of Myanmar, 11 March 2015
The New light of Myanmar, 12 March 2015
The New light of Myanmar, 15 March 2015
The New light of Myanmar, 17 March 2015
The New light of Myanmar, 21 March 2015
The New light of Myanmar, 22 March 2015
The New light of Myanmar, 24 March 2015
The New light of Myanmar, 25 March 2015
The New light of Myanmar, 26 March 2015
The New light of Myanmar, 28 March 2015
The New light of Myanmar, 8 April 2015