

Research Report

Seminar on Federalism, Peace Process and Coordination between Political Parties and CSOs



6th April 2017, Mawlamyine, Mon State



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The Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) aims to contribute in an active and effective way to international cooperation and understanding with its programmes and projects in Myanmar. Its first involvement to provide development assistance in Myanmar dates back to 1994 with capacity building activities for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the time when

Myanmar was preparing to apply for membership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Foundation has had a representative office in Yangon since October 2012 and was the first German political foundation to establish a representative office in Myanmar.

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Overview of the research results

The survey for the research was held during a dialogue on Federalism, Peace Process and Coordination between Political Parties and CSOs in Mawlamyine on 6th April 2017. The dialogue was a collaboration with the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) – Political Party Sector, Myanmar Institute for Democracy (MID) and the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF), bringing together the regional members of different political parties, Civil Society Organizations as well as the people in Mon State.

Following is an overview of the key research results and salient points from the survey.

- The results show that participants perceive the **current political climate as more authoritarian than democratic**. Younger participants (under 40) showed a higher tendency towards authoritarian than older participants (over 40).
A majority of participants noted that they would **prefer a division of states based on ethnicity (58%) rather than territory (38%)**.
- Nearly 80% of the participants agreed that **a federal system is important to resolve the conflicts in Myanmar**.
- **Only about 40%** of the participants rated the **current peace process as effective for a federal reform in Myanmar**. About 20% were neutral in this question.
- **Almost half (48%)** the participants think the **current government is not capable to achieve peace in Myanmar**. Although nearly a third (29%) think that the current government is capable. Interestingly, the results show that the younger participants are more confident in the capability of the current government.
- The participants noted that **Defense (83%), National Security (52%)** and **Border Affairs (45%)** are the **key roles for the Military in a federal Myanmar**.
- **Nearly all** participants (96%) think that **richer states and regions should support the development of poorer states and regions**.
- **Nearly all** participants (94%) feel that **ethnic parties should collaborate more on a national level**.
- **Over two-thirds (70%)** of the participants feel **a third “big” political party is needed in Myanmar**.
- The results show that **only 40 % of the participants have read the full NCA document**.
- **Not even one-third (27%)** of the participants **has read the full Panglong Agreement**.
- **Nearly half** of the participants (42%) feel **it is difficult to stay up to date with the peace process**.
- Nearly all of the participants (88%) feel strongly that they have **a right to participate in one of the National Dialogues**.
- **The vast majority (80%)** of the participants has **never participated in a national dialogue**.
- **The vast majority (81%)** of the participants feel strongly that **political parties (currently in parliament) should be part of the negotiations in the peace process**.

- **The vast majority (84%) of the participants feel strongly that **civil society organizations should be part of the negotiations in the peace process.****
- **Nearly half (42%) of the participants agree that the **current formation of the UPDJC is effective and efficient.****
- **More than two-thirds (69%) of the participants estimate that it will **take 5 years or longer for a comprehensive peace agreement.****
- **Just over half (57%) of the participants suggest to **review and amend the current constitution**, while 39% suggest to draft a new constitution.**
- **A great majority (74%) think that a **third party international stakeholder is needed in the mediation of the peace process.****

Background

The project work of the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) aims to support the political, economic and administrative transition of Myanmar. One key aspect includes capacity building, knowledge sharing and dialogue in the field of Federalism and Decentralization. This support aims at enabling different stakeholders to actively take part in discussions on federal reforms.

According to the present situation in Myanmar, the federal reform, in some ways, depends on political dialogues that are preceded by the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. The 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference, also called Union Peace Conference (UPC), which was held in late August to early September 2016, is the most ambitious commitment undertaken by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Government. After that conference, some forms of National Dialogues have been organized in different States and Regions. However, the public participation in those dialogues is still a critical question. Moreover, the information people can get on peace process and federalism seems to be limited.

In this context, HSF organized a public seminar - in collaboration with the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) – Political Party Sector and Myanmar Institute for Democracy (MID) – bringing together the regional members of different political parties, Civil Society Organizations as well as the people in Mon State.

Aim and Structure of the Seminar

The seminar aimed to share the background and updates on the peace process to the participants. It was structured in two parts: the first one mainly focused on sharing information on the current peace process and its framework. The second part was a panel discussion of four speakers, who are working within the peace process on different aspects. After the panel discussion, the participants were invited to ask questions, and to express their ideas on the peace process and federalism.

Content

The first session of the seminar is to share information to the participants about the peace process. Two members of the Secretariats of UPDJC – Political Party Sector presented on:

- **Outline of Peace Process, National Level dialogue and Union Peace Conference** and
- **Myanmar Conflict Vs Federalism**

In the first presentation, the Chair of the Bill Committee of the Lower House, U Tun Tun Hein, introduced the background of Myanmar Peace Process from the beginning and gave updates. He also highlighted, "Peace also means unity. We can achieve peace only when we are united. This is the policy of the leading party."

The second presentation was focused on the challenges of the current peace process and the Myanmar's long-lasting conflict regarding the forming of a federal country. The speaker, Sai Kyaw Nyunt, also emphasized the role of the leaders in organizing the National Dialogues.

During the panel discussion, the speakers are from different backgrounds: Sai Kyaw Nyunt from political party, U Min Zin, a researcher on Myanmar peace process, U Ye Myo Hein, who is working for civil-military

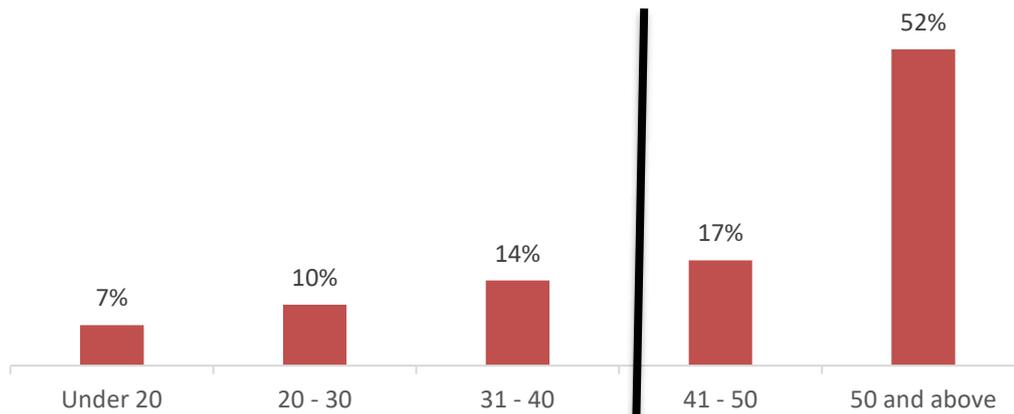
relationship, and U Kyaw Thu, a well-known CSO leader. They expressed their idea on federal reform process on different issues, including the perspectives of the current mechanism, inclusiveness, civil-military relation and nation building.

After the panel discussion, the participants were able to ask questions to the panelists as well as to the UPDJC members regarding the peace process and federalism. The participants were also able to express their ideas on how to achieve political reform, peace and federalism. The forum had over 200 participants and the organizers were aware that not every participant is able to speak and provide their opinion. Therefore, questionnaires were prepared and distributed among the participants during the seminar to provide an alternative voice for their opinions on peace and federalism.

Findings out of survey questionnaires

Out of 240 participants, 150 filled out the provided survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire included 14 multiple choice as well as 4 open questions. Following is an analysis of the questions:

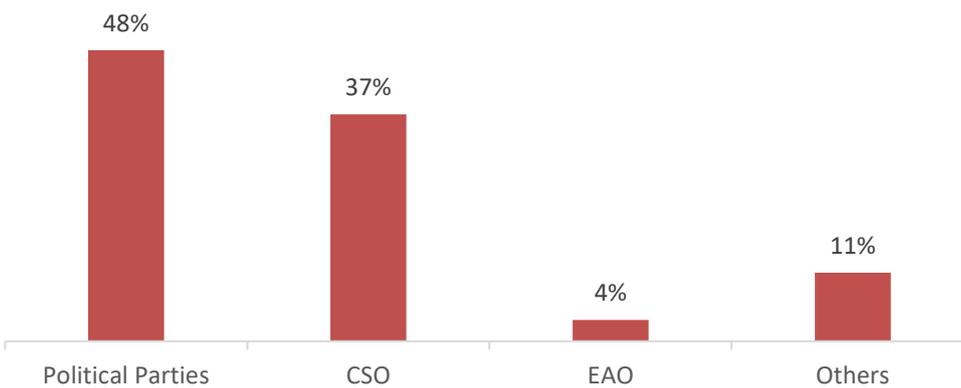
I: Age Groups of the Participants



31% of the participants are of age 40 or younger

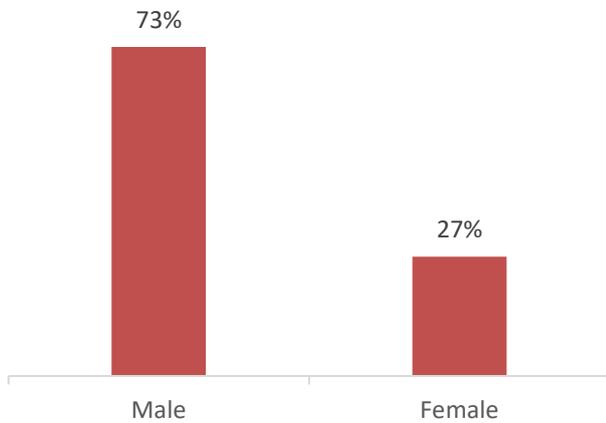
the majority (69%) is older than 40

II: Organisations of the participants



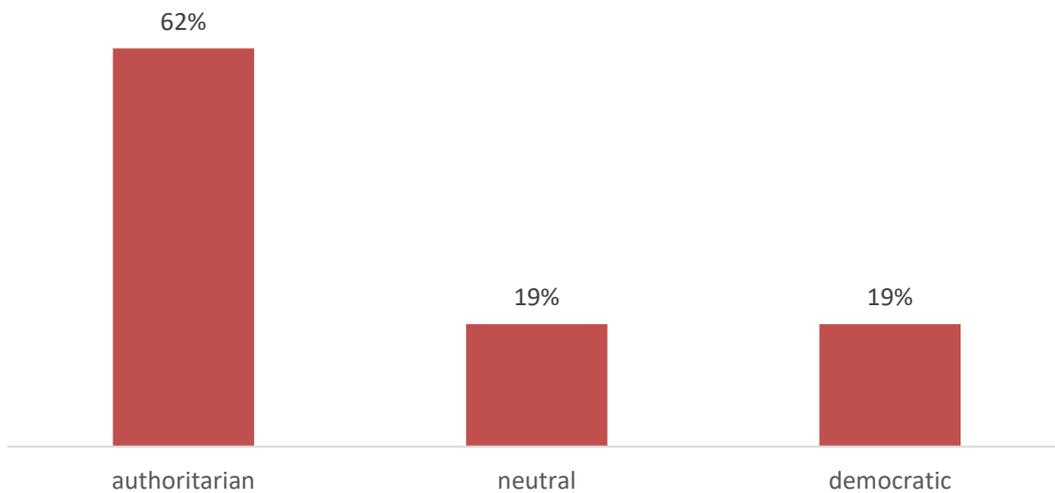
Interestingly in the analysis of the Group of the under 20, none of the participants is members of political parties or EAOs. It seems the higher the age group, the higher is belonging to political parties and EAOs.

III: Gender Allocation:



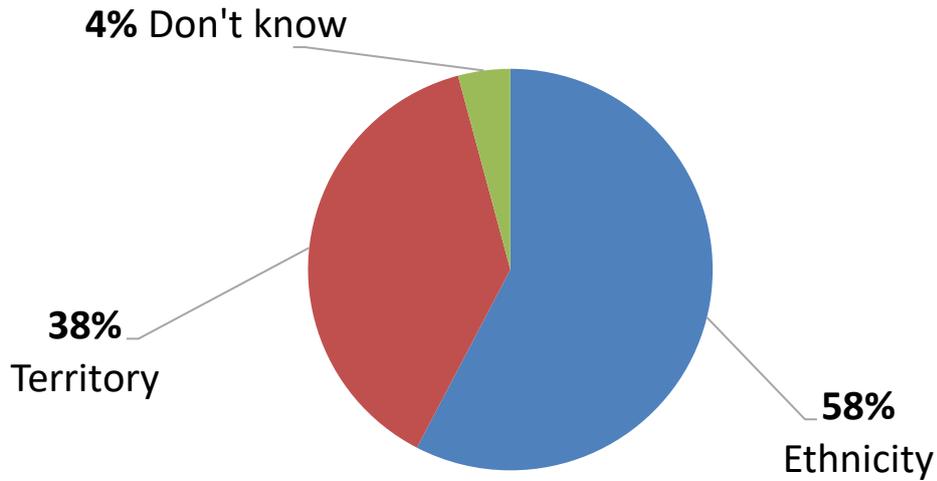
Almost three quarters of the participants were men. In the younger age groups the gender balance was more even.

1. How democratic would you consider Myanmar? (authoritarian – democratic)



Generally, participants perceive the current Myanmar is more authoritarian rather than democratic.

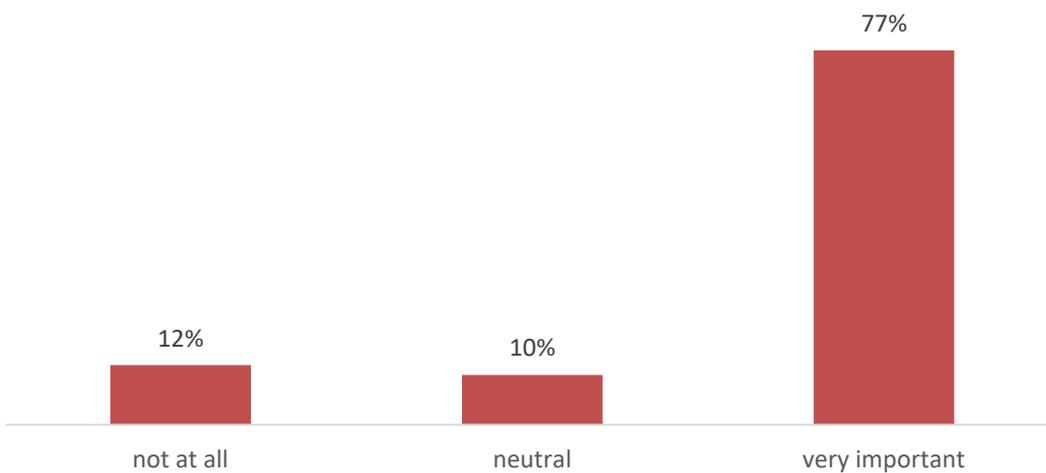
2. Would you prefer a division of states based on ethnicity or territory?



In Federal reform process in Myanmar, it is still critical whether the future states should be formed based on Ethnicity or Territory. A slight majority of participants prefer states based on Ethnicity rather than Territory.

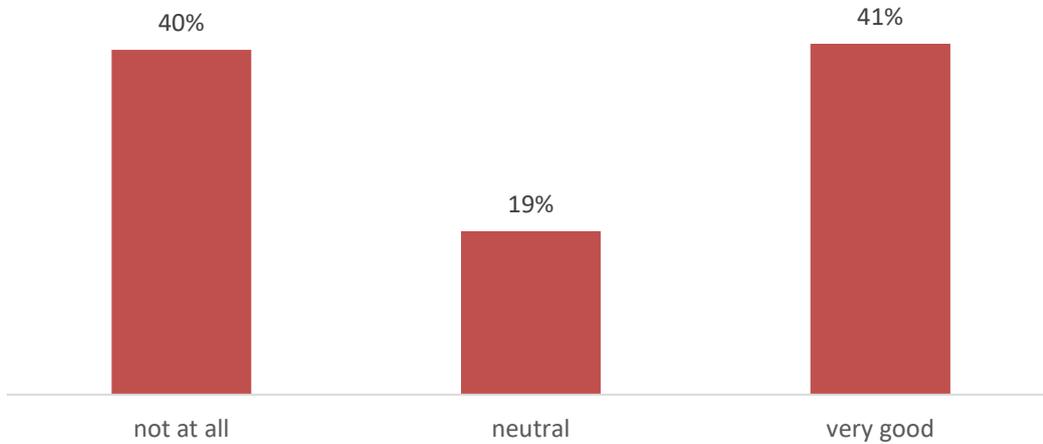
3. How important is a Federal system to resolve the conflicts in Myanmar?

(not at all – very important)



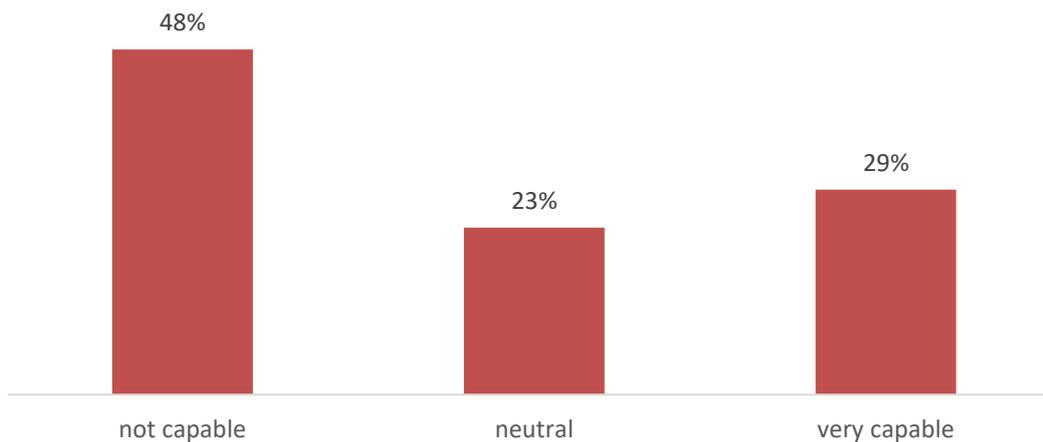
Regardless of age groups, more than three quarters of the participants view that to resolve the conflicts in Myanmar, Federalism is the most important tool.

4. How would you rate the effectiveness of the current peace process for a Federal reform in Myanmar?
(not at all – very good)



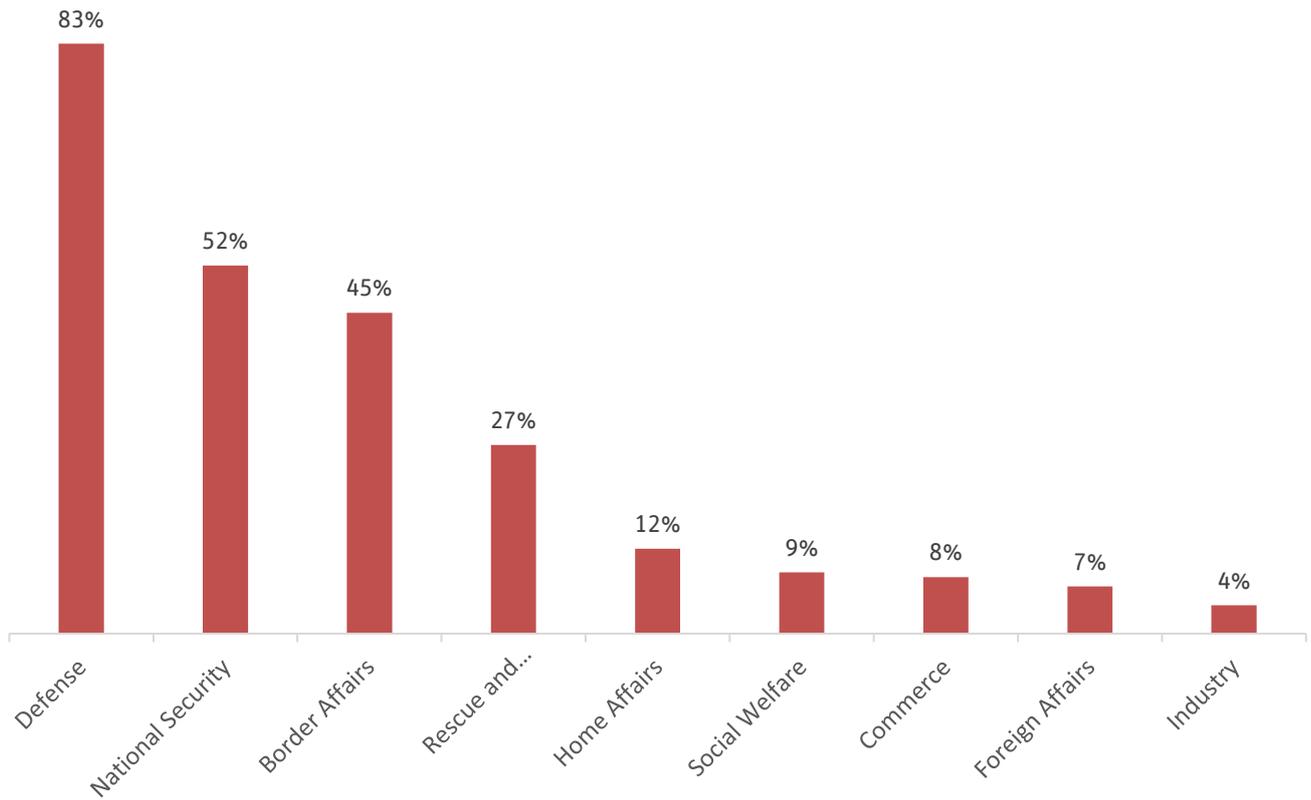
Very diverse responses were given to this question regarding the effectiveness of the current peace process in Myanmar. For reforming into a Federation, 40 percent of participants think that the current process is not effective at all. On the other hand, although 41 percent of the participants perceive that the current process is very effective, 19 percent consider neither too negative nor very positive on the process.

5. How capable do you think is the current government to achieve peace in Myanmar?
(not capable – very capable)



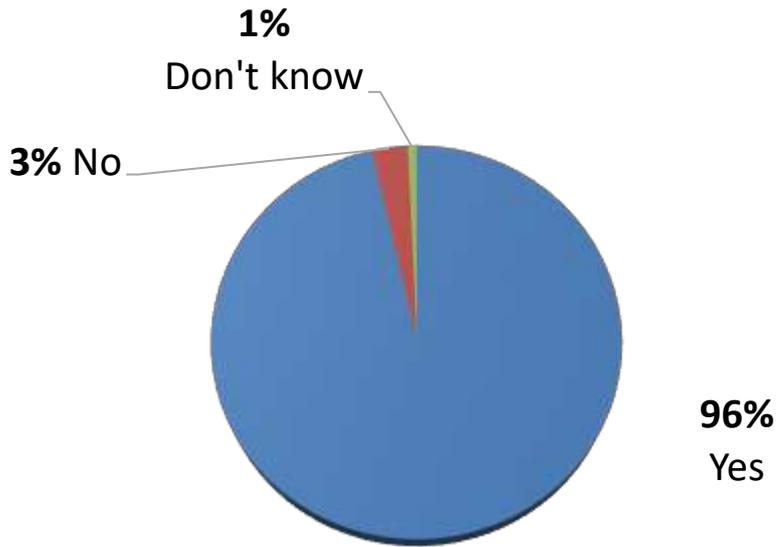
Nearly half of the participants seem not to believe in the effort by the government.

6. Which role should the military play in a federal Myanmar?



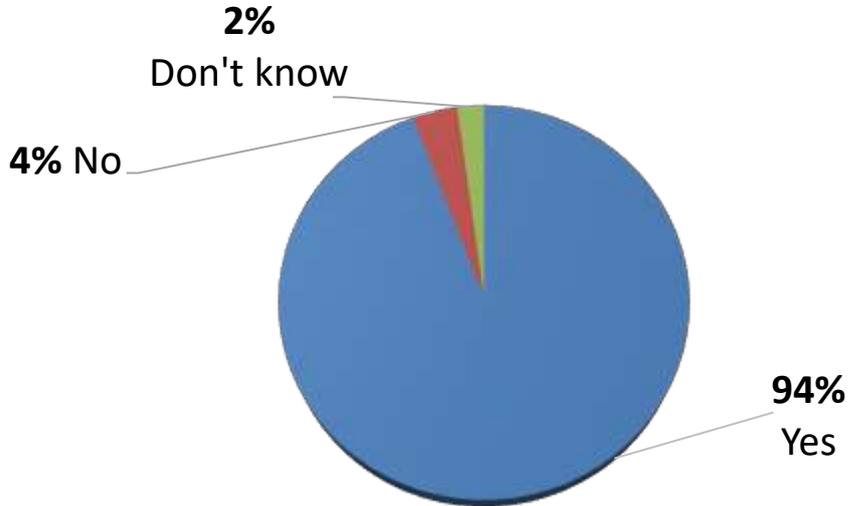
According to most participants, in a federal Myanmar, the military should be responsible for “Defense.” About half of the participants also included “National Security,” and “Border Affairs.” Only a few people agree that the military is also responsible for “Home Affairs.” Also interesting to bring forward is that 4-10 % of the participants feel that military should have roles to play in social welfare, commerce, foreign affairs and industry respectively.

7. Do you think richer states/ regions should partly pay for the development of poorer states in Myanmar?



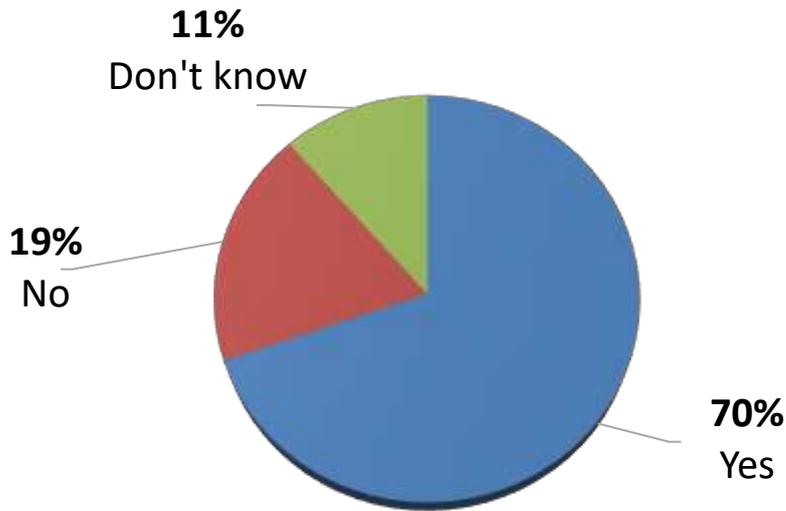
Nearly all of the participants agree that richer states should partly pay for the poorer states.

8. Should ethnic political parties collaborate closer on the national level?



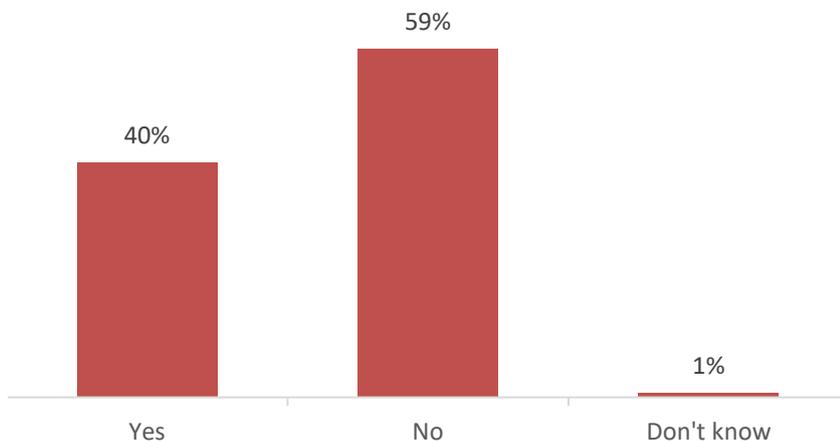
Nearly all participants agree that ethnic political parties should collaborate closer in the national level.

9. Is a third “big” political party (additionally to NLD & USDP) needed in Myanmar?



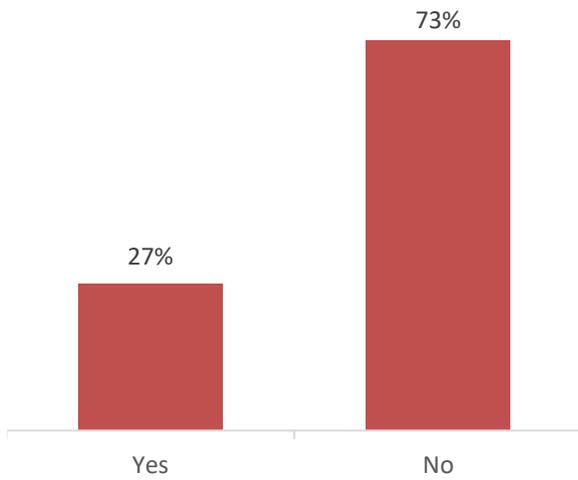
In current situation, there are two dominant parties in Myanmar. The majority of the participants perceive that there should be a third party.

10. Have you ever read the full National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) text before?



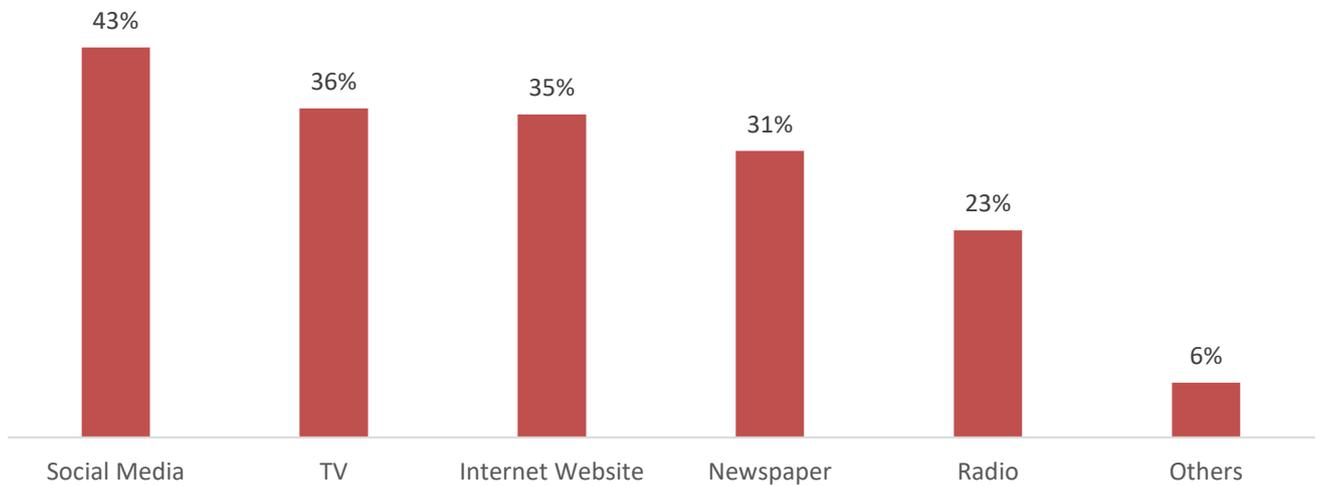
It seems that the information on current NCA is not widely spread among the public. Nearly 60 percent of the participants state that they have not read the full NCA. That could imply on the one hand that 60% haven't read the NCA because they didn't have access to it, or on the other hand that 60% haven't read it although they had access. Possibly is also a mix of both options. Hereby, this needs to be further elaborated in the follow-up conferences.

11. Have you ever read the full Panglong Agreement?



Nearly three quarters of the participants have never read the full Panglong agreement.

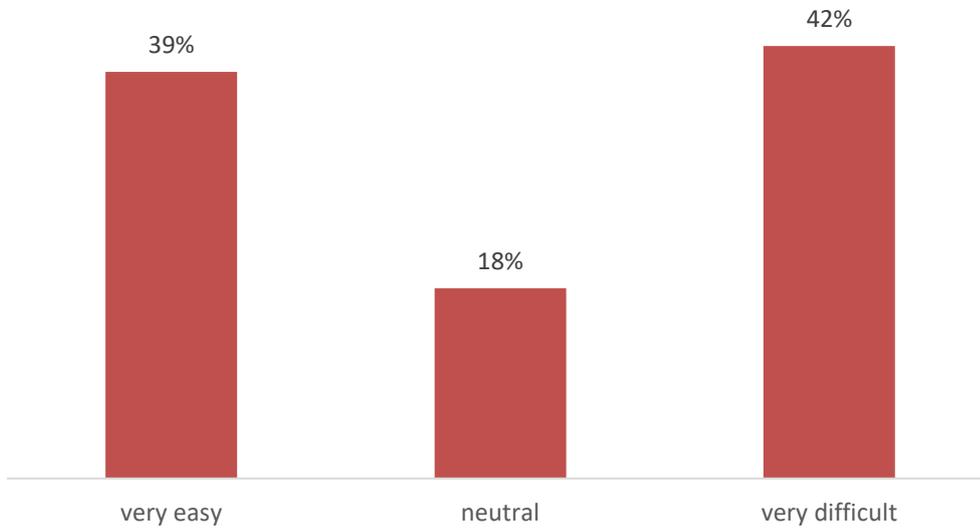
12. Which information sources do you use to stay updated on the peace process?



The above chart shows the different sources from which the public get information on the peace process. Nearly half of the participants inform themselves via social media.

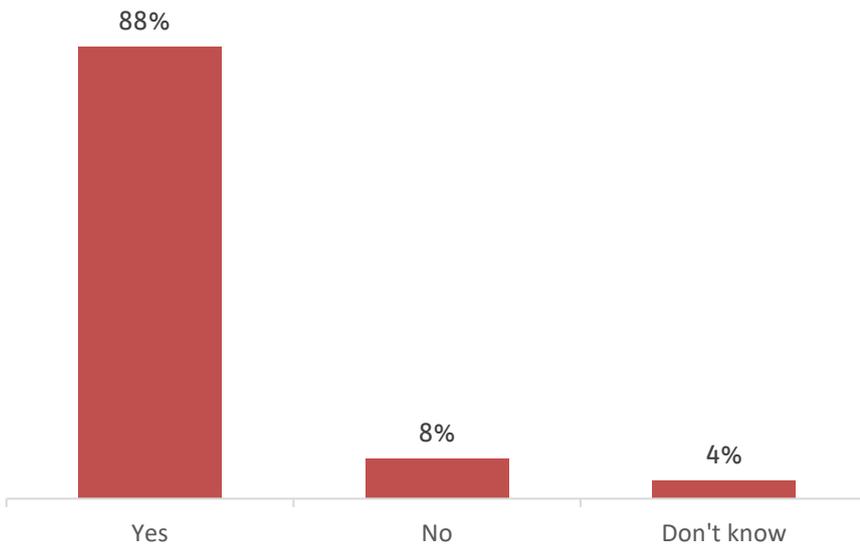
13. Do you think it is easy to stay updated in the peace process?

(very easy – very difficult)



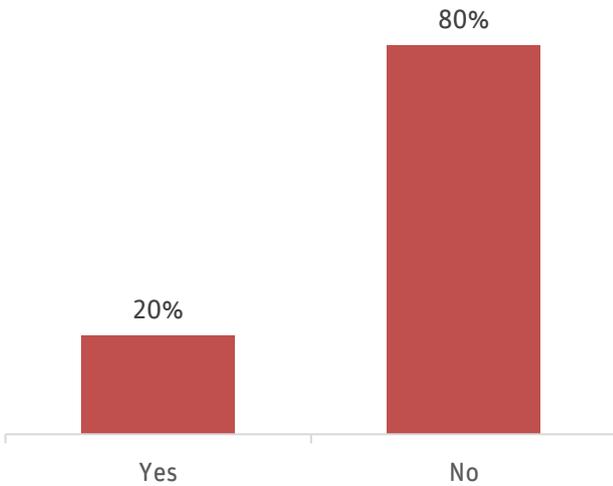
Nearly half of the participants (42%) feel it is difficult to stay up to date with the peace process.

14. Do you think it is your right to participate in one of the National Dialogues?



Most participants believe they have a right to participate in either one of the National Dialogues. These National Dialogues are, according to the current process, in three kinds: Ethnic, Regional and CSO Forum.

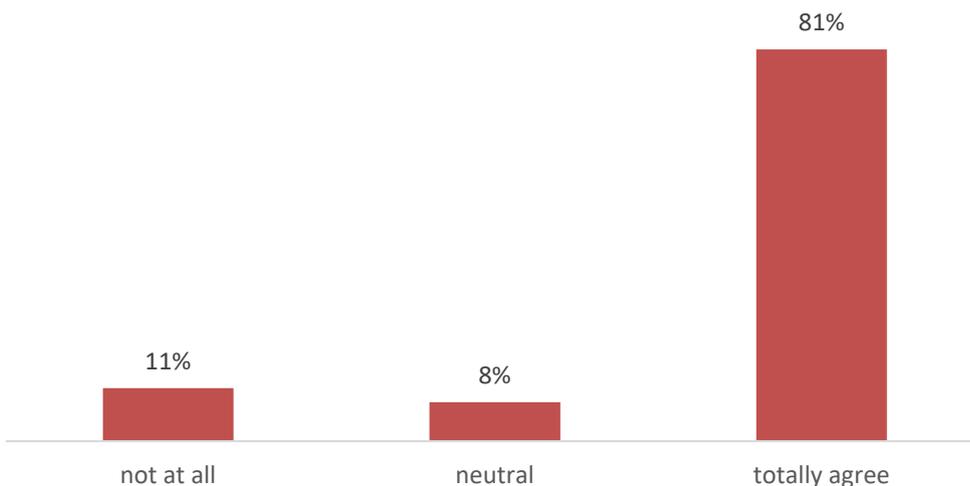
15. Have you participated in one of the National Dialogues?



Even though the participants perceive that they have a right to participate in the National Dialogues, 80% of people have not had a chance to join in one of the National Dialogues. This also overlaps with the evidence that arises from the age groups. Very few have indeed participated in one the National Dialogues – no matter to which age group they belong.

16. Do you think the political parties (currently in the parliament) should be part of the negotiations in the peace process?

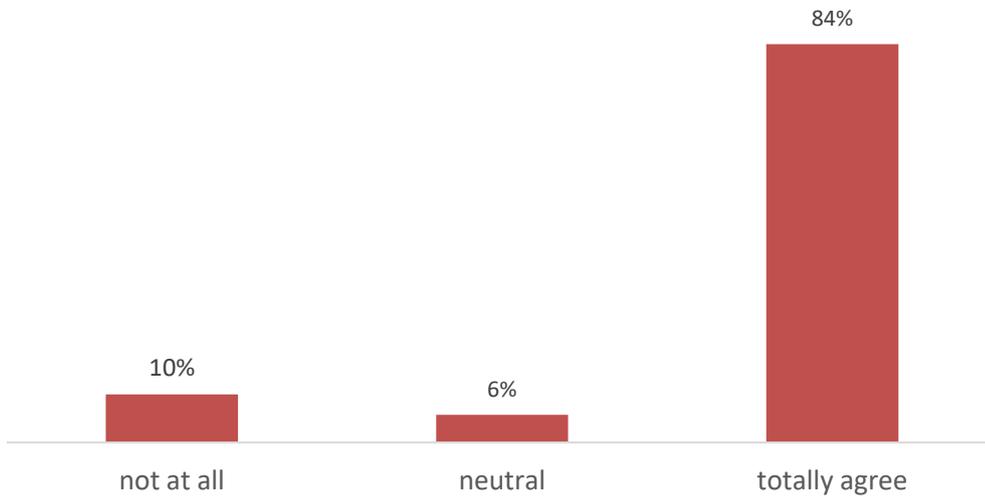
(not at all – totally agree)



Most of the participants agree that political parties in Parliament (altogether 23 parties) should be part of the negotiation in the current peace process.

17. Do you think CSOs should be part of the negotiations in the peace process?

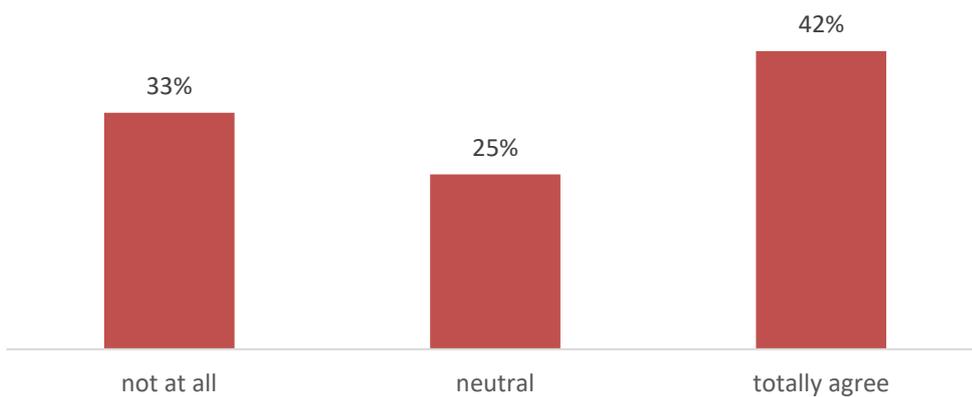
(not at all – totally agree)



Most participants fully agree on the CSOs participation on the negotiation in the current peace process.

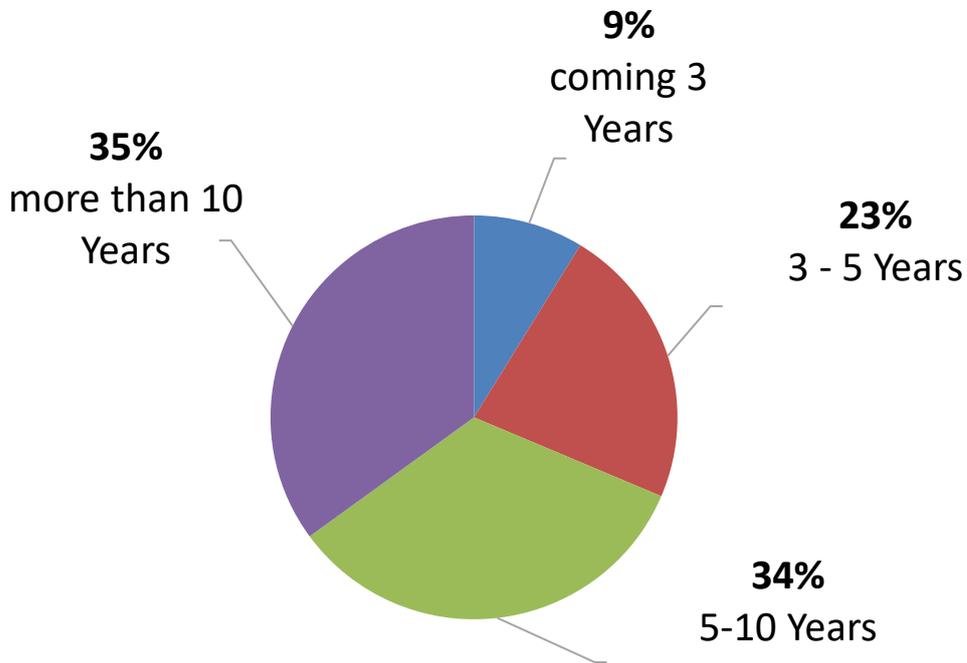
18. Do you think the current formation of UPDJC is efficient and effective?

(not at all – totally agree)



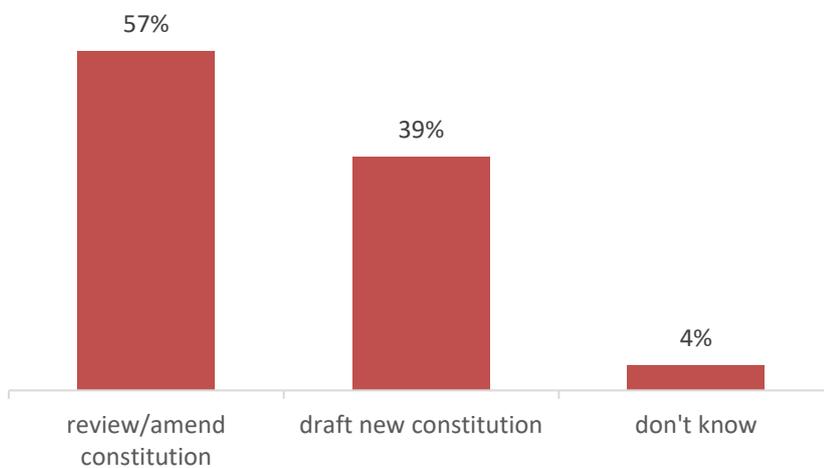
Nearly half of the participants think that the current formation of UPDJC is efficient and effective, though one-third disagrees.

19. Estimate how many years it will take for a comprehensive peace agreement in Myanmar?



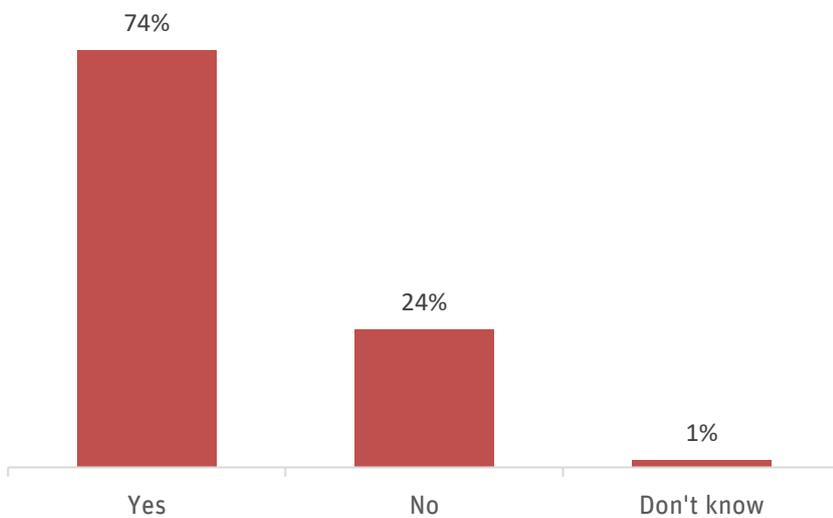
To achieve a comprehensive peace agreement in Myanmar, most of the participants do not think that it will not take long. Their estimation is likely to last more than three years.

20. Would you suggest to...



The above chart shows the public opinion on the constitutional reform Just over half (57%) of the participants suggest to review and amend the current constitution, while 39% suggest to draft a new constitution.

21. Do you think a third party international stakeholder is needed for the mediation in the peace process?



A great majority (74%) think that a third party international stakeholder is needed in the mediation of the peace process.

Others – Open Questions

1. The participants are to state, according to their opinion, the top three opportunities of Federal reform in Myanmar. Their point of view differ, however, the issues they express the most are:

Ranking of the most-mentioned answers – descending order:

- a. There are more and more active CSOs **(25)**
- b. We have an elected government **(15)**
- c. The negotiation among the EAOs and Government is taking place **(11)**

- d. At least there are Peace dialogues according to NCA **(9)**
- e. There are some more leaders in new generation **(9)**
- f. The leading political party has the prominent role **(6)**
- g. The public become more interested in politic **(5)**

2. When the participants express about the main challenges of Federal reform, the issues to be addressed are:

Ranking of the most-mentioned answers – descending order:

- a. There is still civil war **(15)**
- b. The emerging of Fundamentalism (race, religion) **(15)**
- c. The army **(14)**

- d. The problem with 2008 constitution **(11)**
- e. There is no rule of law **(9)**
- f. There is less solidarity among the ethnics **(9)**
- g. Only one party is dominant in parliament **(7)**
- h. No equality among the citizens **(7)**
- i. Every level of government is less accountable **(4)**
- j. Regional governments & regional parliaments have very limited power **(3)**

3. The main constraints on the path to democracy in Myanmar, according to the participants, are:

Ranking of the most-mentioned answers – descending order

- a. The problem with 2008 constitution **(28)**
- b. There is no equality, no rule of law **(14)**
- c. There is discrimination on race and religion **(11)**

- d. There is still a strong centralization in every level of government **(10)**
- e. Still armed conflict **(9)**
- f. A strong nationalism is blooming **(9)**
- g. Corruption **(9)**
- h. Government cannot control the army **(9)**

- i. Decision making process in Hluttaw (the two chambers do not have equal power) **(5)**
4. After all, the participants are open to give suggestion to the main actors who are involved in peace process. Their suggestions in common are as follows:
- a. The inclusiveness should be promoted.
 - b. The Chief Minister of State/ Region should be directly elected
 - c. Peace is not only the NCA between Government and EAOs. It is more about the equality and justice to all the citizens
 - d. Unless the current constitution is amended, the peace process will last long
 - e. Every agreement in peace process shall represent the local people's wish and need, it should be "people-centered"
 - f. The process should be in accordance with people's feeling and desire
 - g. The public should be in the process. (ex: referendum should be organized if there was a deadlock)
 - h. The people shall have the right to know the process and keep them update

****The survey questionnaires can be found it Appendix**

Appendix

Seminar on Federalism, Peace Process and Coordination between Political Parties and CSOs

Please read the statements below. Then click (✓) on your choice. For rating, please choose your answer from 1 (the least) to 7 (the most). If there is a question, please answer as detailed as possible.

Age -	Gender -
Organization -	Political Party <input type="checkbox"/> CSO <input type="checkbox"/> EAO <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>
(Just to click in the box. No need to express the name of your organization)	

1. How democratic would you consider Myanmar?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Autotarian ●————●————●————●————●————●————● Democracy

2. Would you prefer a division of states based on ethnicity or territory?

Ethnicity Territory Don't know

3. How important is a Federal system to resolve the conflicts in Myanmar?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all ●————●————●————●————●————●————● Very important

4. How would you rate the effectiveness of the current peace process for a Federal reform in Myanmar?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all ●————●————●————●————●————●————● Very good.

5. How capable do you think is the current government to achieve peace in Myanmar?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not capable ●————●————●————●————●————●————● Very capable

6. Which role should the military play in a federal Myanmar?
- Defense Social Welfare Home Affairs Rescue and Resettlement
- National Security Commerce Industry
- Foreign Affairs Border Affairs

7. What would you consider the current main opportunities of Federalism? (name top 3)

1.
2.
3.

8. What would you consider the current main challenges of Federalism? (name top 3)

1.
2.
3.

9. Do you think richer states/ regions should partly pay for the development of poorer states in Myanmar?

- Yes No Don't know

10. Should ethnic political parties collaborate closer on the national level?

- Yes No Don't know

11. Is a third "big" political party (additionally to NLD & USDP) needed in Myanmar?

- Yes No Don't know

12. What are the main constraints on the path to democracy in Myanmar? (name top 3)

1.
2.
3.

13. Have you ever read the full National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) text before?

- Yes No Don't know

14. Have you ever read the full Panglong Agreement?

- Yes No Don't know

15. Which information sources do you use to stay updated on the peace process?

- Newspaper Radio TV Internet Website
- Social Media Other (Please state)

16. Do you think it is easy to stay updated on the peace process?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Very easy ●————●————●————●————●————●————● Very difficult

17. Do you think it is your right to participate in one of the National Dialogues?

Yes No Don't know

18. Have you participated in one of the National Dialogues?

Yes No Don't know

19. Do you think the political parties (currently in the parliament) should be part of the negotiations in the peace process?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all ●————●————●————●————●————●————● Totally agree

20. Do you think CSOs should be part of the negotiations in the peace process?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all ●————●————●————●————●————●————● Totally agree

21. Do you think the current formation of UPDJC is efficient and effective?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all ●————●————●————●————●————●————● Totally agree

22. Estimate how many years it will take for a comprehensive peace agreement in Myanmar?

Coming 3 years 3-5 years 5-10 years more than 10 years

23. Would you suggest to

review/amend constitution draft new constitution Don't know

24. Do you think a third party international stakeholder is needed for the mediation in the peace process?

Yes No Don't know

25. Do you have any suggestion to those who are involved in peace process? If so, please express in detail.

.....

