

## UNHCR THAILAND

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### MEDIA MONITORING REPORT #136

#### PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

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##### [The peace process and ethnic education in Burma](#)

Democratic Voice of Burma, 18 October 2015

As Burma prepares for a historic 8 November election, attention is understandably focused on the outcome and, above all, on who will be the country's next president. Another key issue is how and if the peace process could move forward, following the government and some ethnic armed groups (EAG's) agreement of a contentious Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

The answers to these questions will frame what kind of country Burma can be over the coming decade, and further. In general, discussions focus on the structure of power and who will hold it. Less attention is given to questions of policy – what the next government should do, and how. In this article we explore some of the issues and policy choices in relation to education, and particularly ethnic language teaching – a topic relevant to large sections of society, especially ethnic communities.

#### ETHNIC EDUCATION AND MOTHER TONGUE-BASED TEACHING

Mother Tongue-Based (MTB) teaching means introducing children to education through using their first language (or 'mother tongue') as the medium of instruction, at least in the early years. Schooling in ethnic mother tongues is valuable in a multi-ethnic country such as Burma, for both educational reasons (because non-Burmese speaking children make better progress in school, if taught in their mother tongue), and political reasons (because of the strong link between using ethnic languages, and pride in and maintenance of ethnic identity). MTB teaching also means that the national language (Burmese) is gradually introduced at an appropriate stage.

Since at least the 1960s, ethnic nationality people in Burma have experienced a forced assimilation on part of the military-dominated state. Indeed, many ethnic stakeholders still regard the government as the military. It will take generations to overcome such fear and mistrust. Nevertheless, recent developments in education and broader political reforms in Burma have seen the beginnings of introducing MTB teaching into government schools, but as a second language and not as a medium of instruction. In some areas (e.g. parts of Mon State), this has included teaching ethnic languages *during* school hours – one of the main demands of many ethnic nationalists. This is a positive development – although many ethnic stakeholders see only as a relatively small step in the right direction.

For decades, ethnic nationality EAGs and civil society actors have resisted 'Burmanisation' through a number of strategies, including the development of education systems that preserve and reproduce their languages and cultures, under often very difficult circumstances. There is a great variety of non-state ethnic education regimes in Burma, ranging from local input into government-run schools, through 'mixed schools' (jointly run by government and ethnic stakeholders), through schools administered exclusively by EAGs, where government education staff have no role.

## Myanmar gov't, ethnic armed groups form 2 joint committees to implement ceasefire deal

Asia & Pacific Edition, 18 October 2015

YANGON, Oct. 18 (Xinhua) -- The Myanmar government and ethnic armed groups have formed two joint committees in a series of their meetings over the last two days to implement the Nationwide Ceasefire Accord (NCA) following its signing on Thursday.

The two joint committees are the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee which is to prevent recurrence of armed clashes, and the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee which is to facilitate political dialogue.

Both sides also agreed to strive for enabling other remaining armed groups which have not signed the NCA to take part in and complete the peace process.

The two sides decided to meet again in mid-November and arrange political dialogue.

The two sides are set to draw up a political framework within 60 days after the formal NCA signing and start a political dialogue within 90 days.

The Myanmar government and eight ethnic armed groups out of 15, involved in peace deal with the government, initiated the Nationwide Ceasefire Accord (NCA) in Nay Pyi Taw on Thursday, witnessed by local and international observers.

The eight groups are Kayin National Union (KNU), Kayin National Liberation Army (KNLA)-Peace Council, Pa-O Nationalities Liberation Organization (PNLO), All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), Chin National Front (CNF), Arakan Liberation Party (ALP), Democratic Kayin Buddhist Army (DKBA) and Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) / Shan State Army-South (SSA-S).

The other seven remaining groups out of the 15 which have not signed the NCA are Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), Kayinni National Progressive Party (KNPP), National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), New Mon State Party (NMSP), National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Khaplang (NSCN-K), Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF), Shan State Progressive Party/Shan State Army-North (SSPP/SSA-N) and United Wa State Army (UWSA).

## **ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT**

### Development projects will prioritise areas under ceasefire

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 16 October 2015

Development priorities will be given to areas where the ceasefire accord is in place, said Union Minister U Aung Min at a press conference after the nationwide ceasefire accord signing ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The government will provide funds for development, with assistance from international donors, as stipulated in the nationwide ceasefire accord (NCA).

Of the 15 ethnic armed groups invited by the government to ink the truce pact, eight ethnic armed groups agreed to do so. During the ceremony, both sides expressed the view that the signing was a first step in the right direction for achieving lasting peace in Myanmar.

U Aung Min insisted that development projects will also be rolled in areas inhabited by groups who did not sign the ceasefire, provided permission to do so is given by the groups. "They will not be sidelined because we are brothers living in this country. But it is up to them to determine whether or not to allow development works."

Top priorities include demining, providing food and shelter, creating jobs and providing assistance to those who wish to return home after having fled earlier conflicts, the union minister said.

He highlighted the importance of creating industrial zones featuring garment factories and agro-based industries to improve livelihoods, and to do so transparently. The government, ethnic groups and donors will work together to implement development projects in areas affected by conflict, he added.

“Following the tripartite group’s decision, donors will manage the aid themselves, without any interference from the government.”

The government will provide suggestions for possible projects, with the initial capital invested by the government.

## CENSUS AND ELECTION

### Many Voters In Rural Karen State Still Undecided

BNI, 20 October 2015

Many residents of Karen State’s Kyain Seikgyi Township remain undecided about which party to vote for in next month’s national election. The large number of parties running in their township has created confusion for some people. The fact that many of the township’s voters don’t speak Burmese fluently means that many local people won’t be fully informed about the voting process on polling day.

“Most of the eligible voters in my area are uneducated. There are many parties and candidates in our area so the local residents are feeling very confused. They don’t have any experiences in voting and they don’t know which party and candidate are good so they face difficulty in voting,” Saw Win Naing from Khale village in Kyain Seikgyi Township told KIC.

He added that as voting has been canceled in many villages in Kyain Seikgyi Township due to security reasons, many voters have lost their voting rights and he is very worried that uneducated elders will not know how to vote cast their ballot on polling day. Eleven parties will run in the upcoming election in Kyain Seikgyi Township including four Karen parties, two Mon parties, the National Development Party, the National Unity Party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). A total of 37 candidates will run in the election from this township.

“Local residents have no experience in voting. Also, there are many uneducated people and those unable to understand Burmese. These can be challenges for us,” said Saw Thein Win Soe, an Upper House candidate from the Karen People’s Party (KPP) who is running in Kyain Seikgyi Township’s Constituency No 11.

The Karen State Civil Society Network (KSCN) conducted more than 40 voter education trainings in three village tracts in the township during the run up to the election.

Based on the voter list released on September 14th, the township commission said Kyain Seikgyi Township has over 55,000 eligible voters. The majority of the township residents are ethnic Mon and Karen people.

### Voter list likely to increase in Mon State’s Ye Township

BNI, 20 October 2015

According to the latest announcement released in Mon State’s Ye Township in September, there are 155,969 eligible voters for the upcoming election and the voter list is likely to increase after migrant people from other areas have been allowed to submit their applications with a Form 3-A.

Ye Township Election Sub-Commission Office Chairman, U Nyunt Aung, confirmed the list will be released after migrant people who have been living in Ye Township for 180 days have been allowed to submit their applications.

“We can’t release the list of people that have applied with a Form 3-A yet because the lists from different places are not complete yet. That’s why we can only confirm on October 13,” U Nyunt Aung said in an interview conducted last week.

The public including migrant workers had to submit the applications to ward and village sub-commission offices in their respective areas before October 10th to have their names included on the voter list.

“Many strangers came to our village starting from last month. Their accent didn't sound like they were Mon people. They shopped at my store nearly every week,” said Naing Maung Maung, a shopkeeper from Mawtkanin Village in Ye Township.

Similarly, migrant workers have been allowed to vote in the Thanbyuzayat Township.

People from other areas can apply to include their names in the voter list at the ward and village sub-commission offices if they have resided in the area for 180 days. Civil servants need recommendation from their in-charges from respective areas and workers need recommendations from their respective employers or employer representatives. Other people need recommendations from their respective ward or village tract administrator to submit their applications.

If the applicant meets the specified criteria for being an eligible voter, he or she will be added to the voter list in line with the regulations of the respective ward or village tract sub-commission.

The ward or village tract commission will submit the applicant’s name to the township sub-commission, which will then inform the township sub-commission of the applicant’s original residential area with a Form 3-B to remove his or her name from the voter list of that area, according to Ye Township Election Sub-Commission.

A total of 110 polling stations will be opened in 40 village tracts and three towns in Ye Township, the second most populated township in Mon State. The township will elect two Upper House candidates.

### **Myanmar Gives EU Observers Access To Voting on Military Bases**

BNI, 20 October 2015

Myanmar’s military chief will allow observers from the European Union to access military bases during the Southeast Asian nation’s historic general elections next month, the head of the EU mission said Tuesday.

Access to restricted military bases, where tens of thousands of soldiers are stationed outside their home districts, is vital to ensuring that the Nov. 8 elections are transparent.

“In the meeting with the commander-in-chief [Min Aung Hlaing], he agreed that our European Union teams would have access to military installations to observe voting there, if there are not national security considerations that are so serious enough as to not allow it,” Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, the chief observer of the EU mission and vice president of the European Parliament, told a press conference in Yangon.

Lambsdorff, who is overseeing a team of more than 150 short- and long-term election observers in Myanmar, also met with other Myanmar government officials, leaders of the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) party, and representatives from civil society groups.

Long-term EU observers, who have been in the country for a week, have been deployed to regions throughout Myanmar and in the capital Naypyidaw where they are working with candidates, election officials and journalists, he said.

The EU mission, who will observe voting, ballot counting and possible dispute resolution, will remain in the country until December to develop a comprehensive picture of the overall election process, Lambsdorff said.

“It is the task of our mission to analyze the elections comprehensively,” he said, adding that observers must examine laws governing the elections, the work of the Union Election Commission (UEC), which is responsible for the polls, campaign activities, the conduct of the media, voting technicalities, and the tabulation of results at the regional and national levels.

About two days after the elections, the EU election observer mission will issue a preliminary statement with the results of its findings, Lambsdorff said.

In three or four months, the mission will publish a long final report with recommendations for all stakeholders involved in the elections, citing areas where improvements could be made for future elections, he said.

Myanmar’s last general elections held during military rule in 2010 were boycotted by the NLD and criticized as being rigged in favor of the USDP.

“We are an impartial mission,” Lambsdorff said. “We do not care who wins this election. What we care about is that it is an election that is genuine, credible and transparent.”

The United States-based Carter Center will also send a mission to observe the elections.

### [Final voter list Announced Nationwide on Nov. 2, UEC](#)

Irrawaddy, 27 October 2015

The Union Election Commission (UEC) said Tuesday that it would release its final list of eligible voters for the upcoming general election on Nov. 2, giving would-be voters just a few more days to check that they are correctly enumerated and apply for any last-minute changes to the rosters.

Voters who have previously applied for amendments, including having biographical data corrected or their names added or removed from a given voter list, should see those changes reflected in the final roster.

The Nov. 2 release is likely to be closely scrutinized by civil society groups and political parties, which have raised serious concerns about a process of voter registration and verification that began in late March with a first batch of preliminary voter list displays and has continued in stages over the course of the months since. The UEC has faced a storm of criticism as reports have mounted of widespread errors to the preliminary lists compiled by the commission.

One significant alteration to the preliminary voter lists due next week is expected to see tens of thousands of Burmese migrants' names shuffled. These migrants, either internally or abroad, would have applied to change the constituency in which they will vote, often because outdated household registration data was used to compile the initial voter lists. Migrants who can prove residency in a constituency for at least 180 days are eligible to vote in that locale.

In Rangoon's Hlaing Tharyar Township, for example, about 230,000 names were added to the voter rolls, boosting its eligible voter list from 280,000 preliminarily to 510,000 to date, UEC director Tin Tun said on Tuesday in Naypyidaw. The township, on the outskirts of the commercial capital, is industrial hub that hosts a large population of migrant workers.

Conversely, in Chin State, electoral official Lin Kyaw said that statewide the commission had received 7,483 submissions to withdraw from the voter lists the names of family members who are working abroad or have moved to other states and divisions for work.

In response to a question about to what extent the commission could ensure the final voter lists' accuracy, Tin Tun replied: "We can say only after the announcement on Nov. 2."

The UEC stressed that no alterations to the voter lists would be made after the Nov. 2 announcement. Requests for further changes can theoretically be filed with relevant election subcommissions through Nov. 1, but voters concerned about the accuracy of the lists are advised to check them as soon as possible.

Following the Nov. 2 announcement, so-called "voter registration cards" will be issued to those victims of widespread flooding earlier this year who have been left without the identity documents required to cast a ballot on election day.

### [Voting not happening in Mon State's Baw Naw Khee Village Tract](#)

BNI, 26 October 2015

Chit Min Tun — Voting will not take place in parts of Mon State's Belin Township during the upcoming election, according to the Mon State Election Sub-Commission office.

Earlier this month the Union Election Commission announced the list of townships where voting has been canceled. Baw Naw Khee Village Tract has been included on the list, ostensibly due to an alleged inability to hold a free and fair election in the area.

"Among the areas announced by the Union Election Commission, voting is cancelled in only Baw Naw Khee. The rest of the areas will have the election. We have collected the voter list from everyone. That's why the election will be held in the rest of the townships except Baw Naw Khee Village Tract," said U Hein Linn Htet, an election officer with the Mon State Election Sub-Commission Office.

According to the Mon State Election Sub-Commission Office, the election will be held on schedule in Mon State including Mawlamyaing Township, Kyaikmaraw Township, Chaungzon Township, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mudon Township, Ye Township, Thaton Township, Paung Township, and Kyaikhto Township.

Baw Naw Khee Village Tract, where voting has been canceled in territory controlled by the Karen National Union (KNU)'s Brigade's 1 and 5. As the voter list cannot be collected in the village tract up until now, the election cannot be held.

The Mon State Election Sub-Commission has stated that Mon State has over 1.47 million eligible voters. According to the Ye Township Election Sub-Commission's office, over 1,000 polling stations will be open in the state.

According to Chapter 3 of the Union Election Commission Law, the Union Election Commission has the right to postpone elections in constituencies where free and fair elections cannot be held due to natural disaster or due to the local security situation.

### [Japan donates electric lamps for polling station in Mon State](#)

BNI, 26 October 2015

I.M.N.A — the Japanese government has donated electric lamps for polling stations for next month's election in Mon State, according to the Mon State Election Sub-Commission. The lamps will be used at polling stations that don't have electricity "They last a long time after the batteries have been charged," said U Htin Kyaw, an officer with Mon State's Mawlamyaing District Election Sub-Commission.

Mon State has 919 polling stations and 334 polling stations do not have electricity, according to U Hein Linn Htet, deputy director of the Mon State Election Sub-Commission.

In the name of the people of Japan two electric lamps have been sent to the polling stations that don't have electricity, said U Htin Kyaw.

U Htein Linn Htet also said that small power generators have been arranged for all polling stations to be used in case of emergency.

He added that the arrangements have been made after negotiating with the Mon State government and respective administrative departments since electricity is crucial for not only counting ballots at the polling stations but also for ward/village commission offices that are carrying out electoral affairs.

Mon State has 467 Ward/Village Election Commission offices and some of them lack electricity.

A total of 919 special police officers have been appointed to guard the polling stations in Mon State and a special training course is being held for these newly deputized police.

Although there were about one million eligible voters in Mon State during the 2010 Election, the number has grown to 1.4 million for the 2015 Election, according to the Mon State Sub-Commission. Currently, over two million people live in Mon State.

### [Myanmar's army-backed party bullish despite NLD challenge](#)

Bangkok Post, 28 October 2015

NAY PYI TAW - With no little swagger, Myanmar's army-backed ruling party has hit the campaign trail predicting it will win 75% of votes in next month's election despite a formidable opponent in Aung San Suu Kyi and her wildly popular opposition party.

The Nov 8 elections will be the first nationwide polls in a quarter of a century to be contested by Suu Kyi's pro-democracy party.



Supporters hope that presages a decisive victory for her National League for Democracy -- if the vote is free and fair.

But her main rival, the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), is also brimming with confidence.

In Nay Pyi Taw, home to the sprawling parliament led by President Thein Sein, supporters turned out Wednesday decked in the USDP's emerald-green T-shirts and caps, waving party flags and dancing to pop music.

They applauded a ruling party that has overseen four years of sweeping reforms, earning the once-pariah nation the embrace of the international community and a flood of foreign investment.

Jobs have come along with the money, many political and social freedoms have been restored and a limited peace deal has been reached with some warring ethnic groups.

For Than Naing those factors are enough for him to renew his loyalty at the ballot box.

But the USDP, which was accused of rampant cheating in the 2010 polls, has faced claims that it is also using religion in its bid to woo voters, stirring anti-Muslim feeling in the Buddhist-majority nation.

Allegations of other dirty tricks and vote-buying are also doing the rounds as the campaign enters the home stretch.

Observers say no party -- let alone the USDP -- is likely to win 75% of the contested seats.

But under a controversial constitutional provision one quarter of seats in the lower and upper chambers are reserved for the army.

The NLD however needs around 67% of the elected portion to secure a majority.

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