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Local
Governance
Mapping

THE STATE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE: TRENDS IN AYEYARWADY



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The views expressed in this publication are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent the views of UNDP.



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UNDP MYANMAR

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Acronyms

CD	Community Dialogue
CRC	Citizen Report Card
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAO	Development Affairs Organisation
DoE	Department of Education
DoH	Department of Health
DoP	Department of Planning
DRD	Department of Rural Development
DTA	Deputy Township Administrator
FSP	Frontline Service Provider
GAD	General Administration Department
GOM	Government of Myanmar
LGM	Local Governance Mapping
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoNPED	Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development
MSR	Myanmar Survey Research
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLD	National League for Democracy
NUP	National Unity Party
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RHC	Rural Health Centre
SLRD	Settlements and Land Records Department
SRHC	Sub-Rural Health Centre
TA	Township Administrator
TDSC	Township Development Support Committee
TEO	Township Education Officer
TLMC	Township (Farm) Land Management Committee
THO	Township Health Officer
TDAC	Township Development Affairs Committee
TMC	Township Management Committee
TMO	Township Medical Officer
TPIC	Township Planning and Implementation Committee
TPO	Township Planning Officer
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USDP	Union Solidarity Development Party
VC	Village Clerk
VHC	Village Health Committee
VT	Village tract
VIA	Village Tract Administrator
VT/WDSC	Village Tract / Ward Development Support Committee
WA	Ward Administrator



Executive Summary

This report outlines the results of the Local Governance Mapping conducted by UNDP in Ayeyarwady Region in May 2014. Based on the perceptions of the people and local governance actors, the mapping has tried to capture some key aspects of the current dynamics of governance at the frontline of state-citizen interaction and focuses in its analysis on participation in public sector planning, access to some basic services and accountability in local governance.

The results are drawn from three townships, which were selected as they represent the various geographic and economic realities within Ayeyarwady Region. Each has a large number of wards/village tracts and large populations. At the same time, they also capture some of the diversity across the Region's 26 townships. Located in the heart of the Irrawaddy delta, Labutta is the least accessible of the three townships, with many of its villages connected by water transportation only. Population density is much lower in Zalun, which is situated in a low-lying area prone to flooding, though transport connections to the Region capital and Yangon are relatively good. Patheingyi township is co-located with the regional and district hubs and is the most urban of the townships, hosting the seat of the Region Government.

The mapping finds that the resilience, experience and capacity developed by communities and local governance actors in response to Cyclone Nargis of 2008 has left them comparatively well-placed to implement local governance reforms. However, it also identifies a number of areas that can be the focus of further reforms in order to optimise the opportunities they offer to enhance people's participation and improve responsiveness to local development needs.

Ayeyarwady Region

Home to around 6.1 million inhabitants, Ayeyarwady Region is among the three most populous regions in Myanmar, along with Mandalay and Yangon. In terms of territory, with 35,000 km², it ranks only as tenth-largest by surface area among Myanmar's 14 States and Regions. Ayeyarwady covers the fertile, low-lying and densely-populated areas also known as the Irrawaddy Delta. Myanmar was once the main rice producer in Asia, and Ayeyarwady Region has been the centre of the country's rice production for over a century. Underdeveloped transport and storage infrastructure, and low agricultural productivity have caused a relative decline of this market position in recent decades.

On 2 May 2008, Ayeyarwady was severely impacted by Cyclone Nargis, one of the worst natural disasters in Myanmar's history with 138,000 lives lost¹ and serious damage inflicted on the Region's infrastructure. The delta's climatic vulnerability means that some areas of Ayeyarwady remain prone to flooding, posing a significant risk to farmers and fisherman, many of whom are still rebuilding their livelihoods in the wake of Nargis. The devastation wreaked has fundamentally shaped the recent development trajectory of Ayeyarwady Region, and continues to have implications for the dynamics of local governance.

1. Deaths for the entire affected delta area. "Irrawaddy Delta: Five years after Cyclone Nargis" Global Post, 15 July 2013.

The legacy of Cyclone Nargis, and the attention drawn to the vulnerability of the region to natural disasters (particularly flooding) has influenced the development priorities of the Region's government. The resilience developed from the reconstruction effort has placed the Region in a unique position, with organisational experience and capacity garnered by actors in government, civil society and interest groups as they responded to the urgent needs from communities in the aftermath of the disaster. In many respects, this has left Ayeeyarwady Region comparatively better-placed to implement the recent reforms designed to drive people's participation in governance and improve responsiveness in the delivery of public services.

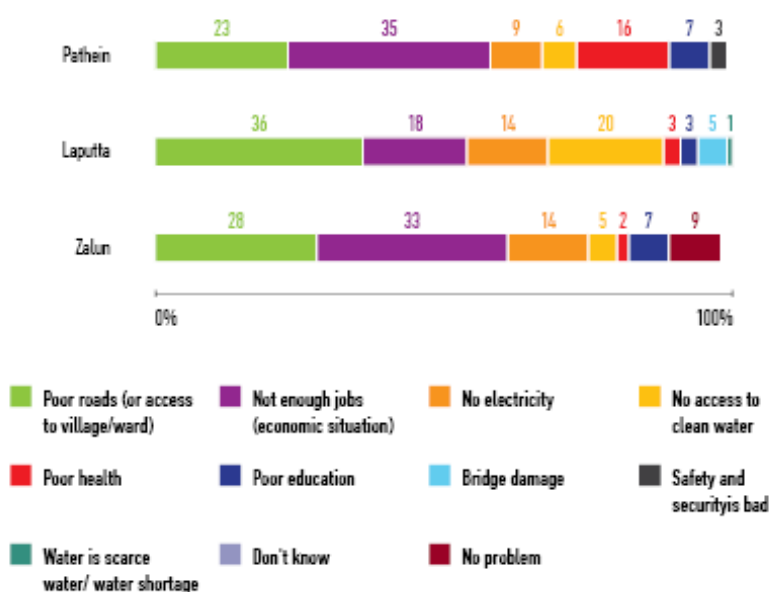
Current development challenges in selected townships

Six years on from Nargis, 288 people across six (rural) village tracts or (urban) wards were asked by the mapping team to reflect upon current developmental challenges in their respective townships. Overall, urban residents were mostly concerned with poor roads (41%), while rural dwellers cited a lack of jobs (28%) as the primary problem in their village tracts. Across townships, more respondents in remote Labutta cited poor roads as the main challenge (36%), while a shortfall of jobs emerged as the most critical issue for most in the more accessible townships of Pathein (35%) and Zalun (33%). Dialogues held at the community level confirmed the extent to which these priorities were contingent on local conditions and needs. However, a few issues were recurrent during these discussions, namely: A lack of access to electricity and a need for repairs of roads and bridges. In both village tracts in flood-prone Zalun, the community noted that insufficient supply of drinking water was an important challenge.

Identifying "the most important problems in the village tract/ward"

Source: Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeeyarwady Region, May 2014.

n = 288, 96 respondents per township



Developmental planning and participation

Respondents in Ayeeyarwady Region are keenly aware of the development challenges faced by their townships, and had a clear idea of the needs they wanted to be met in the coming years. Of interest then is the extent to which existing decision-making processes and governance institutions in place allow for their suggestions and ideas to be factored into the development planning for their local area, and for the views of the people to be reflected.

At the sub-national level, there are emerging opportunities for local actors to influence the planning process and decision-making for public-sector investments. There are new practices taking place for “participatory planning,” such as the consultation of local communities and interest groups for their suggestions and priorities for local development. This is happening at the township level in Ayeeyarwady through formal institutions such as the Township Planning and Implementation Committee (TPIC), which acts as a technical committee for gathering the information and data required for strategic planning.

For strategic planning, the TPICs are relatively active in townships across the Region - which is not necessarily the case in other States/Regions in the country, where the committee is sometimes dormant or not a relevant factor in strategic planning.² In Patheingyi, the TPIC is involved in providing information to and approving the local priorities compiled by the Department of Planning, and continues to be an active mechanism for gathering information and suggestions from interest groups from the business sector and the community.

Setting priorities for development funds

A number of discretionary funds exist, where needs-based proposals are prepared at the township level for submission to and approval by the State/Region Government.³ Typically, this process should be handled by the Township Management Committee (TMC), an executive body of township managers, which is obliged to consult with the Township Development Support Committee (TDSC), a consultative committee with members elected from sector interest groups to better reflect the priorities of communities.

What emerges across Ayeeyarwady townships is that the TMC is not always the driving entity for this process - despite its executive responsibility to do so. Rather, there are examples of the TDSC actually leading the formation of priorities for proposals related to available development funding. The interpretation by the committees of their role is contingent on local personality dynamics, but also a lack of clarity among members on objectives. Non-government members of the TDSC professed to be unclear on their responsibilities and the standard operating procedures that govern the committees’ tasks, and none had received any training.

2. Insights from participants at workshop to coordinate donor co-ordination on local governance convened by UNDP and Action Aid, February 2014. This was also evident in Mon and Chin States from the pilot phase of the local governance mapping.

3. For instance, a fund from the Department of Rural Development and the Ministry of Border Affairs fund for ethnic minorities. See Nixon, Hamish and Joeline, Cindy, Fiscal Decentralisation in Myanmar: Towards a Roadmap for Reform. Myanmar Development Resource Institute - Centre for Economic and Social Development (MDRI-CESD) and the Asia Foundation, July 2014.

Internal coordination and information flow for developmental planning

Several factors may have bearing on effective information-sharing for planning purposes. A relatively large number of township departments (54 in Patheingyi, and over 30 in Labutta and Zalun) may render the current composition of the TMC to be limiting in the task of cross-departmental consultation. This means that alternative forums (i.e. existing inter-department meetings) are being utilised for co-ordination with sector departments and wider consultation. But in practice, this is not always efficient.

To address the challenge of co-ordination, the Township Administrator in Labutta has formed specific committees for the eight “poverty reducing” areas, each of which is responsible for planning and implementation of projects which are funded by PRF.⁴ An annual planning meeting for the PRF fund allocation takes place in the township attended by all eight committees and various stakeholders from the consultative committees and other departments.

Processes for participatory planning

While planning activities in Ayeeyarwady related to strategic plans and discretionary development funds have their distinctive processes and institutions, there is some effort across both to deepen “participatory planning.” In discussing how information was gathered to reflect people’s priorities for strategic planning, one Township Planning Officer spoke of how Village Tract Administrators (VTAs)⁵ were now asked to prepare proposals prioritising local needs. Between the TMC and the TPIC (both of which are chaired by the Township Administrator), information on village-level priorities is shared.

The consultative committees such as the TDSC also play a “representative” function: members have been elected/selected to represent the interests of their sector (i.e. business, social, economic), and their ability to be effective is contingent on wider consultation with their constituents. In the case of Zalun, vocal participation from the “rice lobby” (as one interlocutor referred to it) appears to be driving the proactive nature of the TDSC and their leading role in setting priorities for available development funding. “We can work hand in hand with farmers (towards development),” notes one TDSC member. This case represents the ability of capable actors to be able to influence decisionmaking - somewhat beyond their consultative remit - while at the same time, highlights potential challenges for those representatives who lack the capacity or resources to do so as well as the risk of such forums being captured by influential elites.

The needs and perspectives of women are not evidently reflected in planning institutions or processes in some Ayeeyarwady townships on two fronts. Women make up the minority of managers who are obliged to attend inter-departmental meeting and serve as members of various committees in all three townships: In Labutta, females comprise just 15 percent of department heads. And there was no evidence of women having been elected to any of the township consultative committees, suggesting that without adequate consultation from current members, their needs and priorities unlikely to be reflected in a meaningful way.

4. These are: 1) infrastructure, 2) water supply, 3) transport, 4) bridges, 5) education, 6) health, 7) security and 8) agriculture.

5. Throughout the report, “VTAs” is used as a short form for Village Tract/Ward Administrators (“VT/WAs”), as the functions and mandate are essentially identical as per the 2012 Ward and Village Tract Law. Except where a difference is explicitly mentioned, VTAs should therefore be read as for both Village Tract and Ward Administrators.

Municipal affairs

The Development Affairs Organisation (DAO) in every township falls directly under the responsibility of the State or Region Minister for Development Affairs, and is responsible for delivering a range of urban services (including water and sanitation). It is a decentralised, revenue-generating department, which receives funds from the Region government budget and is accountable to the Chief Minister of the Region Government.⁶

To provide advisory support to the DAO, a Township Development Affairs Committee (TDAC) - *See Pan* has been set up. It comprises “persons popularly elected from among local people and social and economic organisations.” In practice however, the TDAC is a hybrid committee that plays both a technical and consultative role to support municipal service delivery. The TDAC in Ayeyarwady townships is emerging as an actor for decision-making on matters related to municipal revenues and taxes on households, shops and licenses, and ultimately as an approving body in municipal budget planning. In addition, the TDAC functions as a broker between citizens and the DAO in the development of municipal road works.

To overcome resource constraints, a cost-sharing model for financing local infrastructure is being widely applied in both Patheingyi and Zalun municipalities, where citizens and the DAO have split the cost of building or upgrading roads in the townships. According to one TDAC member, the DAO would typically refund 50 percent of the cost incurred to the community for construction. Approximately 100 road-related activities have been undertaken in this way.

People's participation in planning

Measures to include the ideas and suggestions of communities have been integrated into the planning process and allocation of decentralised funds. Most apparently, this is reflected in the participation of community elders and representatives of social and economic sector groups in the new consultative committees such as the TDSC - despite concerns as to the extent to which these can be broadly representative of township interests.

Emerging from discussions with committee members and government staff alike is a lack of clarity on the *de jure* functions of the TDSC, whose formal role is limited to an advisory one, intended to support the TMC.⁷ The mode of elections of representatives to the various bodies has also been unclear and inconsistent, and non-transparent at times. TDSCs were established across Ayeyarwady townships in 2013, though the selection process for sector representatives varied in each case. Clarity on the role of the TDSC as a consultative sounding board and a credible election process are critical to the committee's legitimacy. This is being challenged by stakeholders in some townships, in light of the processes deployed for elections.

Other tools being utilised for “bottom-up” planning include proposals outlining development priorities from the village tract/ward level and attendance at regular meetings by the elected VTA, village leaders or ‘10/100 Household Heads’. Around half (53%) of the 288 respondents

6. Bissinger, Jared and Maung Maung, Linn. *Subnational Government and Business in Myanmar*. Subnational governance in Myanmar Discussion Papers, Centre for Economic and Social Development (MDRI-CESD), December 2013.

7. Notification No 27/2013, “Assignment of duties for formation of township and ward/village tract development support committee.” The President's Office, 26 February 2013.

to the community-level survey have participated at such a meeting in Ayeyarwady, rising to 61 percent in rural areas. Women (44%) were less likely to have participated than men (63%). Though they might have attended such meetings, fewer respondents have been 'formally' invited to meetings specifically related to new development projects or problems in the village. This includes only 23 percent overall and 19 percent of women against 27 percent of men. This suggests potential for wider inclusion of the community in consultations related to local development projects, and more attention to the participation of women in particular.

Basic service delivery

The President, as the Chief Executive of the Myanmar Government, has instructed government agents to adopt a more "people-oriented" approach in carrying out their roles and implementing their mandates. Relevant to this is the extent to which the reforms are shifting expectations of people with respect to basic services, and the roles and perceptions of service providers in the provision of these.

In Ayeyarwady, CSOs are significant contributors to the provision of education and health services in some townships. The emergency response to Cyclone Nargis has been attributed for the mobilisation and growth of civil society service providers in the social sector in Ayeyarwady Region, with many organisations geared towards supplementing healthcare services or providing livelihoods support for citizens.

Perceptions of improvement in basic service delivery

People in Myanmar, especially in rural areas, still expect rather little from their government in terms of service delivery. Myanmar for a long time has had one of the lowest government expenditures for the social sector anywhere in the world, though national-level spending on social sectors has risen in the past few years. This rise has led to more socio-economic investment and improved service delivery at the township level through increased sector spending and "poverty-reducing" projects. In a context where the majority of people remain underserved for basic infrastructure and local services, respondents were asked about their perceptions of improvements.

Primary healthcare: Over half of all respondents to the community survey perceive health services to have improved in their ward/village tract, though the impact is not equally felt across the townships - only 16 percent of Labutta respondents noted improvements, while 75 percent reported that healthcare services stayed "more or less the same". Eighty-five percent of respondents in Zalun observed improvements. Such divergence of opinion is likely related to the development of specific facilities at the local level - 46 percent of all respondents attribute improvements to the construction or renovation of a health facility, while 36 percent cite the improved attitudes of healthcare staff. Twenty-six percent indicate reduced costs for consultations and drugs a significant improvement.

Primary education: The majority - 76 percent of respondents - perceive primary education services to have improved in their ward/ village tract in the past three years, most evidently in Zalun (83%) and Pathein (81%). In Labutta, around a third of respondents (35%) thought it was "more or less the same". Heightened perceptions of improvements at the community level are likely related to visibility of infrastructure developments - 86 percent of respondents attribute improvements to the construction or renovation of a new primary school, better maintenance or more classrooms/toilets.

Drinking water: Most respondents (66%) agreed that the provision of clean drinking water has stayed more or less the same, in the past three years. Respondents in Patheingyi appeared most ambivalent: 22 percent perceived improvements in this area, while 16 percent thought that provision of clean drinking water in that township had worsened in the last three years. Again, such perceptions are likely related to local area investments in water supply - 56 percent of respondents who observed improvements attributed this to the installation of taps and pumps.

Information, transparency and accountability

People have not historically relied on government assistance, and are used to addressing problems and everyday challenges by themselves at the community level. Their attitudes to and expectations of basic services are understandably shaped by these experiences. This is also the case when considering accountability, which too remains a relatively nascent vis-à-vis local governance in Ayeeyarwady.

People's access to information

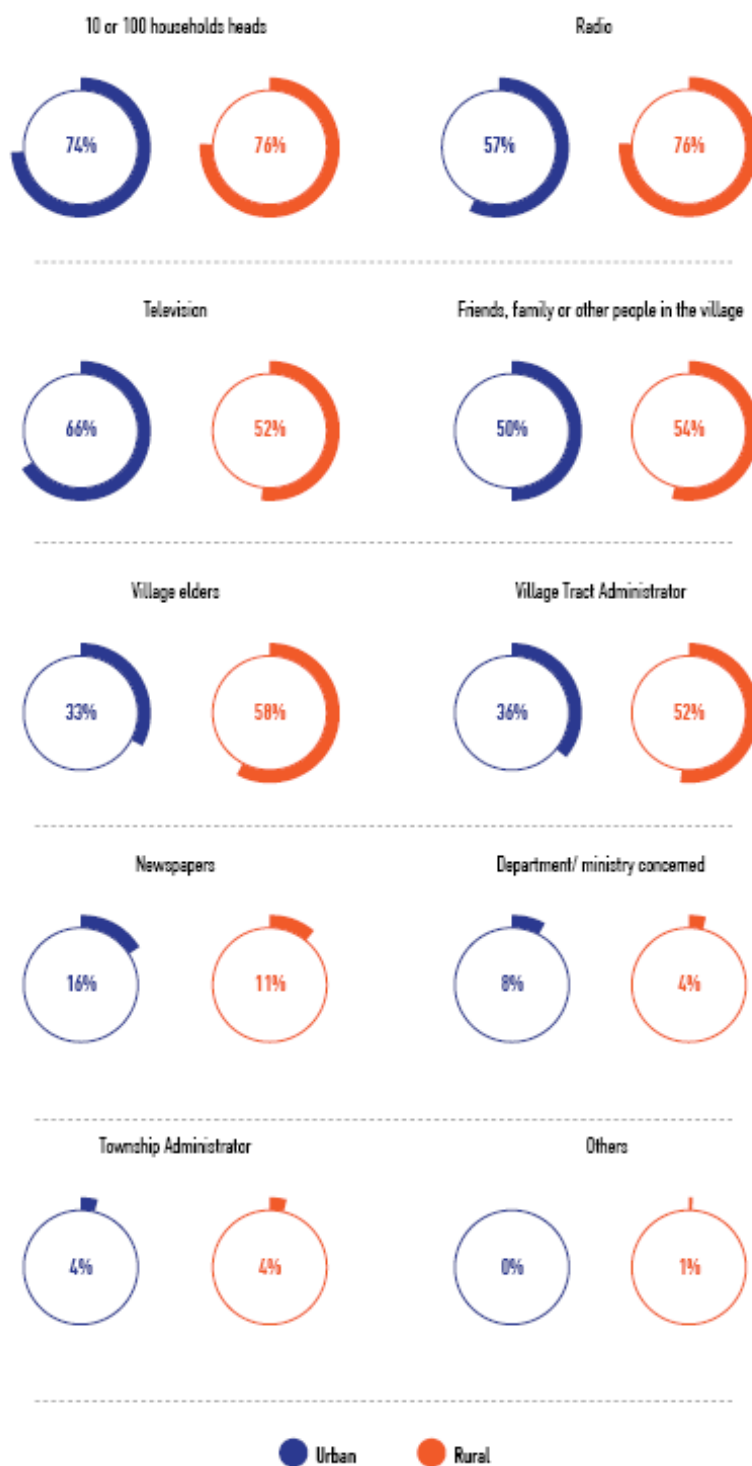
Critical to the ability of people to be able to navigate the disputes among themselves and with state authorities, and to seek some form of "answerability" (or responsiveness to complaints, queries and requests), is their access to information on rules and regulations, services and local governance arrangements.

In Ayeeyarwady Region, the 10/100 Household Head remains the primary source of government-related information for 75 percent of all respondents. This indicates that in rural areas, governance-related communication is mainly local, personal and verbal, rather than centralised and in written form, at least when it comes to the end users, the ordinary citizens. But contradictory perceptions of the VTA and the people indicate that there may be a potential bottleneck related to access to information. Whereas five of the six VTAs thought that the Township Administration was informing citizens sufficiently well about plans for new development projects (such as schools, roads, health facilities) in their ward/village tract, 72 percent of community survey respondents did not think they were receiving enough information of this nature, though this varied by ward/village tract. This is indicative of an "information disconnect" that is taking place in Ayeeyarwady townships from the VTA down to the 10/100 Household Heads.

There is some hesitation among township management with respect to the media in Ayeeyarwady, as reflected by concerns of one official that "[...] government employees have to be careful, as there is some finger-pointing in journals and media." As a corollary, a civil society representative posited that a lack of information sharing is actually preventing balanced media coverage. "In our township, the media is not invited to public meetings so it is hard to know or inform the public on what is really happening." This is pertinent in light of a high reliance (indicated by community respondents) on the media for news on government policies, laws and directives: 76 percent are dependent on the radio in rural areas and 66 percent on television in the urban areas.

If there are new laws or directives from the government, how would you usually learn about them?

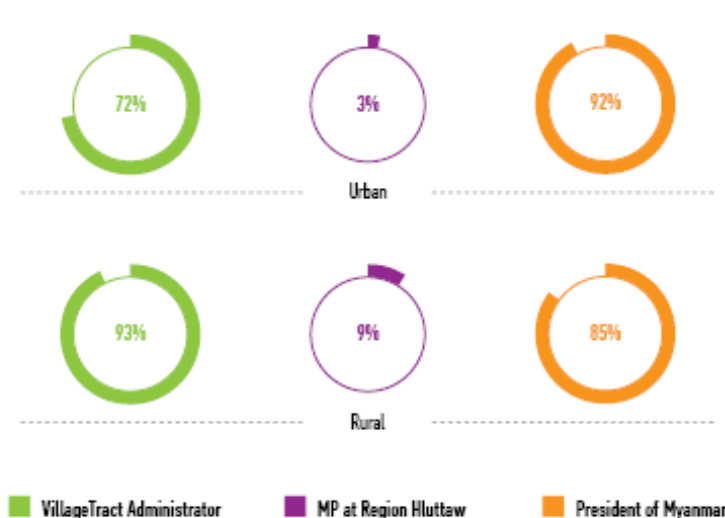
Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.



People's awareness of local governance duty-bearers and mechanisms

In a context where access to information can be challenging, to what extent are people also cognisant of the current status of local governance reforms, and the implications for their rights and livelihoods? The reforms with the most immediate implications for communities relate to a new expectation inferred on the VTA as an elected representative, and the creation of new village tract/ward and township-level committees with "persons popularly elected from among local people and social and economic organisations,"⁸ which act as a sounding board for administrators in setting local development priorities.

Awareness among constituents of their local representative is high - 72% of respondents could name their elected Ward Administrator in urban areas as could 93 percent of rural residents with respect to their Village Tract Administrators, potentially indicating a high degree of exposure and access. However, very few people were able to name the elected representative for their constituency in the Region Hluttaw, indicating that it was not the fact of an election having taken place that was the reason for the high degree of familiarity with their respective VTAs. Also, when asked of their perceptions on the role of the VTA, people were more familiar with the traditional roles associated with this function, rather than with the newly-created representative dimension of that office. Most respondents (54%) perceived the conflict mediation role of the VTA as among the most important function, while 38 percent perceived the task of ensuring peace and security in the ward/village to be important. Given the historical function of VTAs over the past century, as well as the legal mandate enshrined in the *Ward and Village Tract Law*, it does not come as a surprise that expectations related to the "law and order" role of the VTA are more embedded among communities in Ayeyarwady townships compared with the still tenuous and uncertain "representative" role of the VTA, following their recent election.



Knowledge of names of elected representatives, urban-rural breakdown

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.

8. Notification No 27/2013, "Assignment of duties for formation of township and ward/ village tract development support committee. The President's Office, 26 February 2013.

There was an expectation among 37% of respondents, however, that the VTA elevates local problems to the township administration, which may be reflective of an emerging expectation by constituents of their newly-elected representatives. This may be considered low compared with localities that have experienced democratic local self-government in the past. But in Myanmar, these trends should be seen as encouraging, given the often low expectations from the revised 2012 *Ward and Village Tract Law* in terms of democratisation and better representation.

To what extent are people aware of the new consultative bodies? Across the three townships, only 2 percent of people were aware of new consultative committees at the township level. While this is in part a function of how recently these entities were established, it is also indicative of low awareness as to the new mechanisms emerging for interest groups to represent their interests and influence local decision-making. In Ayeyarwady Region, this has a bearing on the extent to which these committees can be broadly representative during development planning.

Civil society

Mechanisms for social accountability are poorly developed. Civil Society Organisations (CSO) have played and continue to play a very constrained role in Myanmar to date. After decades of exclusion, the space for CSOs to participate in these activities is slowly emerging. Arguably, this is happening faster in Ayeyarwady Region than in other State and Regions across the country, where CSOs emerged in response to the devastation wreaked by Cyclone Nargis, developing capacity and experience, and building relationships with communities and the administration.

Many CSOs in Ayeyarwady are generally active and vocal, and already play a role in public-sector delivery of health and education services as members of the township consultative committees. This is positive, and indicates growing capacity for CSO representatives to play a potential advocacy role in local governance. One innovative channel for developing civil society's capacity for consultation, input and social accountability is the establishment of a formal forum for CSO representatives to meet with Region Government on a regular basis. Regional GAD officials described a meeting that is held every three months, where representatives of the region government meet with CSOs to discuss issues. One CSO representative noted that these are being held in the style of a "Speaker's Corner" (*Hit Taing*), supposedly the only one in the country where CSOs can speak publicly on issues to receive due consideration from government authorities.⁹

What other space is emerging at the level of the community, where people can influence local decision-making and have a voice? Composed of members from both government staff and members of the community, both Village Health Committees and Parent Teacher Associations could be described as hybrid organisations that transverse civil society and the public sector. In Ayeyarwady, these bodies were activated in response to Nargis to support the reconstruction effort, and have gained experience and capacity to support healthcare and education services and manage funds at the local level in a manner and to a degree not seen in other States and Regions.

⁹ Region GAD Office.

It is essential that state bodies and non-governmental groups interact in a cooperative manner in such bodies, for information sharing, and to identify scope for joint collaborative action. This is most critical in relation to humanitarian assistance and disaster preparedness, which remains a key policy priority in Ayeyarwady Region, given its vulnerability to climactic events. However, it also has clear benefits for democratic governance if state officials and non-governmental groups are familiar with each other's capacities, expectations and approaches, which may contribute to governance effectiveness and ultimately better outcomes for ordinary citizens.

Conclusions

Capacity development challenges remain a key impediment to more effective use of the newly created mechanisms and institutions. In many cases, office holders, committee members and the general public are unclear about roles and mandates, and what is expected of them. There was also no evidence of elected committee members having received specific training related to their work. This could be addressed by a concerted effort to identify capacity shortfalls, and conduct capacity building as part of a longer-term institution building strategy, with clear goals and parameters, rather than on an ad hoc basis.

There are significant institutional shortcomings in relation to information, coordination, and communication. Understandably, these "soft skills" of local governance will take longer to emerge than the mere establishment of institutions and issuance of rules and directives. However, only a conscious and focused effort will be able to address these shortfalls.

The role of women as local governance actors, or rather the almost complete absence of them, is one of the key observations that can be drawn from the study. Women make up low numbers of decision-making officials at the local government level in townships; only 8 have been elected as VTAs, and none on township consultative bodies. Without adequate consultation from current office holders and members, women's needs and priorities are unlikely to be reflected in a meaningful way. In addition, the study indicates that there is scope for improving the equality of opportunity for women to participate in development planning.

Perceptions from the community indicate that there is recognition of socio-economic investments trickling down to the village level - primarily in education, followed by healthcare and drinking water. Yet, instructions and directives cannot be equated with service delivery in a democratic governance context. The mapping indicates that the attitudinal changes that will be required to transform governance from control and top-down administration to governance that is more participatory and responsive have yet to take root at the local level in Ayeyarwady Region.

Institutional reform often happens through experimentation and by allowing a degree of local improvisation, and the experience of Ayeyarwady suggests that this is an effective approach. Revival of the PTAs and VHCs as community-level bodies for influencing and supporting service delivery is one example. Meanwhile, urban development is one area where the potential implications of further decentralisation can be observed. Municipal authorities are experimenting with cost-sharing models, directly engaging and negotiating with citizens to drive development of the municipal road infrastructure in a bid to overcome resource constraints. It will be important to continue conducting frank (self-) assessments of how well newly created institutions have worked, and adjust accordingly.

In Ayeyarwady, there are examples of gradual administrative decentralisation that may be taking place in some sector areas. One major change for the healthcare planning process is in the procurement of medical supplies and equipment at the Region level, with input from Ayeyarwady's 26 townships. New initiatives are also being trialled to overcome challenges pertaining to access and communications. A key mechanism of primary education administration in Ayeyarwady Region is the use of "school cluster families". Thus, there are a number of innovative techniques which may offer practical solutions also to other States and Regions. There is however no systematic effort of collecting and analysing such innovations and lessons learnt on behalf of the authorities themselves and the potential for greater gains through upscaling and systematising such innovations is therefore not fully used.

The surveys have indicated that in rural areas governance-related communication is mainly local, personal and verbal, rather than centralised and in written form, at least when it comes to the end users, the ordinary citizens. The 10/100 Household Head remains the primary source of such information, and the role and capacities of these local leaders deserve a closer look. Local government staff has yet to be introduced to using the media more effectively to share information with the public.

The fact that VTAs have been appointed following an election, does not in itself amount to the democratisation of local government. However, what matters for local institutions and mechanisms is not only the legal mandate of institutions but also the perceived role, the community expectation and the level of personal initiative that results from the fact that office holders are now elected. This appears to be gradually shifting in Ayeyarwady townships, as evidenced from the emphasis on information sharing.

It seems that sometimes, and for the time being, formal consultative bodies do not yet enjoy much legitimacy, as they are little known, not very representative and do not really have much impact. Questions also remain as to the credibility of the election processes in place. Formal mechanisms for grievance redressal are also being questioned for their effectiveness - particularly for land disputes, where a high number continue to be elevated up to and beyond the township - and for lack of transparency and popular representation of these bodies.

After decades of exclusion, the space for CSOs to evolve as local governance actors - beyond humanitarian and social welfare support - is slowly emerging. In addition, formal space is being created for CSOs to engage with government and to take on an advocacy role. Still, CSO representatives cite limited awareness of the "rules of the game" - the formal and informal institutions and processes of local governance - as a key barrier to developing their social accountability capacity. This is an area where capacity building and the development of peer networks could deliver gains very quickly.



1. Introduction

With the Bay of Bengal to the west and the Andaman Sea to south, the Ayeyarwady Region is at the delta of its namesake river. Bordered by Rakhine State and Bago Region to the north, and with Yangon Region to the east, it covers a sprawling, fertile area of around 35,963 square kilometres (km²). It is one of Myanmar's most populous States and Regions, with 6.1 million people - comprising 12% of the national population.¹⁰ Ayeyarwady Region has historically been a major agricultural producer for Myanmar, and despite occupying just 5 percent of national land, it is known as the country's rice bowl, granary and fisheries hub. Agriculture contributed some 47% to the region's GDP in 2013, of which 31% was driven by crop production and 15.8% by the fisheries sector.¹¹

The region faces specific geographical and climatic challenges to basic local service delivery. Transportation of supplies and people through the delta waterways and communication with the more remote villages are a major challenge for public sector services such as healthcare delivery and the management of primary schools. Despite the wide availability of water, scarcity of clean drinkingwater can be a problem for Ayeyarwady residents during the dry season.

This report outlines the results of the Local Governance Mapping conducted by the UNDP in Ayeyarwady Region in May of 2014 and draws from a variety of other relevant and available sources. Based on the perceptions of the people and local governance actors, the mapping has captured the current dynamics of governance at the frontline of state-citizen interaction and analyses participation in planning, access to basic services and accountability with respect to local governance. The report thus describes the way in which local governance processes and mechanisms are functioning for developmental planning and participation; people's access to basic services; and emerging factors of institutional and social accountability. This analysis has been conducted on the basis of empirical data collected from three townships - Labutta, Patheingyi and Zalun - which were selected as they represent the various geographic and economic realities within Ayeyarwady Region.

While the focus of the study is on the local level of governance, the roles of the Region and Union government authorities and their relationships with the lower levels in a broader governance context are also relevant, and to some extent, reflected upon in this analysis.

In this large, populous, agricultural Region, the introduction of certain local governance reforms has led to the establishment of new mechanisms and processes to improve responsiveness of public service providers and the township administration to the needs of communities. Decentralisation to the township - the front line of public service delivery in the country - has been limited in Myanmar, but general policy commitments towards empowering that level of government administration have been made and there are new decentralised funds available for local development. Decisions can now be made on the disbursement of this funding at the sub-national level, and with that, there are opportunities to influence development priorities at the township level and below.

10. Summary of the Provisional Results. Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The Population and Housing Census of Myanmar, 2014. August 2014.
11. Ayeyarwady Region Department of Planning, 2014.



2. Ayeyarwady Region

Table 1: Ayeyarwady Region at a glance



Figure 1: Map of Ayeyarwady Region Townships



2.1 Socio-economic background

Ayeyarwady Region covers mainly the fertile, low-lying and densely-populated areas also known as the Irrawaddy Delta, one of Myanmar's main river systems that the Region takes its name from. The river and its delta occupy a position of central importance in the history, economy and the daily life of the Region. Rice cultivation and fishing dominate economic activity in still largely rural communities. Meanwhile, the development of industry, infrastructure and service sectors such as tourism still lag behind the Yangon-Mandalay 'central axis' areas of Myanmar and give much of the region an air of remoteness and underdevelopment.

On 2 May 2008, Ayeyarwady was severely impacted by Cyclone Nargis, one of the worst natural disasters in Myanmar's history with 138,000 lives lost¹² and serious damage inflicted on the region's infrastructure. The delta's climatic vulnerability means that some areas of Ayeyarwady remain prone to flooding, posing a significant risk to farmers and fisherman, many of whom are still rebuilding their livelihoods in the wake of the 2008 cyclone. Nargis has also had a bearing on the way in which industry has evolved in Ayeyarwady: In the reconstruction period, companies from the electricity, gas and water supply, construction, hotel and restaurant; transport, storage and communications sectors consolidated their presence in the region, providing services to support the activities of private households or SMEs and both domestic and international organisations involved in the rebuilding effort. Though the size of these industries remains small, the region has gained some of the sector experience it will require to advance the agricultural sector, and for tourism development.¹³

The most recent assessment of poverty in Myanmar¹⁴ indicated that Ayeyarwady was an "underperformer" with respect to poverty reduction, which was likely exacerbated as a result of Cyclone Nargis. Thirty-two percent of the region's population were estimated to be below the poverty line, higher than the national average of 26 percent.¹⁵ It was also possible to identify major problems that had direct implications for poverty in the region - floods (11%) and vermin/insect infestation (13%) were cited as being major problems for households surveyed. Ayeyarwady is one of the States and Regions worst affected by calamities in Myanmar, losing annually an average 11.4 percent of harvest to storms, floods, and pests (against a national average of 7.8 percent).¹⁶ The geographical and climatic vulnerability of Ayeyarwady is a major development challenge for the Region Government, and for the Region's rural residents farming in flood and storm-prone areas. Cyclone Nargis pushed many such farmers into landlessness, rising to some 75 percent of households in the most affected areas in the Ayeyarwady delta. Severely-afflicted townships such as Bogalay and Labutta saw landlessness rise to 62 percent and 71 percent respectively.¹⁷

Rice cultivation and the development of Ayeyarwady's agricultural economy have taken place at the detriment of the Region's forestry resources. Deforestation - much of it to enable small-scale paddy farming - has depleted most mangrove forests. Aside from its negative implications on the region's bio-diversity, this will have bearing for the Region's resilience to

12. Deaths for the entire affected delta area. "Irrawaddy Delta: Five years after Cyclone Nargis" Global Post, 15 July 2013.

13. Schmitt-Degenhardt, Stephan. "A regional perspective on poverty in Myanmar". UNDP, August 2013.

14. Integrated Household Living Conditions Assessment, 2009-10.

15. Schmitt-Degenhardt, Stephan. "A regional perspective on poverty in Myanmar". UNDP, August 2013.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Post-Nargis Joint Assessment. Tripartite Core Group (Government of Myanmar, ASEAN and United Nations), July 2008.

climatic events such as flooding and storm surges, for which the mangrove forests serve as a line of defence.

The devastation wreaked by the 2008 cyclone has fundamentally shaped the recent development trajectory of Ayeyarwady Region, and continues to have implications for the dynamics of local governance. The resilience developed from the reconstruction effort has placed the Region in a unique position, with organisational experience and capacity garnered by actors in government, civil society and interest groups as they responded to the urgent needs from communities in the aftermath of the disaster. In many respects, this has left Ayeyarwady Region comparatively better-placed to implement the recent reforms designed to drive people's participation in governance and improve responsiveness in the delivery of public services.

Its proximity to the country's commercial capital Yangon, which is just 4-5 hours by highway from Patheingyi, brings with it an opportunity for Ayeyarwady to develop its potential as a major industrial zone. There are already three designated industrial zones in the Region (Hinthada, Myaungmya and Patheingyi), and planning is underway for the development of a special economic zone (SEZ) in Patheingyi.¹⁸ In 2013, the Region Government was in discussion with Thai company, PTTEP, for a US\$5.5 billion investment for a deep-sea port, according to local media reports.¹⁹ Accessibility is more challenged deeper into the delta. The administrative centre of Labutta (the most remote township included in this study), is situated a further 3-4 hours by road from Patheingyi, and a number of village tracts are only accessible by waterways. Water transport remains a key means of mobility and communication in the Region.

Myanmar was once the main rice producer in Asia, and there is hope that Ayeyarwady Region can help to bring about the re-emergence of the country as a major food exporter, given its capacity as the major domestic producer. There are a number of hurdles to this, not least an underdeveloped transport and storage infrastructure, and the need to improve agricultural productivity. Yet, according to 2012 figures from the Settlement and Land Records Department (SLRD), there is no (in fact negative) land available for further agricultural development, suggesting that productivity gains for the region's agricultural economy will have to be achieved through measures such as mechanisation and further land consolidation rather than expansion.²⁰ This is complicated by the fact that land disputes related to rights of access to fertile alluvial soil, fisheries resources and instances of land grabbing are common in Ayeyarwady.

2.2 Demographics

Home to around 6.1 million inhabitants (see Box 1; roughly equivalent to the countries of Nicaragua and Sierra Leone, and slightly smaller than Laos), Ayeyarwady Region is among the three most populous regions in Myanmar, along with Mandalay and Yangon. In terms of territory, with 35,000 km² (roughly the size of Taiwan, and slightly bigger than Moldova or Belgium), it ranks only as tenth-largest by surface area among Myanmar's 14 States and Regions (See Table 1).

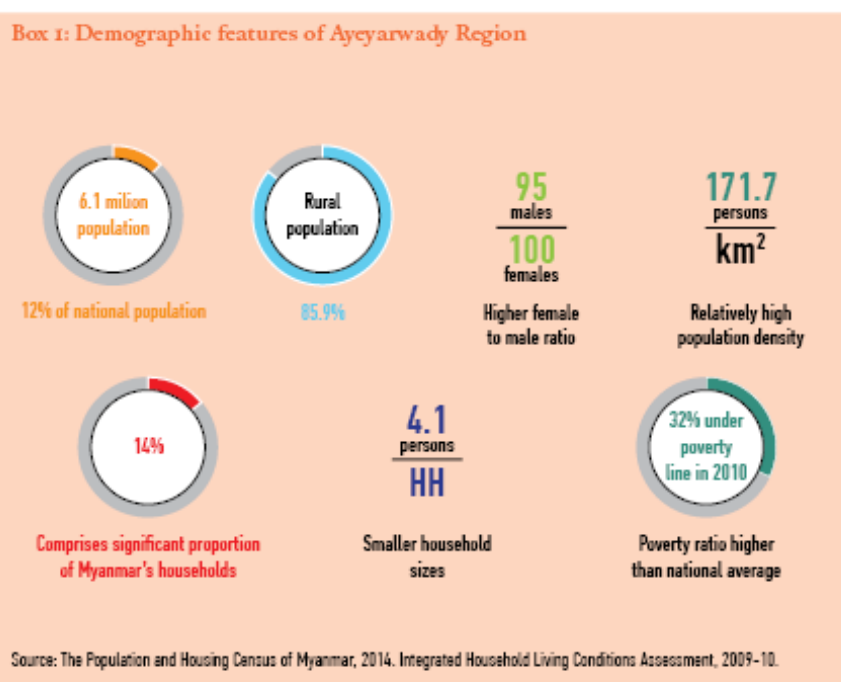
18. Abe, Masato. "Growing Through Manufacturing: Myanmar's Industrial Transformation." ARTNeT Working Paper Series No. 145. UNESCAP Bangkok, July 2014.

19. "Ayeyarwady region government and PTTEP negotiate US\$5 billion investment." *Eleven Weekly Media*, August 5th 2013.

20. *Ibid.*

With 171.7 persons per km², the region is densely populated, albeit much less so than the largely urban Yangon Region (at 723 persons per km²) but well above the national average (76 persons per km²)²¹. Ayeeyarwady is one of the most rural States/Regions in Myanmar, with an urban population of only 873,046 (14.1%) versus a rural population of 5,302,077 (85.9%)²². For every 100 females there are 95 males in Ayeeyarwady (against a national ratio of 93) with 3,010,195 (48.7%) men and 3,164,928 (51.3%) women (see Figure 2 for a breakdown by sex across urban and rural areas). There are 1.49m households in Ayeeyarwady comprising 14 percent of the country's total. These are among the smallest in the country at 4.1 persons per household (the national average is 4.4)²³ (See Figure 2). Townships in Ayeeyarwady tend to be larger than the national average. The Region's least populous township of Kyangin comprises 96,090 people, while its most populous, Hinthada, has a population of 337,880.

The ethnic make-up of the Region remains difficult to validate, as most available official data is out dated, and the new census figures have not yet been released in detail. Bamar form the majority of the population in Ayeeyarwady, with sizable numbers of Karen/Kayin, and a small minority of Rakhine in western coastal regions. The majority of the people are Buddhist, with small minorities of Christians and Muslims. There is no recent legacy of ethnic conflict in the region.



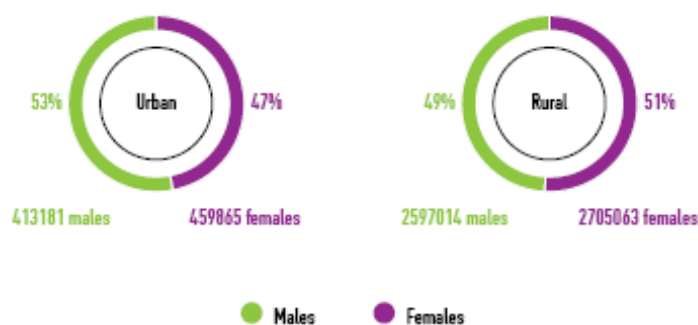
21. Summary of the Provisional Results. Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The Population and Housing Census of Myanmar, 2014. August 2014.

22. By comparison, 29.6 percent of the national population live in urban area. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

Figure 2: Ayeyarwady Region, population breakdown by sex across urban and rural areas

Source: Summary of the Provisional Results, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, The Population and Housing Census of Myanmar, 2014, August 2014.



2.3 Brief historical background and Ayeyarwady Region's government and institutions

Historically, the Irrawaddy delta area was populated by Mon people. Since the 11th Century, Burman kingdoms, which were centred further north along the river, and the Bago-based Mon kingdoms, took turns in controlling the delta area. In the 18th Century, the delta became the first British foothold of Burma, after they seized Negrais Island (also known as Mawtin Point) in 1753.²⁴ In the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826), the delta was the last stand by the Burmese against the advancing British forces. In the Second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852, the entire delta region was seized by the British and became part of British Burma.

The British colonial administration drained marshes and swamps that dominated the area, and from 1861, built dykes and embankments for rice cultivation. During the colonial period, the Twante Canal was constructed and remains one of the main man-made waterways and beneficial to the delta region for communication and commerce through water transportation with Yangon.

From 1885 onwards, the Region was administered as Irrawaddy Division, as a part of 'Ministerial Burma (Burma proper)' with its headquarters in what was then called Bassein (now Patheingyi). The British intensified their exploitation of the rich soil of the land around the Irrawaddy Delta and cleared away the dense mangrove forests. Rice, which was in high demand in Europe (especially after the building of the Suez Canal in 1869), was the main crop grown in and exported out of Burma at the time. To bolster the production of rice, many Burmese migrated from the northern heartland to the delta, shifting the population concentration and that of economic wealth and power in the country southward. During that era, the territorial organisation in villages/village tracts and wards, townships and districts was established and covered the entire area. Many of the officials in those governance structures were Europeans or South Asians who had migrated within the British Empire.

Having suffered heavy losses and damage during World War II, the division formed one of the core components of newly-independent Burma after the adoption of the 1947 Constitution. However, while the Shan, Kachin and Karen States and Chin were granted a degree of self-governance, the divisions in central Burma, including Irrawaddy, remained under the direct control of the central government in Rangoon. Following the devastations of World War II,

24. The Burmese retook the island in 1759 by force, massacring most of the British settlers there.

the basic administrative structure remained in place. Irrawaddy became newly independent Burma's most populous division and a number of parliamentary elections were held from 1947 to 1961. The Democratization of Local Administration Act of 1953 was not fully implemented and did not alter the fundamental setup of local government during the 1950s.²⁵ Following the 1962 military coup Security and Administration Committees (SACs) were set up at the local level, which were chaired by the regional military commander, and by the (military) Minister of Home Affairs at the centre.

In 1974, however, with implementation of a new constitution based on principles of "Burmese socialism" the Division (alongside the other six) was conferred equal status with the seven ethnic States, albeit in the absence of any meaningful ability to exercise self-governance. The 1974 Constitution introduced the concept that States and Divisions had the same status. Irrawaddy Division thus became one of the 'constituent units' of the 'Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma', made up by 14 States and Divisions. People's Councils were introduced at all levels of government administration. The basic units of villages/village tracts and wards, towns and townships were essentially retained as they had been set up in the 1920s, only leaving aside districts which had earlier played a more central role but were abolished as a level of administration in 1972. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) was built up as a mass organisation following the same territorial structure as the state itself, while all other parties were banned. From 1974 onwards, the BSPP's role in state administration was firmly entrenched in the Constitution itself. In the mid-1980s, the party claimed that over 2.3 million people were involved in fortnightly party cell meetings and other Party activities.²⁶ In Irrawaddy Division, this structure was established throughout its territory.

The new structure also foresaw the holding of elections to the various administrative bodies at different levels. For these elections, however, only candidates pre-screened and approved by the BSPP were allowed. While it was not mandatory that a candidate must be a member of the BSPP, in practice most of them were. Across Irrawaddy Division, such People's Councils were thus set up at the level of village tract/ward, township, and Division level. At the central level of government, the Pyithu Hluttaw served as the country's legislature, with each of Ayeyarwady's townships represented by at least one elected member.

Even these tentatively participatory elements of the structure were essentially abolished with the suspension of the 1974 Constitution in 1988, when Irrawaddy Division, as all other parts of the country, were again placed under direct military control and administration. In 1989, its English name was officially changed to Ayeyarwady Division. The internal territorial organisation remained the same, while the dominant role played earlier by the BSPP was essentially substituted by the military in the form of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). The 27 May 1990 elections for 485 seats in a new national parliament resulted in the National League for Democracy (NLD) winning 48 of 51 seats in Ayeyarwady, with the National Unity Party (NUP) winning two seats and an independent candidate one seat. All candidates winning seats were men. However, the 1990 elections were not implemented and did not lead to the formation of a national legislature, nor did they have any effect on governance arrangements in Ayeyarwady Division. Many of the candidates who had won seats in Ayeyarwady Division were either arrested and sentenced to lengthy prison terms or left the country.

25. For more detail on these attempts, see Furnivall, *Governance of Modern Burma*.

26. Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*.



In 1993, the military regime began to rebuild direct links with the population and established the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA). It gradually became the largest state sponsored mass organisation (claiming in 2005 that it had grown to 23 million members). USDA branches were set up in every township across Ayeyarwady Division, as in village tracts and wards. Membership was “essentially compulsory for civil servants and those who sought to do business with or receive services from the state.”²⁷ Division officers of the USDA were often prominent regional businessmen as well as military personnel and civil servants. In 1997, the SLORC was reorganized into the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), which set up a pyramidal structure of similar committees down to the village tract/ward level.

In May 2008, the national referendum on the new Constitution was held just days after Ayeyarwady was devastated by Cyclone Nargis. The referendum was postponed by three weeks in the most heavily affected parts of the country, but for obvious reasons still fell far below the expected turnout figures in such areas. The new Constitution made Ayeyarwady Region a constituent unit of the new Union of the Republic of Myanmar. The 2008 Constitution renamed the Divisions into Regions, and afforded them with limited legislative, executive and judicial powers. Accordingly, its institutions were set up following the 2010 elections. The 2010 elections simultaneously elected representatives to the two Houses of the Union legislature and to the Region legislature (*hluttaw*). They resulted in a victory of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) which had emerged from the USDA a few months before the elections and had inherited its assets, networks and leadership. It won a majority of the seats in all elected bodies including in Ayeyarwady Region. By-elections were held on 1 April 2012 following the constitutionally required resignation of a number of elected *hluttaw* members as they joined the executive branch of government, as well as vacancies due to other reasons.²⁸ In Ayeyarwady, one seat in the Region *Hluttaw* was thus contested in by-elections, as well as five in the Union legislature.

The Region *Hluttaw* is formed by (a) two representatives elected from each township in the Region; (b) representatives elected from each national race determined by the authorities concerned as having a population which constitutes 0.1 percent and above of the population of the Union, in the case of Ayeyarwady Region the Karen/Kayin community and the Rakhine community; and (c) representatives who are the Defence Services personnel nominated by

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Members of the Union *Hluttaws* who join the Union government must resign from their seats. For members of the State and Region *Hluttaws*, there is no such requirement.

the Commander-in-Chief for an equal number of one-third of the total number of Hluttaw representatives elected under (a) and (b), i.e. one quarter of the total number of members.

The elections for the members of the Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw were contested on the basis of townships, which were each divided in two separate constituencies. As the Region has 26 townships, 52 territorial constituencies were formed. In addition, two constituencies were set up for the Kayin/Karen and Rakhine ethnic communities of the Region. The USDP won 48 out of the 54 seats, while the NUP won six seats (see Table 2).

Party	Constituencies contested	Votes	Percent	Seats
Union Solidarity and Development Party	54	1,636,177	61%	48
National Unity Party	48	826,287	31%	6
Kayin People's Party	12	106,470	4%	-
New Era People's Party	14	70,770	3%	-
Independents (3)	3	23,037	1%	-
National Democratic Force	2	12,351	<1%	-
Difference and Peace Party	2	5,946	<1%	-

Table 2: 2010 Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw election results

The results for the election of the ethnic Karen/Kayin constituency of Ayeyarwady Region are interesting, as the two major national parties competed with a party specifically catering to the Karen/Kayin electorate. In the contest for this seat alone, almost 600,000 votes were cast, whereas the total number of votes cast for all parties in the 2010 elections in Kayin State was around 250,000 (see Table 3).

Party	Votes	Percent	Seats
Union Solidarity and Development Party	215,398	36%	1
Kayin People's Party	204,692	35%	-
National Unity Party	173,896	29%	-

Table 3: Votes and results for ethnic Karen / Kayin constituency, Ayeyarwady

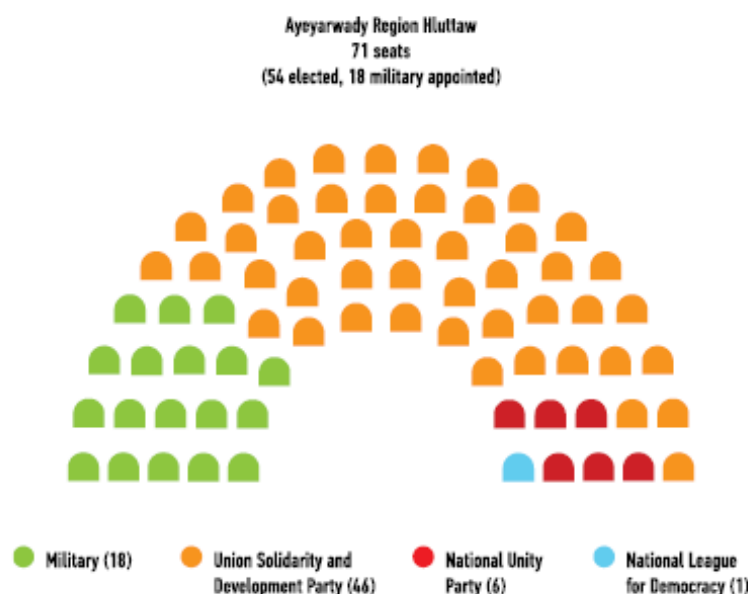
Constituency	Party	Candidate	Votes
Patheingyi - 1	Union Solidarity and Development Party	Khin Khin San	53,716
	National Unity Party	Maung Maung Myint	25,171
Patheingyi - 2	Union Solidarity and Development Party	Aung Kyaw Sein	48814
	National Unity Party	Myint Aung	27209
Labutta - 1	National Unity Party	Zaw Win	52,424
	Union Solidarity and Development Party	Win Swe	48,985
Labutta - 2	Union Solidarity and Development Party	Htein Lin	59,912
	National Unity Party	Tun Thein	46,372
Zalun - 1	Union Solidarity and Development Party	Hla Khaing	31,427
	National Unity Party	Mya Thaug	9,756
	Kayin People's Party	Aung Myo Kyaw	2,860
Zalun - 2	Union Solidarity and Development Party	San Maung	37849
	National Unity Party	San Aye	6,423
	Kayin People's Party	Aung Mya Than	4,550

Table 4: 2010 Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw election results (selected townships)

In the 2012 by-elections, one seat was contested in Ayeyarwady Region in Yekyi-2 constituency. The NLD won the seat, against candidates from the USDP and the NUP also contesting.

In the Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw, the USDP therefore currently holds 46 seats, the military occupies 18 seats. The National Unity Party (NUP), despite garnering almost a third of the votes cast, holds six seats and the NLD one seat (see Figure 3). The term of the Region or State Hluttaws is the same as the term of the Pyithu Hluttaw, i.e. five years. Three of the 71 Hluttaw members in Ayeyarwady are women.

Figure 3: Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw composition



The legislative activity of the Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw has been higher than in smaller Region or State Hluttaws. In 2012 and the first half of 2013, in addition to the minimum required Region laws essential for budgetary and planning purposes a number of other Region laws were adopted as per the legislative powers listed in Schedule Two of the Constitution. Thus Law and supplementing Law on fresh-water fisheries, a Law on Organic and Chemical Fertilizers, a Law on Ayeyarwady Region Municipal Affairs, a Law on Salt and Salt-based Products, a Law on Firewood Plantation, a Law on Systematic transportation of Road Transport Vehicles Business, a Law on Systematic transportation of Waterway Transport Vehicles Business, a Law on Cottage Industry, etc. were adopted by the Region Hluttaw. As instructed by the Government, in 2013 A Law Amending the Ayeyarwady Region Municipal Affairs Law was also passed.²⁹ Twenty numbers of laws have been adopted during 2012 and 2013.

The Myanmar Development Resource Institute – Center for Economic and Social Development (MDRI-CESD) found that the Region Hluttaw in Ayeyarwady to be the most

29. These laws essentially comprised of the State Development Plans and the Budget Allocation Law. The Law Amending The Ayeyarwady Municipal Affairs Law was passed in February 2013. Source: Myanmar's State and Region Governments, Hamish Nixon, et al., September 2013; Myanmar Development Resource Institute - Centre for Economic and Social Development (MDRI-CESD) and The Asia Foundation.

active among six State and Region Hluttaws examined in 2012 and 2013. In Ayeyarwady, members credited their active programme to the Chairman's exceptional efforts. With 69 days in session, Ayeyarwady Hluttaw had more than double the average number of days in session than the other five State and Region Hluttaws included in the MDRI-CESD study.³⁰

The institutional framework for Ayeyarwady Region follows that of other States and Regions and is prescribed in detail in the 2008 Constitution. The head of executive branch of the Region is the Chief Minister of the Region. Members of the Region Government are Ministers of the Region. The Region Government was established on 31 March 2011. Thein Aung, USDP, a retired Brigadier General and former SPDC Minister of Forestry, was appointed as Chief Minister, San Tint, USDP, as Speaker and, Dr. Htein Win, USDP, as Deputy Speaker of the Region Hluttaw. In addition to the Chief Minister, the Region Government also comprises of 11 Ministers and the Advocate General of Ayeyarwady Region.³¹

Besides representatives of the USDP (finance, agriculture and livestock, forestry and mines, planning and economics, transport, development affairs and social affairs), only the NUP was also given a ministerial portfolio, namely for electric power and industry. The Minister of Security and Border Affairs is by constitution held by a representative of the military. The representatives elected for the ethnic minorities constituencies in the Region, i.e. the Karen/ Kayin and Rakhine community are automatically members of the Region Government. They are also USDP representatives. There is only one woman member of the Ayeyarwady Region

Name	Function	Party
Thein Aung	Chief Minister	USDP
Col Maung Maung Win	Ministry of Security and Border Affairs	Military-appointed
Win Ko Ko	Ministry of Finance and Revenue	USDP
San Maung	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Breeding	USDP
Soe Myint	Ministry of Forestry and Mines	USDP
Hla Khaing	Ministry of Planning and Economics	USDP
Than Tun	Ministry of Transport	USDP
Saw Mya Thein	Ministry of Electric Power and Industry	NUP
Kyaw Win Naing	Ministry of Development Affairs	USDP
Khin Saw Mu	Ministry of Social Affairs	USDP
Man Than Shwe	Ministry of National Races Affairs (Karen)	USDP
Ba Kyu	Ministry of National Races Affairs (Rakhine)	USDP

Table 5: Members of Ayeyarwady Region Government Cabinet

Government, Daw Khin Saw Mu, Minister of Social Affairs (see Table 5).

For the Union legislature, the Pyithu Hluttaw and the Amyotha Hluttaw, 26 and 12 representatives were elected for Ayeyarwady Region respectively. For the seats in the Union Pyithu Hluttaw, each township served as a constituency. Hence, altogether 26 members were elected from Ayeyarwady Region to the larger one of the two Houses of the Union legislature. Of these, 25 were won by the USDP, and one by the NUP (see Table 6).

30. Ibid.

31. August 2014.

Table 6: 2010 Pyithu Hluttaw election results for Ayeyarwady Region

Party	Constituencies contested	Votes	Percent	Seats
Union Solidarity and Development Party	26	1,713,967	62%	25
National Unity Party	26	742,982	27%	1
National Democratic Force	7	139,049	5%	-
Independents (3)	3	68,880	3%	-
Union of Myanmar Federation of National Politics	4	38,756	1%	-
Kayin People's Party	3	36,518	1%	-
New Era People's Party	5	35,269	1%	-
National Political Alliances League	1	10,721	<1%	-
Difference and Peace Party	1	5,559	<1%	-

The number of voters per member of the Pyithu Hluttaw ranges from 150,000 in Ayeyarwady Region to 48,000 in Kayah State. Although Ayeyarwady Region is among the largest and Kayah State the smallest of the 14 units, the order of representation per member does not strictly follow the ranking in terms of population size.

On 1 April 2012, by-elections were held for five seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw for Ayeyarwady Region. All five, including in Patheingyi Township, were won by NLD candidates.³² The new and current numbers of representatives from Ayeyarwady Region in the Pyithu Hluttaw are 20 for USDP, 5 for the NLD and one for NUP.

For the Amyotha Hluttaw, each Region and State is assigned 12 seats by the Constitution. In States and Regions with more than 12 townships, these seats are elected on the basis of groups of townships. As there are 26 townships in Ayeyarwady Region, townships are combined to form larger constituencies. In 2010, the USDP won all of the 12 available seats in Ayeyarwady Region. Although the NUP received about a third of the votes, it did not secure a seat (see Table 7).

Table 7: 2010 Amyotha Hluttaw election results for Ayeyarwady Region

Party	Constituencies contested	Votes	Percent	Seats
Union Solidarity and Development Party	12	1,413,270	57%	12
National Unity Party	12	786,415	32%	-
National Democratic Force	2	85,754	3%	-
Independent	1	74,059	3%	-
New Era People's Party	3	48,031	2%	-
Kayin People's Party	1	31,291	1%	-
National Political Alliances League	1	14,402	1%	-
Difference and Peace Party	1	12,377	1%	-

On 1 April 2012, by-elections also took place for one seat in the Amyotha Hluttaw in Ayeyarwady's Constituency No.10 (Pyaw, Dedaye). It was also won by an NLD candidate. The new numbers of Amyotha Hluttaw members from Ayeyarwady Region is 11 from the USDP and one from the NLD.

³² Maubin constituency - Sein Win Han (Sein Win), Myingyi - Kyaw Myint, Myingyi - Mahn Johnny Patheingyi - Win Myint, and Wakema - Myint Myint San.

Administratively, Ayeyarwady Region is divided in 26 townships (see Figure 4), which are themselves made up of 219 wards (in urban areas) and 1,912 village-tracts covering 11,651 villages. Townships are grouped into six districts: Patheingyi, Hinthada, Myaungmya Maubin, Pyawbwe, and Labutta. Patheingyi serves as the Region's capital city.

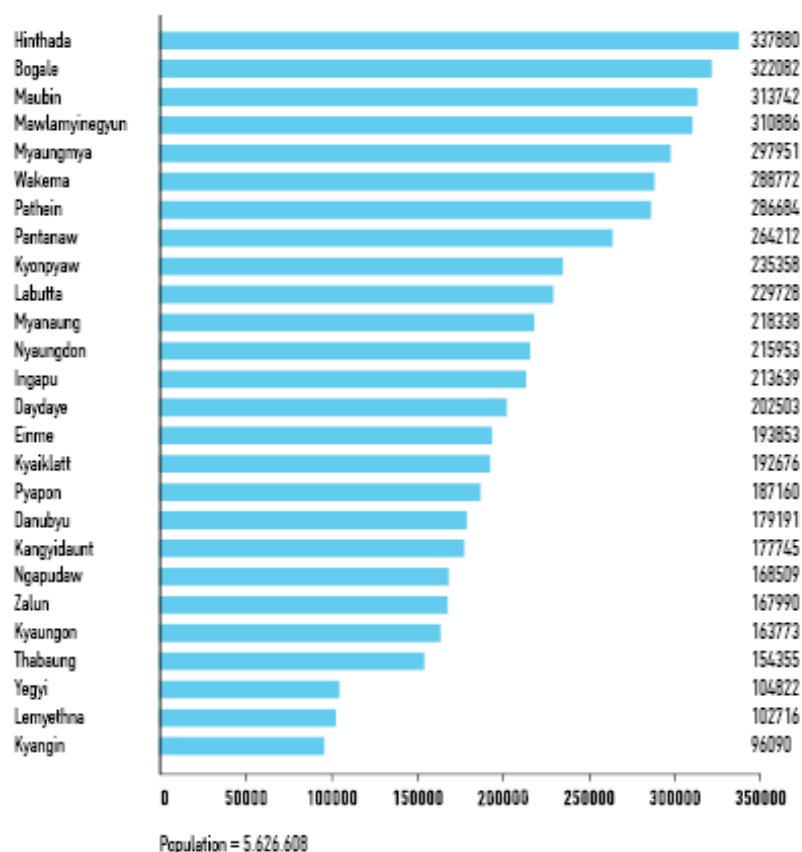


Figure 4: Township population size in Ayeyarwady Region

Source: Summary of the Provisional Results, Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The Population and Housing Census of Myanmar, 2014, August 2014.

Note: Excludes sub-township populations.

This brief summary of the political and administrative institutions of Ayeyarwady Region shows that the Region has experienced a significant amount of change and dynamism in terms of political representation in recent years. The composition of political representative bodies at the Union and Region level informs and shapes the efforts, undertaken since 2012, of reintroducing some forms of popular participation at the local level, in particular the townships and the village tracts and wards. Understandably, voices critical of the prevailing power structures have not yet fully come to the fore in the Region in the past three years, at least not within the institutional framework set up by the Constitution and subsidiary legislation. At the same time, the large number of local civil society and social groups present in Ayeyarwady, many of which played an important role in the wake of Cyclone Nargis in 2008, and put the Region ahead of other parts of Myanmar in this regard, is an important characteristic of the political and institutional dynamics specific to the Region. However, the elections to the Village Tract and Ward Administrators took place outside the scope of the wider political party spectrum, and apparently without any campaigning or programmatic

outreach by the candidates, and - on the basis of anecdotal information - returned many individuals who had already served in the system earlier. The process was tightly controlled by the General Administration Department.

Questions such as accountability and public participation in local decision-making processes, which will be discussed in the following chapters, cannot be considered entirely disconnected from the political dynamics in any given locality. While neither this summary nor the research undertaken by UNDP as a whole focuses on the political dimension of transition in Myanmar, or in any given State or Region, not taking into account the overall context of historical legacies and political reform would not do justice to a comprehensive mapping of the local governance situation on the ground. Increasingly, questions such as the spending of public funds for development projects, and the accountability of office holders for their administrative actions will gain a political dimension, as Myanmar gradually moves closer to a multi-party environment.

In a large Region like Ayeyarwady, which has an intrinsic interest in strengthening the role of subnational units vis-à-vis the Union Government, such questions will also play a key role in the further development of Myanmar's quasi-federal system overall. A clear delimitation of roles and a definition of responsibilities between local administrators and civil servants on one side, and political or interest groups representatives on the other side, will be required. In particular, services should be provided on the basis of equal rights and equity, rather than on the basis of political favours and personal loyalties. Representation must be based on universal and equal suffrage, rather than on connections, kinship and networks of influence. As the findings from local governance mapping shows, and as will be discussed below, Ayeyarwady has the potential to become a pioneer Region in terms of institutional innovation and in finding Region-specific solutions to local problems, and could thus become one of the leaders of local governance reforms in the years to come.



3. Methodology

3.1 Objectives

The Local Governance Mapping examined local governance issues related to basic local service delivery across Myanmar's States and Regions, with the view of better understanding the processes, mechanisms and dynamics of governance at the township level and below. It was designed to predominantly make use of *qualitative data*, related to experiences and perceptions of citizens, government staff and other stakeholders with these questions in mind:

- To what extent have reforms so far enabled local governance actors and institutions to be more responsive to the needs of people?
- What are prevailing attitudes on access to basic services in the community, and what dynamics underpin the relationship between the state and people with regards to service delivery (i.e. primary healthcare, primary education, drinking water)?
- What new spaces have been created, or are emerging, for the people of Myanmar to participate in community decision-making and have a voice?
- Despite the local governance reforms being applied on a fairly uniform basis across Myanmar's States/Regions, what differences are emerging as a result of unique local conditions?

As such, it is not an assessment but an effort to better understand the state of play for local governance today, and highlight some of the practices that are emerging across the country.

3.2 Research tools

In Ayeyarwady Region, a number of tools were deployed to understand the operating environment at the Region and township level, and related to the above questions, people's and service provider's perceptions on three key tenets of local governance - a) Development planning and participation; b) Access to basic services; and c) Information, transparency and accountability (see Table 8).

Community survey (Citizen Report Card; CRC): The number of townships selected varied according to the size and population of each state or region: In Ayeyarwady, three townships were selected and a survey conducted in May 2014 comprising 96 residents in each township (288 people in total). The questionnaire focused on the core principles of local governance, and the satisfaction and experiences of people using basic services provided by government (such as basic healthcare and primary education).

Frontline service provider interviews: In addition to the service users, Frontline Service Providers (FSP) including school principals, teachers, healthcare facility managers, healthcare staff and the Village Tract Administrators (VTA) in these wards/villages were also interviewed, focusing on the service delivery process and their interaction with service users.

Township background studies: Additionally, to deepen the understanding of the functioning of township governance in each State or Region, a background study was also conducted in these townships. Semi-structured interviews held with key government staff and CSO representatives were focussed on the manner in which governance actors in different townships had interpreted and implemented the recent reforms.

Dialogues in the community: Similar issues were discussed collectively in a Community Dialogue (CD), which was held in each of the wards/village tracts where surveys were conducted, where different groups present in the community (including women, youth and elders) participated alongside frontline service providers and the Village Tract/Ward Administrator (VTA). The objective of this exercise was to collectively identify issues of governance emerging in relation to service delivery and local administration, and to agree on solutions that could be implemented at the community level.

Interviews, focus group discussions and validation of interim findings with Region actors: Discussions were held with government officials the Region level using open interviews and focus group discussions, with a view to understand their perceptions and experiences regarding the functioning of administration at the township level, and to reflect on their own role in providing support to lower level government institutions. During a one-day workshop held at the Region level, representatives of the various townships (both government and non-government) and Region-level officials participated to hear the interim findings, discuss the most pressing priorities from a local governance perspective and to identify potential actions.

Mapping level	Activity	Participants	Geographical scope	Outputs
Community	Citizen Report Card (CRC), Community Survey	288 citizen respondents	6 village tracts / wards in three townships	Dataset and reporting on key findings
	Frontline Service Provider interviews	4 Village Tract Administrators, 2 Ward Administrators 6 primary school principals 13 primary school teachers 6 heads of healthcare facilities 9 healthcare staff	6 village tracts / wards in three townships	
	Community Dialogues (CD)	170 service users 105 service providers	6 village tracts / wards in three townships	Data from scoring exercise and summary for each village tract / ward
Township	Interviews and secondary data analysis	Government staff from relevant departments.	Three townships	Background research to inform community findings
	Focus group discussions	Government staff, committee members and civil society representatives	Three townships	Qualitative data to inform analysis
Region	Focus group discussions and interviews	Government staff from relevant departments	Patheingyi (region capital)	Qualitative data to inform analysis
	Workshop to share interim findings	Government staff and committee members from township level, state level government and civil society representatives	Three townships and region	Validation of interim findings, suggestions and ideas from local governance actors

Table 8: Local Government Mapping exercise: participants, coverage and outputs for Ayeyarwady Region



Box 2: Background to the Local Governance Mapping for Myanmar's 14 States and Regions

Since the adoption of a new Constitution in 2008, Myanmar has embarked on an unprecedented programme of reform, with a view to strengthen the democratisation process and focusing basic public services on the needs and priorities of its people. This has translated into an emphasis on good governance and basic public service delivery (i.e. basic health, primary education and household water) that is more responsive to the priorities of local communities. Sub-national and local governance has been identified by the Government of Myanmar as an important catalyst in this.

A gradual shift in responsibilities from the Union level to the Region and State-level government is taking place, while at same time, the importance of good local governance is being acknowledged. Both the constitution as well as the Framework for Economic and Social Reforms (FESR) 2012-15 are explicit regarding a gradual transfer of political, administrative and fiscal responsibilities to the newly established State and Region governments, *but do not extend to the transfer of responsibilities to local-level institutions and the establishment of a local government as a third tier of government in Myanmar.*

Village tracts, wards and townships are recognised as administrative structures under the jurisdiction of State and Region Governments which in turn remain under the control of central government structures and resources. At this level, an incremental strategy has been adopted by the Government of Myanmar in the guise of legal reforms and the establishment of new mechanisms and practices to create space for people to participate in setting local development priorities, and improve the ability of government to be more responsive to the "voice" and needs of the people.³³

³³ An introduction to these arrangements, along with a more detailed description of the research methodology is outlined in the Local Governance Mapping in Myanmar: Background and Methodology.

Though such reforms are being implemented at the township level and below, no 'local government'³⁴ (with the exceptions of the six Self-Administered Areas in Sagaing Region and Shan State) exists below the State and Region level in Myanmar at this stage in the decentralisation process. This is significant in a context where the township represents the key touch point between the government administration and its people. It is from the country's 330 townships that the vast majority of basic public services are administered, and the lowest level at which government administration takes place. The township is also the basic unit of constituencies for political representation at the State/Region and the Union level legislatures. Whether the township will eventually emerge as the forefront of local government in the future is as yet unclear. But township administrations across the country are tasked to improve basic local service delivery, while playing a new developmental role that aims to place the people of Myanmar at the centre of the process.

Within this context, the UNDP has been working together with the General Administration Department (GAD) within the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) to "map" the dynamics of local governance at the township level and below, with an emphasis on those aspects where government interacts with the people. The more systemic aspects of this analysis that relate equally to all States and Regions are summarized in the background document, 'Local Governance Mapping in Myanmar: Background and Methodology', while this report focused more specifically on Ayeyarwady region as such. For a deeper analysis of the contextual background, constitutional and legal parameters and operational constraints of local governance in Myanmar, readers are advised to read this Region-specific report in conjunction with the Background document.

34. Local government refers to specific, semi-autonomous institutions or entities created by national or state constitutions, legislation of a higher level of government or by executive order to deliver a range of specified services to a geographical area. Local governance refers to local-level formulation and execution of collective action. Of relevance here is the framework for citizen-citizen and citizen-state interactions, collective decision-making and delivery of local public services. (See Shah, Anwar (ed.), Local governance in developing countries. Public sector and accountability series. The World Bank, 2006.)



4. Governance at the Frontline: Participation in Planning, Responsiveness for Local Service Provision and Accountability in Ayeyarwady Townships

“The government has to reach lower, and the citizens higher,” said Ayeyarwady Chief Minister U Thein Aung, speaking to the need for a more participatory approach from government to decision making, and the requirement for citizens to raise levels of awareness so that they can engage in the process.³⁵ Along with other townships in the region, Labutta, Pathein and Zalun townships have all undertaken local governance reforms which have the potential to drive progress towards these goals.

4.1. Introduction to selected townships

In consultation with the Ayeyarwady Region government, Labutta, Pathein and Zalun townships were selected to participate in this local governance mapping, with the view of representing the socio-economic and geographic diversity that exemplifies the region’s 26 townships. Within each township, one ward (urban) and one village tract (rural) were included in the exercise, drawn from a shortlist submitted by the Township Administrator. In Zalun, two village tracts were selected in light of the highly rural character of the township’s population (see Table 9 and Figure 5).

Township	Township characteristics	Village tracts/wards selected
Labutta	Remote, rural	No (B) Ward
		Myit Pauk Village Tract
Pathein	Accessible, urban	No (1) Ward
		Kyaung Pan Kone
Zalun	Accessible, rural	May Yi Lan Village Tract
		Pyin Ma Kone (East) Village Tract

Table 9: Selected townships and village tracts and wards, Local Governance Mapping in Ayeyarwady Region

It is believed that the selection of a small representative sample of locations from within the Region allows this study to derive a number of general observations that are valid for local governance in the Region as a whole. One of the purposes of the publication of this report is to test these assumptions and contribute to a Region-wide debate and further analysis around local governance participation and voice based on the evidence collated. The intended approach is to present and discuss the findings in the Region itself, and further deepen and expand the understanding of the state of local governance reform in Ayeyarwady. This should also allow comparison with a baseline, across the country and over time, as and when future local governance reforms will be implemented.

The three selected townships are broadly representative of Ayeyarwady Region. Each has a large number of village tracts/wards and large populations. At the same time, they also capture some of the diversity across the region’s 26 townships. Sitting in the heart of the delta, Labutta has a population of just under 230,000 people and is the least accessible of the townships, with many of its 518 villages connected by water transportation only. Population density is much lower in Zalun, which is in the north of the region, and comprises 456 villages in a low-lying area that is prone to flooding. However, transportation connections to the region capital and Yangon are relatively good. With a population of just under 290,000, Pathein Township is co-located with the regional and district hubs and is the most urban of the townships, serving as an administrative centre for the coastal sub-townships of Ngwe Saung and Shwen Thang Yan, as well as hosting the Region Government. No separate municipal structures are in place. Tourism is a key growth sector driven by development of the township’s beaches in recent years (see Table 10).

35. Referenced during a Focus Group Discussion with CSO representatives in Ayeyarwady Region.

Figure 5: Ayeyarwady Region: townships and wards/village tracts included in the local governance mapping field study

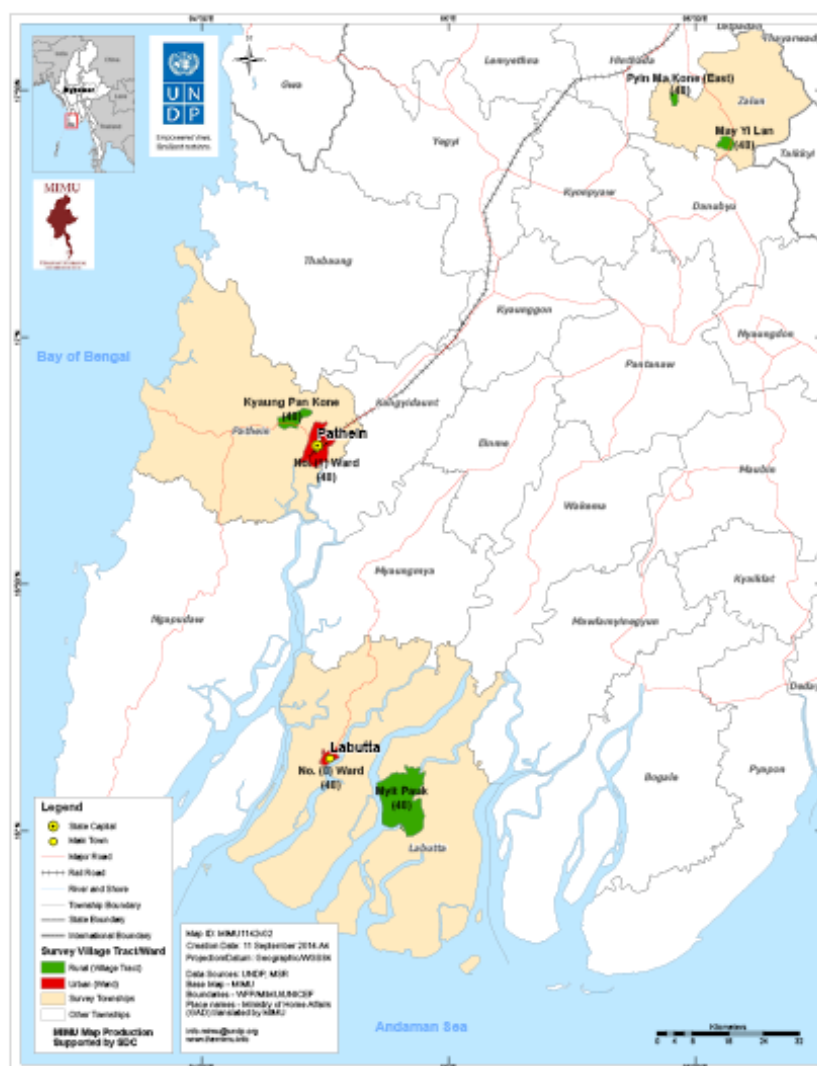


Table 10: Characteristics of Labutta, Patheingyi and Zalin Townships

Source: Township General Administration Department, Socioeconomic profiles 2014.

Township	Geographic	Access	District	Population size ³⁶	Municipal wards	Village tracts	Villages
Labutta	South	125km highway connection (by tar road) to Patheingyi	Labutta	229,728	13	64	518
Patheingyi	West	195km highway connection (by tar road) to Yangon	Patheingyi	286,684	22	53	287
Zalin	North-east	170km highway connection (by tar road) to Patheingyi	Hinthada	167,990	5	66	456

36. The Population and Housing Census of Myanmar, 2014. Provisional results, August 2014. Labutta population excludes the sub-township of Pyinsak. Patheingyi population excludes the sub-townships of Ngwe Saung and Shwea Thang Yan.

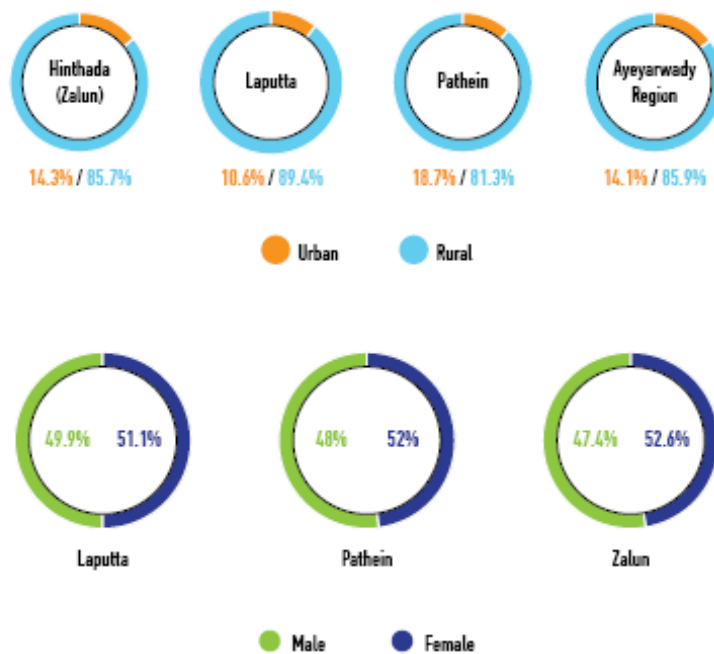


Figure 6: District-level population breakdown, urban-rural³⁷

Source: The Population and Housing Census of Myanmar, 2014. Provisional results, August 2014.

Figure 7: Township population breakdown, by sex

Source: The Population and Housing Census of Myanmar, 2014. Provisional results, August 2014.

Labutta: Remote, rural

Labutta is a large, populous coastal township in the south of the Region, made up of a number of islands and peninsulas along the low-lying stretches of the Irrawaddy delta. The latest data from the 2014 census confirms that Labutta is the most rural of the three townships - only 10.6 percent of people in the wider Labutta District reside in urban areas³⁸ (see Figure 6). The local economy is dependent on fisheries and farming, while a freezing facility and salt production also contribute. The township faces problems in the electricity and water supply, particularly during the summer months, and residents are dependent on water supply from the local lake for household water. There are no apparent security issues in the township.

Labutta was badly hit by Cyclone Nargis in 2008, with 84,454 deaths or missing persons (a staggering one third of the population) reported.³⁹ Estimates of landlessness in the aftermath of the disaster stood at around 62 percent, while livestock ownership dropped from 35 to 4 percent among farmers.⁴⁰ The sex ratio is more favourable to men than other townships in Ayeyarwady, with 99.8 males for every 100 females (see Figure 7). This could be related to women being more adversely affected by the cyclone than men: 47,901 females were reported dead or missing against 36,553 males.⁴¹ Labutta's development priorities in the past five years have been largely defined by recovery and rebuilding from Nargis. The government reported

37. The urban population is defined as those people living in "wards" that are provisioned by municipal services. The rural population lives in "village tracts".

38. As the most recent urban-rural population breakdowns at the township level were not available, district-level statistics have been referenced.

39. Post Nargis Periodic Review IV. Tripartite Core Group (Government of Myanmar, ASEAN and United Nations). July 2010.

40. Figures from 2011 JICA research, cited in Delta Alliance - Ayeyarwady Delta, Final Mission Report, 11 December 2013.

41. Post-Nargis Periodic Review IV. Tripartite Core Group (Government of Myanmar, ASEAN and United Nations). July 2010.

Figure 8: Map of Labutta Township



in 2010 that a total of 4,548 houses had been built for 50 villages in the township, while cyclone shelters were under construction in six villages in preparation for future disasters.⁴² Labutta's Township Administration⁴³ is made up of 34 sector departments.

Patheingyi: Accessible, urban

Patheingyi is the most urbanised of the three townships - 18.7 percent of people live in urban areas (see Figure 6). Patheingyi, located alongside the Irrawaddy River, is the regional capital, and has been an administrative hub for the delta area from the British colonial era, when it was known as Bassein. It remains the Region's capital today, and is also growing in prominence as an industrial hub and tourism centre, with traffic passing through Patheingyi to the fast-growing maritime sub-townships Ngazun and Shwepyithar featuring some of Myanmar's most attractive beaches. The township's historically strategic location resulted from the fact that although it lies relatively far inland it can be reached by sea-going vessels sailing up the lower Irrawaddy. Though its infrastructure was damaged, there were no recorded deaths from Cyclone Nargis in this large township, which has a population of just below 290,000 people. There are more women than men, with around 92.5 males for every 100 females (see Figure 7). Today, Patheingyi is attracting new attention from investors for development of industrial projects. There is an existing industrial zone, and developments are underway for a new Special Economic Zone. Plans have been proposed by investors from India, Thailand and Singapore for development of a new deep-sea port and expressway and rail links between Patheingyi and Yangon.⁴⁴ Co-located with the district and Region capital, the township administration comprises 53 sector departments.⁴⁵

42. "Myanmar Ayeyarwady Delta Enjoys Economic Progress Two Years After the Storm," People's Daily Online, May 12, 2010. Accessed September 6 2014.

43. Township Administration is defined in this report to comprise all sector departments at the township level. The Township Administrator is the head of the GAD, which plays a co-ordination and leadership role for the township.

44. Abe, Masato. "Growing Through Manufacturing: Myanmar's Industrial Transformation." ARTNeT Working Paper Series No. 145. UNESCAP Bangkok, July 2014.

45. According to the Township Administrator, a number remain inactive but have not yet been formally closed down (i.e. the Township Post Office department), bolstering the total figure.

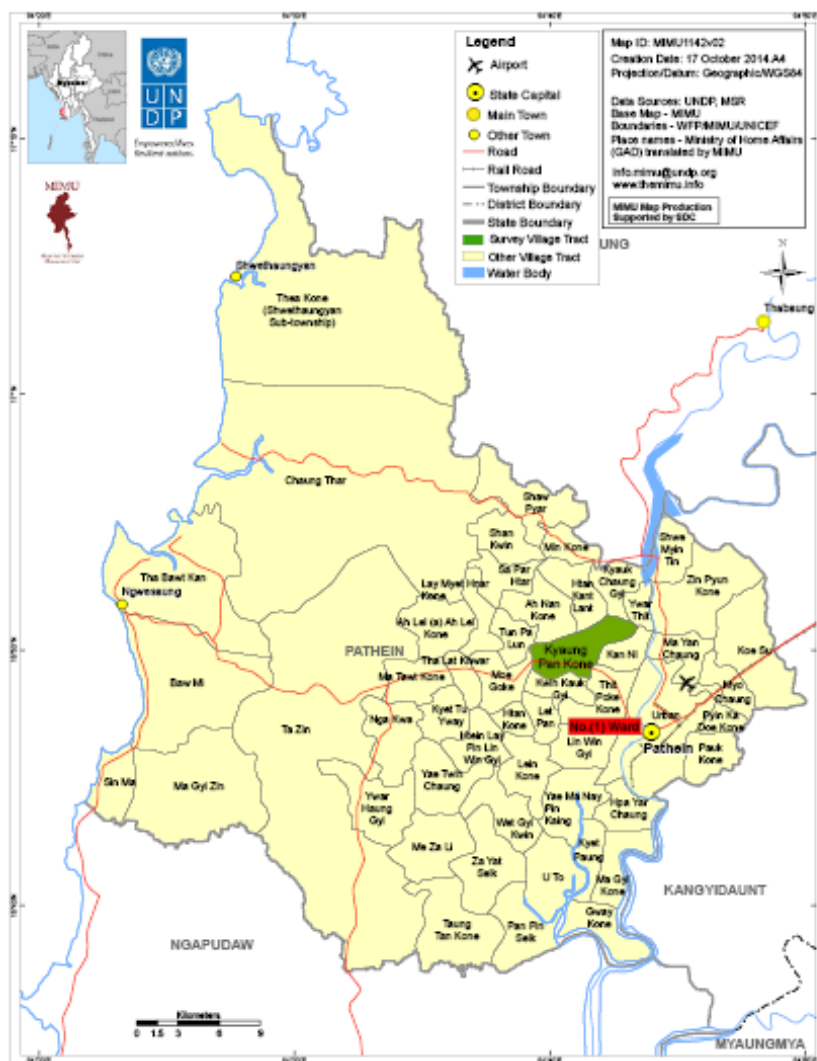


Figure 9: Map of Patheingyi Township

Zalun: Accessible, rural

Zalun is the smallest of the three townships, with a population of just over 165,000. The sex ratio is very favourable to women: There are 90.1 men for every 100 women (see Figure 7). Zalun is a major agricultural township, and home to two rice specialisation companies,⁴⁶ and it was the least affected by Cyclone Nargis of the three townships. Agricultural interests are strong in this rural township - some 85.7 percent of the population live in rural areas in the wider Hinthanda District (see Figure 6). Flooding is a major issue for the area, and land disputes related to new emerging alluvial land has been a source of local conflict between residents. Zalun's township administration comprises 33 sector departments (see Table 11).

46. These are Zalun Ayeeyar Co. Ltd and Zalun Saensung Co Ltd., according to the Myanmar Rice Industry Association.

Figure 10: Map of Zalun Township



1.	General Administration Department	18.	Planning
2.	Police Force	19.	Sports
3.	Fire Brigade	20.	Education
4.	Municipal	21.	Health
5.	Cooperatives	22.	Court of Justice
6.	Agriculture	23.	Law and Legal Office
7.	Irrigation	24.	Audit Office
8.	Settlement and Land Records	25.	Revenue
9.	Agricultural Mechanisation	26.	Myanmar Economic Bank
10.	Traditional Medicine	27.	Railways
11.	Veterinary	28.	Information and Public Relations
12.	Communication	29.	Agricultural Product Trading
13.	Transportation	30.	Meteorology and Hydrology
14.	Forestry	31.	Small Loans
15.	Electricity Power	32.	Postal Service
16.	Immigration	33.	Agricultural Development Bank
17.	Industry		

Table 11: Township sector departments⁴⁷ in Zalun

Source: GAD Socioeconomic Profile, May 2014, 2014.

4.1.1 Current development challenges as identified by local township residents

The legacy of Cyclone Nargis, and the attention drawn to the vulnerability of the Region to natural disasters (particularly flooding) has influenced the development priorities of the Region's government. The disaster allowed large numbers of international humanitarian groups to establish a presence in the Region, which has accordingly been exposed to international assistance and has been studied and documented to a degree unmatched by most other parts of the country. Disaster preparedness is a major focus of local activities in Ayeyarwady townships, where the Township Administrator also serves as chairman of the Disaster Preparedness Committee in each township. The Region Government (like those of other States and Regions) has developed a comprehensive regional action plan for disaster risk reduction and recovery, under the oversight of the Chief Minister.⁴⁸ On a day-to-day level, the Township Administrator spends a fair proportion of time on issues related to the Region's geographic vulnerability: For instance, regular flooding and erosion of embankments has resulted in a continued emphasis on impact mitigation and has raised a number of new disputes related to land in Zalun.

Cyclone Nargis has influenced development priorities of the Region's government in the recent past.

In a community-level survey six years on from the devastation of Cyclone Nargis, people were asked to reflect upon the biggest developmental challenges in their respective townships. Food security was not a concern for most of the 288 respondents, of which 74 percent always had enough food, but a quarter of respondents (26%) sometimes or often felt that they could not buy enough food for their households. This rises to 30 percent in Labutta, and suggests a continued concern in the community on the vulnerability of their livelihoods to climatic or other shocks. Overall, urban residents were most concerned with poor roads (41%), while rural dwellers cited a lack of jobs (28%) as the primary problem in their village tracts. Across townships, more respondents in remote Labutta cited poor roads as the main challenge (36%),

47. The set up of departments are not identical across the townships.

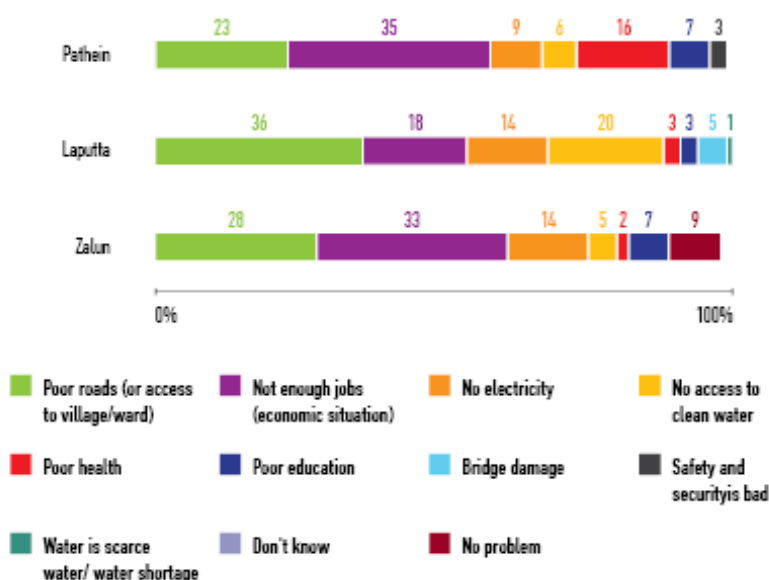
48. Interviews with officials from the Ayeyarwady Region GAD office.

while a shortfall of jobs emerged as the top issue for most in the more accessible townships of Pathein (35%) and Zalun (33%) (see Figure 11). Dialogues held at the community confirmed the extent to which these priorities were contingent on local conditions and needs. However, a few issues were recurrent during these discussions, namely: A lack of access to electricity and a need for repairs of roads and bridges. In both village tracts in flood-prone Zalun, the community noted that insufficient supply of drinking water was an important challenge.⁴⁹

Figure 11: Identifying “the most important problems in the village tract/ward”

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.

n = 288, 96 respondents per township.



People’s expectations for the future were consistent with the top developmental challenges as perceived today: of 288 respondents, 55 percent sought improvements in road infrastructure while 47 percent hoped to see improvements in the electricity supply. Improved health facilities (31%) and water supply (21%) were also anticipated.

Respondents in Ayeyarwady Region are keenly aware of the development challenges faced by their townships, and had a clear idea of the needs they wanted to be met in the coming years. But to what extent do the processes and institutions in place allow for their suggestions and ideas to be factored into the development planning for their local area?

49. Ibid.



4.2 Developmental planning and participation

4.2.1 Township developmental planning

At the sub-national level, there are emerging opportunities for local actors to influence the planning process and decision-making for public-sector investments. There are new practices taking place for “participatory planning,” such as the consultation of local communities and interest groups for their suggestions and priorities. This is happening at the township level in Ayeyarwady through line ministry institutions such as the Township Planning and Implementation Committee (TPIC), which acts as a technical committee for gathering the information and data required for strategic planning. And with the (limited and gradual) decentralisation of funds for discretionary spending at the sub-national level, new mechanisms and practices have been established to better reflect the needs of communities for discretionary development funds. Two such mechanisms are a Township Management Committee (TMC), an executive body of township managers with a responsibility to coordinate the line ministry departments at township level and to collate project priorities; and the Township Development Support Committee (TDSC), a consultative committee with members elected from sector interest groups to act as a “sounding board” for the TMC on development priorities.

Strategic planning activities

Similar to other States and Regions across the country, “planning” activities at the township level in Ayeyarwady Region continue to be limited in scope. National short-term (five year) and long-term (10- 20 year) strategic planning is facilitated by the township Department of Planning, under the Union Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development (MoNPED), whose local officers are tasked to gather information and prepare priorities

for development activities. Such information is then elevated to higher levels to inform development planning and annual budget allocations at the region and Union level, where the majority of decision-making and planning *per se* for the township continues to take place.

The TPIC was conceived by MoNEPD as a channel for improving “bottom-up planning” in the development of national plans and budget allocations.⁵⁰ Established across Ayeeyarwady townships in 2011, the TPIC’s formal role is to collate, review and discuss proposed development plans and activities from village and village tract/ward level for the purposes of strategic budgeting and planning. Aside from compiling and elevating information to inform the overall strategic plan as a technical, sector committee, it also has a role to play in monitoring the implementation of various development projects. The formal composition of TPIC is very flexible, and contingent on the needs of each particular township, though representatives of key departments deemed important to economic activity such as agriculture, livestock breeding, electric power and municipal affairs are usually represented. The diversity in the composition of the committees across the three Ayeeyarwady townships is striking: In Zalun’s TPIC, there are 21 departments represented, nine departments in Labutta and ten in Pathein. The strongest emphasis on public participation is in Pathein, where businessmen and “elders” or recognised leaders from the community are prominent members.⁵¹

Township Planning and Implementation Committees in Ayeeyarwady are active and involved in planning and approving the local priorities compiled by the Department of Planning.

The TPICs are relatively active in townships across the Region - which is not necessarily the case in other States/Regions in the country, where the committee is sometimes dormant in informing strategic planning.⁵² In Pathein, the TPIC is involved in providing information to and approving the local priorities compiled by the Department of Planning, and continues to be an active mechanism for gathering information and suggestions from interest groups from business and the community. The priorities identified and collated by the TPIC are elevated to the District and Region-level committees and integrated into a Region plan, before being reviewed by the Region Government and ratified via the Region Hluttaw. Upon review and approval by the Union-level Finance Commission and the Union Hluttaw, the plan eventually is passed back to the Region Hluttaw, where a local budget law is passed to this effect (see Figure 12).



50. Van Landt, Gerhard and Steffensen, Jesper. Local Development Background Study: Inventory of Planning and Financing Practices at the Sub-national Level in Myanmar. Draft Report. UNCDF/ UNDP, June 2012 (unpublished).

51. See Annex 2 for composition of TPIC membership.

52. Insights from participants at workshop to coordinate donor co-ordination on local governance jointly organized by UNDP and ActionAid, February 2014. This was also evident in Mon and Chin States from the pilot phase of the local governance mapping.

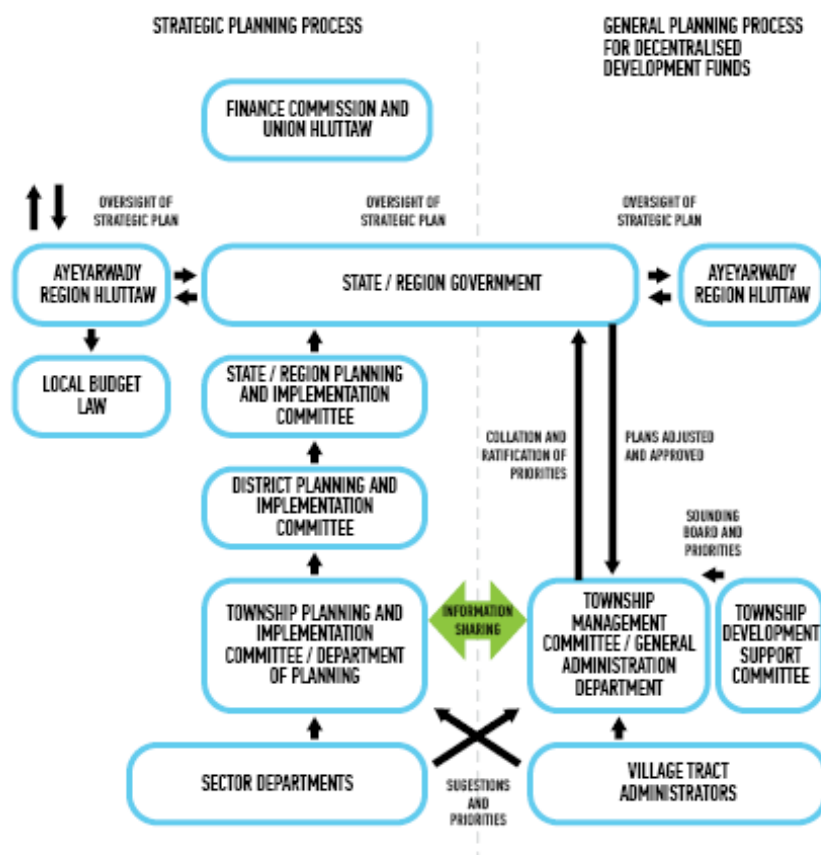


Figure 12: Township developmental planning processes, Ayeyarwady Region

Source: Adapted from GAO, 2013.

Setting priorities for development funds

As is the case with all States and Regions in Myanmar, planning, budgeting and decision-making in Ayeyarwady Region has historically taken place at higher levels within the vertical structures of sector ministries, while the lower levels of administration have been focused more on the actual implementation of services and functions. This continues to be the case today for the departments that are responsible for the bulk of non-military government expenditures, including the education and health ministries. The landscape is now gradually changing as fiscal resources are beginning to stream down from the Union to the State and Region level through other streams of funding. Grants and loans are being made available to support specific departments⁵³ that sit under the purview of the State and Region governments with their incomes sometimes supplemented by taxes and other revenues collected locally. Separately, funds have been made available for spending on local infrastructure development in townships, with State and Region Governments, parliamentarians and township actors now able to directly influence decisions on disbursements.

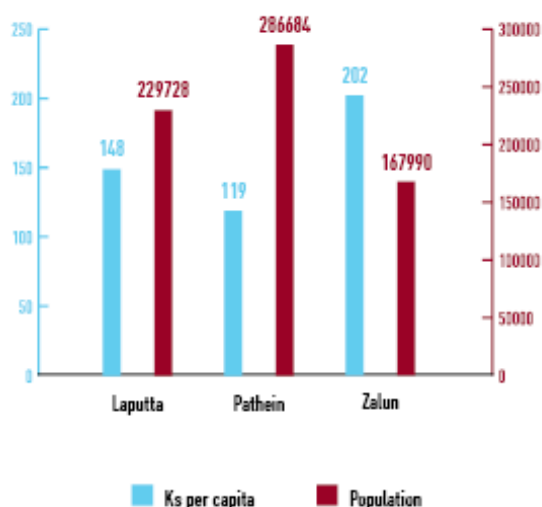
53. These State/Region budgets are intended to finance the following departments: Law, Livestock and Fisheries, Immigration, Revenue, Forestry, Electricity Distribution, Information, Communications and Postal Services, Cooperative Affairs, Firefighting, Municipal Affairs and the Planning Department.

Typically 2-3 out of 10 proposed projects from the township levels are approved under the Poverty Reduction Fund.

Since 2012-13, States and Regions have been receiving funds from the Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF), a presidential initiative that was budgeted and executed under the GAD in the early days of its inception.⁵⁴ In 2013-14, the PRF was distributed in Ayeyarwady Region on the basis of equal shares across the 26 townships (each received approximately Ks 34 million/34,000 USD each). For the three townships in this study, this has meant that per capita spending is relatively low, and that there are discrepancies across townships in the Region: it was highest in Zalun at Ks 202 (0,2 USD), and lowest in Pathein at Ks 119 (0,1 USD) per person (see Figure 13). The process for allocation is similar across the townships, with village-level priorities from the VTA feeding into a list of activities proposed to the Regional Government and region-level GAD for approval. PRF funds are earmarked against specific projects, but in the case of Ayeyarwady, only a small proportion of those proposed from the township level have been approved and funded: "Typically 2-3 out of 10 are approved," noted one township official.

Figure 13: Approximate per capita allocation of the Poverty Reduction Fund in Ayeyarwady townships

Source: Ayeyarwady Region Government.



The way in which townships utilised the PRF has differed based on local priorities. In 2013-14, Zalun spent Ks 23 million on road works and between Ks 5-6 million on loans for economic development.⁵⁵ Pathein Township received Ks 36.5 million, with Ks 26.5 million spent for agriculture development, Ks 5 million for SME development and Ks 5 million for microloans. But with a Ks 15 million (15,000 USD) cap on project size and limited funds available, the PRF is not yet a significant source of funding for Ayeyarwady's townships given their large populations and high number of village tract/wards.

Another such development fund of note is the Rural Development Fund (RDF), under the remit of the GAD. Disbursements are relatively small (reportedly, Ks 10 million (10,000 USD) is available for each State/Region) and there is an imperative for the community to contribute 50 percent of the costs for any project funded through this source. In Zalun

54. This grant of Ks 1 billion per State/Region was the first non-earmarked transfer from the Union to State/Region government that was given to subnational entities on a discretionary basis. In 2013-14, the State/Region had direct drawing rights to the PRF, which sat in the State/Region administration budget, though the GAD retained secretarial responsibility for its execution. In 2014-15, the processes around "equal share" allocation have changed, and each State/Region will have the autonomy to decide on the distribution of the PRF among townships.

55. Prior to this, Zalun received Ks 39 million in 2012-13, for which Ks 30 million was earmarked for roads, Ks 2 million for the construction of a Rural Health Centre (RHC) and Ks 7 million for investments and loans to government cooperatives.

Township, this model has proved difficult to optimise in practice: A person seen locally as an Elderly and Respected Person (ERP) offered a contribution of Ks 20 million for the construction of bridge, but the pledge could not be matched by the GAD. In another case, one village tract agreed to match a grant of Ks 2.5 million for a development project, but could only raise Ks 300,000.

In 2013-14, a Constituency Development Fund (CDF) was also established by the Union Hluttaw whereby each township/constituency was allocated an additional Ks 100 million (100,000 USD) for development projects (each with a maximum cap of Ks 5 million/5,000 USD), selected in consultation with Members of Parliament⁵⁶ for which the developmental impact is likely to be diluted given the large population and high number of villages that are characteristic for townships in Ayeyarwady Region. Focusing on rural development projects and implemented with the participation of the township's four elected Hluttaw members (one each for the two Union Hluttaws, and two per township from the Region Hluttaw), critics have noted that these funds sit outside of the township planning envelope held by the Township Administration and the GAD, and that that parliamentarians could be prone to approve projects based on votes, rather than local development priorities. This appears to have had a bearing on the way in which processes and priorities are set at the township level, and the dynamics at play between the actors involved in this process. In Ayeyarwady townships, MPs seem to play a proactive role in discussing the allocation of such funds. One Township Administrator discussed the important role of their MP in meeting directly with the local constituency residents to inform them of fund availability, and then acting as a sounding board in picking projects to meet the criteria for parliamentary approval. MPs also offer advice to the TMC to set spending priorities, based on field visits and consultations with their constituents.

Setting priorities for local development funds

In addition to those outlined above, a number of other discretionary funds exist, where needs-based proposals are prepared at the township level for submission to and approval by the State/Region Government.⁵⁷ Typically, this process should be handled by the TMC, under the responsibility of the GAD, which is obliged to consult with the TDSC and seek inputs from VTAs to better reflect the priorities of communities.

What emerges across Ayeyarwady townships is that the TMC is not always the driving entity for this process - despite its executive responsibility to do so. Rather, there are examples of the Township Development Support Committee (TDSC), a newly-established advisory body with representation from interest groups, actually leading the formation of priorities for proposals related to available development funding. This is particularly pronounced in Zalun, where the TDSC appears to be carrying out executive responsibilities vis-à-vis the allocation of development funds: Members spoke of performing their role in working with VTAs and compiling priorities and proposals from the community to bring to the GAD. At the same time, one TMC member and head of department admitted a general lack of awareness of the TMC "[...] which seems to be fading." In Pathein, there are no specific meetings for the TMC to gather and make decisions at, but members do join larger meetings comprising other

Instead of the TMC, the TDSC with civic representation is leading the formulation of priorities for proposals related to available funding.

56. See: Vote-buying fears over MP funds plan. Myanmar Times, 15 December 2013.

57. For instance, a fund from the Department of Rural Development and the Ministry of Border Affairs fund for ethnic minorities. See Nixon, Hamish and Joeline, Cindy, Fiscal Decentralization in Myanmar: Towards a Roadmap for Reform. Myanmar Development Resource Institute - Centre for Economic and Social Development (MDRI-CESD) and the Asia Foundation, July 2014.

township committee members and department representatives where township priorities appear to be ratified. Conversely, in Labutta, the TMC has emerged as the key managerial body and forum for discussing and approving development priorities. The interpretation by the committees of their role is contingent on local personality dynamics, but also a result of a lack of clarity among members on objectives. Non-government members of the TDSC professed to be unclear on their responsibilities and the standard operating procedures that govern the committees' tasks, and none had received any training.

4.2.2 Information flow for developmental planning

Cooperation among different stakeholders is required to improve effectiveness of discretionary fund spends.

U Hla Khaing, Region Minister of Planning and Economic Development for Ayeyarwady and MP from Zalun highlighted the trend of rising budget allocations for discretionary funds related to regional development, emphasising the importance of spending this funding in an effective way. For this, he stressed that co-operation among different stakeholders would be required. As the "backbone" of government administration in Myanmar, the township GAD, led by the Township Administrator, administers all government activities at every level of government down to the level of the village tract/ward.⁵⁸ More recently, the GAD's co-ordination and developmental responsibilities have become more pronounced, particularly given the central role played in collating township priorities for these development funds.

One challenge pertains to the sharing of information and co-ordinating across township sector departments, which are a source of valuable information on community priorities and, at the same time, responsible for executing and monitoring development projects at the direction of their line ministries. With each department retaining its own responsibilities to the sector ministry and its own "turf", issues of cross-sectoral co-ordination emerge with implications for development projects. Discussants at a Region-level workshop specifically highlighted a case of the construction of a road and irrigation system in one township, which was affected by confusion between the municipal affairs and irrigation departments as to who was responsible for issuing construction permits.

Regular large gatherings including representatives from township committees and township departments appear to be the favoured format for sharing of information and facilitating co-ordination on township development priorities.

In Ayeyarwady, regular large gatherings including representatives from township committees and township departments appear to be the favoured format for sharing of information and facilitating co-ordination on township development priorities. Formally, discussions on the disbursement of decentralised funds should be led and executed by the TMC through seeking advice from TDSC and TDAC at least once a month, incorporating their perspectives when setting the township's socioeconomic investment priorities.

Several factors may have a bearing on effective information sharing for planning purposes. A relatively large number of township departments (54 in Patheingyi, and over 30 in Labutta and Zalun) may render the current composition of the TMC to be limiting in the task of cross-departmental consultation. This means that alternative forums (i.e. existing inter-department meetings) are being utilised for co-ordination with sector departments and wider consultation. But in practice, this is not always efficient. In Patheingyi, a Ks 4 million (4081 USD) project to renovate a Sub-Rural Health Centre was decided and agreed upon and the Department of Health informed following the decision, without having been consulted. Similarly, in Zalun, the GAD worked with an external sponsor to build a Rural Health Centre which was handed over to the Township Medical Officer without his prior knowledge or involvement in the process.

⁵⁸A Village Clerk who receives a salary from the GAD provides administrative support to the elected Village Tract Administrator.

Box 3: Committees for Poverty Reduction

To address the challenge of co-ordination, the Township Administrator in Labutta has formed specific committees for the eight “poverty reducing” areas, each of which is responsible for planning and implementation of projects which are funded by PRF.⁵⁹ An annual planning meeting for the PRF fund allocation takes place in the township attended by all eight other departments.

It is possible that such discussions are being crowded out at these large meetings, or that they are taking place “offline” within the TMC, in which there is no representation of the Department of Health despite the importance of basic healthcare as a development priority.

TDSC members in the townships also highlighted a lack of information on development plans as being an impediment for executing their consultative function. In Labutta and Zalun it was observed that information on development fund plans and proposed costings was not always shared by the township management with committees: One respondent in Labutta called the process “arbitrary.” Despite their proactive participation in determining the priorities for development funding, Zalun TDSC members observed that development plans were for the most part co-ordinated among the township committees, but relevant information was not shared with them. As an example, they mentioned “the candidates for construction companies during a recent procurement were not shared.” To better facilitate information flow, the TDSC in Zalun has nominated eight VTA “cluster representatives”, who have been assigned to share information and collect ideas for community development from their respective geographical areas. In Pathein, committee members conveyed that information sharing from township management on plans and budgeting was “not bad”, but that the general public faced more difficulty in getting access to such information. Support committee members in all three townships thought that information sharing on project implementation itself was “not good/not bad.” In Labutta, members noted that the community was sometimes informed about the projects at the beginning, but that typically there was no reporting back on progress and results.

To better facilitate information flow, the TDSC in Zalun has nominated eight VTA “cluster representatives”, who have been assigned to share information and collect ideas for community development from their respective geographical areas.

4.2.3 Processes for participatory planning

While planning activities in Ayeeyarwady related to strategic plans and discretionary development funds have their distinctive processes and institutions, there is some effort across both to deepen “participatory planning.” In discussing how information was gathered to reflect people’s priorities for strategic planning, one Township Planning Officer spoke of how VTAs were now asked to prepare proposals prioritising local needs. Between the TMC and the TPIC (both of which are chaired by the Township Administrator), information on village-level priorities is shared.

The consultative committees such as the TDSC also play a “representative” function: members have been elected to represent the interests of their sector (i.e. business, social, economic), and their ability to be effective is contingent on wider consultation with their constituents. The strength of agricultural interest groups is evident in both Zalun and Pathein: There are two Rice Specialisation Companies in Zalun and three in Pathein according to the Myanmar

59. These are: 1) infrastructure, 2) water supply, 3) transport, 4) bridges, 5) education, 6) health, 7) security and 8) agriculture.

Rice Industry Association⁶⁰, with the objective of developing the rice industry through increased agricultural productivity and improving the livelihoods of farmers. In the case of Zalun, vocal participation from the “rice lobby” (as one interlocutor referred to it) appears to be driving the proactive nature of the TDSC and their leading role in setting priorities for available development funding. “We can work hand in hand with farmers (towards development),” notes one TDSC member. A key focus of the committee is on assisting farmers in upgrading their agricultural systems, for which they proposed the development of a 100-acre model farm in the township - which was duly approved along with a Ks 530,000 (540 USD) grant. The TDSC chairman is a prominent business owner of a rice mill, paddy and rice trading company, while another member is chair of the Farmer’s Association. This case represents the ability of capable actors to be able to influence decision-making - somewhat beyond their consultative remit - while at the same time, highlights potential challenges for those representatives who lack the capacity or resources to do so as well as the risk of such forums being captured by influential elites.

Box 4: Women’s participation in developmental planning

The needs and perspectives of women are not evidently reflected in development planning institutions or processes across Ayeyarwady townships on two fronts. Women make up the minority of managers who are obliged to attend inter-departmental meetings and serve as members of various committees in all three townships: In Labutta, females make up just 15 percent of department heads. Moreover, there was no evidence of women having been elected to any of the township consultative committees, suggesting that without adequate consultation from current members, their needs and priorities unlikely to be reflected in a meaningful way. Just 0.24 percent of VTAs in the country are women, and there is evidence of about 8 female VTAs having been elected in Ayeyarwady⁶¹ but none in the three Ayeyarwady townships studied.

	Labutta	Patheingyi	Zalun
Heads of township departments	5/34 (15%)	10/53 (19%)	11/33 (33%)
Non-executive (“elected”) members of consultative committees	None	None	None

In reflecting upon interim findings, township-level actors identified the participation of women as a key governance priority. According to participants, the nature of work in public administration is not always appropriate for women as per socio-cultural norms. At the same time, it was emphasised that women are increasingly taking on decision making roles: of the 14 State/Region cabinets, women are represented only in Kachin, Yangon and Ayeyarwady, where the Minister of Social Affairs, Daw Khin Saw Mu, is female. It should also be noted in this context that country-wide, more than 50 percent of township judges, the lowest level of the judicial branch, are women.

Women in township leadership positions

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.

60. As of 2011. Cited from Zaw, Kan et al. ‘Agricultural Transformation, Institutional Changes, and Rural Development in Ayeyarwady Delta, Myanmar’. Yangon Institute of Economics, 2011.

61. Data provided to UNDP by GAD on October 24, 2014.

4.2.4 Municipal Planning

Also referenced as city or township development committees, the Development Affairs Organisation (DAO) in every township falls directly under the responsibility of the State or Region Minister for Development Affairs, and is responsible for delivering a range of urban services (including water and sanitation). Urban residents interact directly with the DAOs, which are in charge of 'municipal' service delivery. It is a decentralised, revenue-generating department, which receives funds from the State or Region government budget and is accountable to the Chief Minister of the State or Region Government. There is no corresponding Union-level entity.⁶²

To provide advisory support to the DAO, the Township Development Affairs Committee (TDAC) has been established under the same Presidential Notification as the TDSC and also comprises "persons popularly elected from among local people and social and economic organisations." In practice however, the TDAC is a hybrid committee that plays both a technical and consultative role to support municipal service delivery. The operations of the TDAC are framed by the Municipal Act which each State or Region is constitutionally mandated to adapt for its own circumstances. In Ayeyarwady Region, the Municipal Act was adjusted in 2012 to incorporate new reforms for elected citizens on the TDAC, for which specific rules and regulations are applicable.

In Ayeyarwady townships, the TDAC is emerging as an actor for decision-making on matters related to municipal revenues and taxes on households, shops and licenses, and ultimately as an approving body in municipal budget planning. In Patheingyi, it performs some executive functions such as school health education and sanitation inspections in the marketplace. Members of the TDAC were also actively involved in the inspection of a floating market that is under construction.

Cost sharing for urban development

In addition, the TDAC functions as a broker between citizens and the DAO in the development of municipal road works. Progress in urban infrastructure development has been hampered in the past by limitations on the municipal budget, which is wholly funded by local tax collection. This will vary significantly based on the size of the municipal area, i.e. the urban parts of a township that are subdivided into wards. In large townships and district hubs such as Patheingyi, tax collection is much higher, thus imparting the DAO with more spending power, according to the Executive Officer: collected municipal tax revenues amounted to Ks 223 million (223,000 USD) in Zalun against Ks 990 million (993,000 USD) in Patheingyi in 2012-13.⁶³

62. Bissinger, Jared and Matung Maung Linn. *Subnational Government and Business in Myanmar*. Subnational governance in Myanmar Discussion Papers, Centre for Economic and Social Development (MDRI-CESD), December 2013.

63. Township Socio-economic Profiles. GAD, May 2014. This currently poses as a constraint for the DAO with respect to human resources: 30 percent of the budget can be used for salaries, contributing to a hiring shortfall 109 people were hired of the 255 sanctioned for the department in Patheingyi as of May 2014.

Box 5: Cost sharing for local infrastructure development

To overcome resource constraints, a cost-sharing model for financing local infrastructure has been widely applied in both Patheingyi and Zalun, where citizens and the DAO have split the cost of building or upgrading roads in the townships. According to one TDAC member, the DAO would typically refund 50% of the cost incurred to the community for construction. In Zalun, this model was utilised to develop eight municipal streets in 2013, with 11 planned for 2014. Township officials interviewed did note, however, that such arrangements were not always financially viable for the DAO. In Patheingyi township, the TDAC is operationalising a similar arrangement, with local residents contributing 75% of the costs for development of municipal streets and 25% coming from the township DAO. Approximately 100 road-related activities have been undertaken in this way.

4.2.5 People's participation in planning

Measures to include the ideas and suggestions of communities have been integrated into the planning process and allocation of decentralised funds, as outlined above. Most apparently, this is reflected in the participation of 'elected elders', and representatives of social and economic sector groups in the new consultative committees - despite concerns as to the extent to which these can be broadly representative of township interests.

The selection process and role clarity of TDSC members have been causes of concern.

Emerging from discussions with Ayeeyarwady committee members and government staff alike is a lack of clarity on the de jure functions of the TDSC, whose formal role is limited to an advisory one, intended to support the TMC.⁶⁴ Clarity on the role of the TDSC as a consultative sounding board and a credible election process are critical to the committee's legitimacy. Stakeholders in some townships, in light of the processes deployed, are challenging this. TDSCs were established across Ayeeyarwady townships in 2013, though the selection process for sector representatives varied in each case. In Patheingyi, representatives of the 53 CSOs in the township (70-80 persons in total) convened to nominate representative members. In Zalun, elders and the Ward Administrators put forward five nominees for each quarter for the TDSC. Members were then elected at a meeting by the 25 nominees. In Labutta, the Township Administrator selected sector representatives from a list of community elders. "The Township Administrator directly selects members from township elders, and [the TDSC] is not a legitimate representation of the community," says one civil society representative.

In Patheingyi, civil society representatives indicated broader support for the election of support committee members, but noted that most of them came from the business sector or were patrons of the government, questioning their ability to represent wider community interests. In addition, there is evidence of the TDSC performing executive functions outside of its remit, reflecting a misunderstanding by members of their formal responsibilities. For instance, in Zalun, decisions on the allocation of mobile SIM cards disbursed to townships by the Regional Government were made by the TDSC, and committee members discussed how they compiled the development proposals collated from the VTAs for development funding. "The TDSC has the mandate to spend and allocate funds from regional government and MPs funds," according to one TDSC committee member. While broader responsibilities and assigned tasks are outlined in the Presidential Notification⁶⁵, no detailed procedures

64. Notification No 27/2013, 'Assignment of duties for formation of township and ward / village tract development support committee. The President's Office, 26 February 2013.

65. Ibid.



or terms of reference yet exist. There was also no evidence of elected members having received specific training related to their work.

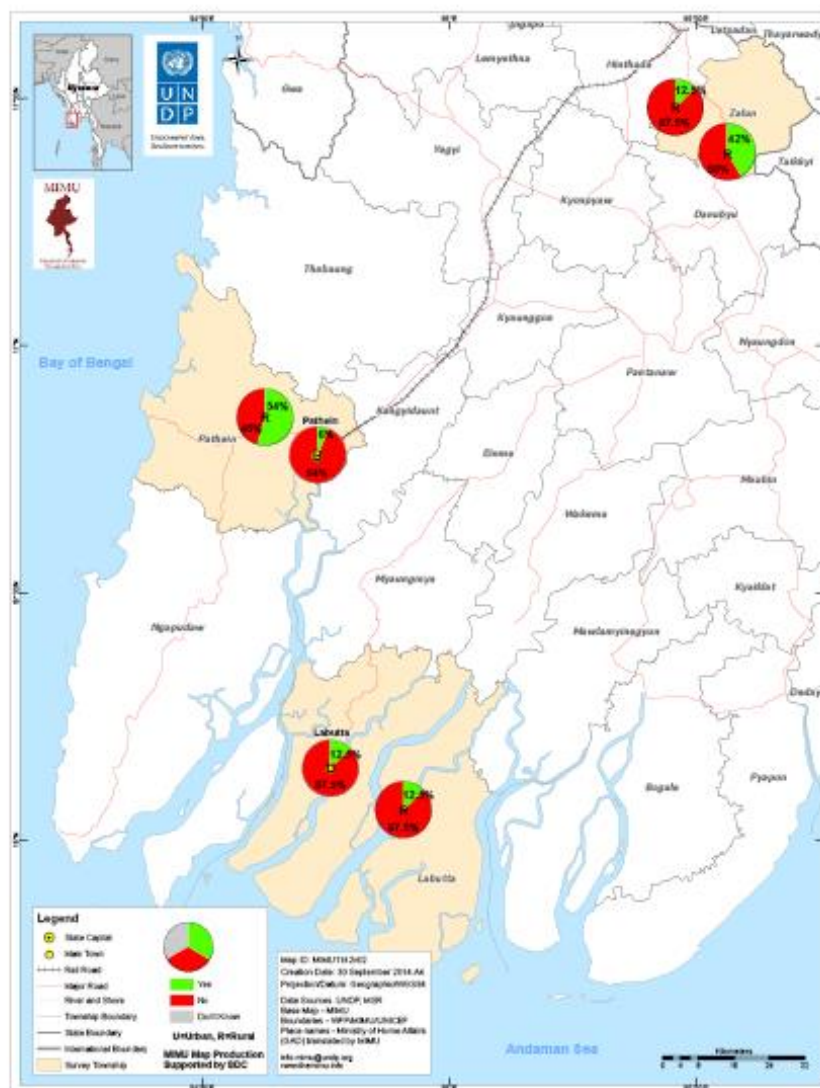
In a number of key policy speeches made by the President since 2011, he has laid out goals, principles, and priorities of his administration in a variety of sectors. These include decentralisation and bottom-up planning. The new approach to governance and development, as declared by the President and reiterated by the entire senior level of government, including at Regional and State level, is to transform the incumbent system, decentralise and promote a people-centered, “bottom-up approach” to development and decision-making through new processes and mechanisms in the strategic planning process.

Among the tools being utilised for “bottom-up” planning include proposals outlining development priorities from the village tract/ward level, and attendance at regular meetings by the elected VTA or WA, village leaders or 10/100 Household Heads. The VTA is central to conveying information on village-level priorities upwards, and remains one of the few channels by which communities can influence decision-making processes at the township level or above. This raises questions of whether people actually have an effective opportunity to share their suggestions and ideas with the VTA, and whether the VTA is facilitating opportunities for people to influence local decision-making. In considering opportunities to interact with the VTA or for people’s priorities to be taken into consideration, village-level meetings with the VTA, the Village Clerk or the 100 Household Heads are the key mechanism in the Ayeyarwady context. Around half (53%) of the 288 respondents to the community-level survey have participated at such a meeting in Ayeyarwady, rising to 61 percent in rural areas. Women (44%) were less likely to have participated than men (63%). Though they might have attended such village gatherings, fewer respondents have been ‘formally’ invited to meetings specifically related to new development projects or problems in the village: Only 23 percent overall, and 19 percent of women (against 27 percent of men) (see Figure 14). This suggests potential for wider inclusion of the community in consultations related to local development projects, and more attention to the participation of women in particular.

While about half of the people surveyed had participated in village level meetings with the VTA or 100 Household heads, fewer (and far fewer women) had been formally invited to these consultations.

Figure 14: People being invited to village-level meetings related to new development projects or problems in the village

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.



Box 6: Community Dialogues: Involvement of communities in development planning

At all six dialogues held at village tracts/wards in Ayeeyarwady, members of the community and service providers were asked to reflect on the extent to which people were involved in local decision making. When asked about the involvement of communities in decision-making in recent years, participants at a community dialogue in May Yi Lan Village Tract, Zalun Township, have noted some changes. "There is more transparency in the last three years. The people have a chance to speak out. In addition, the villagers have permission to elect the VTA." Examples of the VTA actively facilitating the participation of people in local development activities emerged from these discussions.

In Kyaung Pan Kone Village Tract, Patheingyi Township, the VTA had formed a working group committee including representatives of the community to be involved in the participation of a road project. The VTA in Ward 1 of Patheingyi Township also encouraged community involvement in road construction by forming project sub-committees, and facilitating contact with the DAO. In Myitpauk Village Tract in Labutta Township, the VTA has taken a much more consultative approach in carrying out projects. "The VTA now seeks the villagers' opinions when carrying out projects. For example, when a water gate was built, the VTA sought advice from the farmers to inform his decisions," according to participants at a community dialogue. Such examples raise important questions pertaining to the role of the VTA against their mandated responsibilities. It is as yet unclear to what extent the recent elections have altered the relationship between the VTA and their communities, but some anecdotal evidence suggests that at least some VTAs have made use of their new opportunities and acted upon their electoral mandate with a more open, inclusive and interactive approach towards consultations and decision-making processes.

At the same time, communities conveyed that they did not yet feel adequately involved in setting development priorities at the local level. In Ward 8, Labutta Township, it was felt that the VTA only communicated village committees and 10/100 Household Heads, and that "... only the household heads' suggestions are taken into consideration and the people's voice is not considered." This may allude to challenges related to information flow between the VTA and the 10/100 Household Heads, who remain a primary link for the dissemination of information from the administration to the people.

The President, as the Chief Executive of the Myanmar government, has instructed government agents to adopt a more "people-oriented" approach to carrying out their roles and implementing their mandates. These instructions have been well communicated, but it has understandably been a challenge to translate them into tangible change at the community level - though some change is beginning to occur through the mechanisms and processes outlined above, and evidence of more consultative attitudes among some VTAs. Also of interest is the extent to which the reforms are shifting expectations of people with respect to basic services, and the roles and perceptions of service providers in the provision of these.

4.3 Access to basic services

4.3.1 Basic service delivery

Service delivery is not a core function traditionally associated with local government in Myanmar, in the rural areas in particular. During the long periods of military rule and authoritarian government, the state was mainly perceived, and understood its role, as one of controlling the population and defending the state against threats. The public security roles of local administration staff are deeply entrenched. Changing deeply ingrained roles and perceptions and altering the nature of the relationship between the state and citizens to one of democratic accountability and service delivery will take time, and is one of the key long-term challenges of the reform process.

The role of the non-governmental sector

As is the case for townships across the country, the task of effective and efficient delivery of public services is a particularly challenging one in resource-constrained environments. At the township level in Myanmar, domestic non-governmental actors⁶⁶ have been active for a long time and have focused primarily on poverty relief and welfare-related activities. This includes burial societies, healthcare, and pensioners' groups for former soldiers, primarily drawing on local funding and resources. These organisations played an important complementary role in bringing at least some basic education and health services to the people during decades of underinvestment, although their outreach was often limited.

Post Nargis, civil society has emerged as a key provider of services.

In Ayeyarwady, CSOs complement the provision of education and health services in some townships. The emergency response to Cyclone Nargis has been attributed for the mobilisation and growth of civil society in Ayeyarwady Region, with many organisations geared towards supplementing healthcare services or providing livelihoods support for citizens. This is particularly the case in the Region capital of Patheingyi, where a reported number of 53 organisations operate from. Nine CSOs are active in Labutta, and there are seven in Zalun. In Zalun, CSO representatives conveyed that they were typically the "first destination" for community members seeking help, while in Patheingyi there is "a good familiarity between citizens and the CSOs." The relationship between civil society and the community is perceived to be less affable by CSOs in Labutta.

In Zalun, CSOs contribute to public service delivery when the hospital requires oxygen or blood supply, and there is an ambulance that can be used by public health authorities in case of emergencies. However, coordination challenges remain. "Normally, we do not communicate with the GAD regularly," says one CSO representative, "but GAD will call us if emergency support is needed". In Patheingyi, CSOs are familiar with collaborating with government and sharing of resources for emergency situations, though information sharing is still a challenge. "We don't get much public information from government officials," says one Patheingyi representative from a healthcare CSO. "During an outbreak of dengue fever at a health centre, the hospital was unable to share information with us, making it hard for us to prepare to help."

66. For this research broad definition of the term Civil Society (Organizations) as used by the World Bank is employed, which refers to the wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) therefore refer to a wide of array of organisations: community groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations. Within the Myanmar setting this includes both registered and non-registered CSOs.

As is the case across the country within government structures, the township sector departments are the most significant actors in the administration of basic local services. In what follows, three areas of state service delivery at the local level are analysed. Notably, these are not necessarily local-level government services, but central government functions delivered and implemented in a deconcentrated manner, and at the local level. This also implies that the government staff involved in delivering these services are central government staff who are located at the local level, but report to and follow the instructions of central government ministries, albeit increasingly with the intermediary level of the Regional Government departments playing a coordinating role.

Primary healthcare

Healthcare needs vary significantly from one township to another across Ayeyarwady Region depending on climatic and geographical factors: For example, malaria is common in Patheingyi Township, but much less so in Zalun. For primary healthcare delivery, the biggest challenge pertains to transportation of supplies and people through the Delta waterways and communication with the more remote villages. The remote location of some communities makes the transportation of basic supplies and vaccines a challenging task, though child immunisation rates in the region (97%) are comparable to the national average (98%).⁶⁷ But access is one of the reasons why children in Ayeyarwady Region are less likely than the average Myanmar child to be born in a health facility (only about 23 percent are, against the national average of 36 percent).⁶⁸

Primary healthcare delivery to the remote villages through Delta waterways is a big challenge.

	Labutta	Patheingyi	Zalun
No. of hospitals	2	5 (1x250-bed, 4x station hospitals)	4 (1x25-bed, 3x16-bed, 1 under constr.)
Maternal Child Health Centres	1	2	1
Rural Health Centres (RHC)	13	7	7
Sub-rural Health Centres	70	41	34
No of healthcare staff	128		129

Table 12: Data on public healthcare resources, Ayeyarwady Region townships

Source: Township Healthcare and GAD offices, Ayeyarwady Region, 2013.

	2011			2012			2013		
	Labutta	Patheingyi	Zalun	Labutta	Patheingyi	Zalun	Labutta	Patheingyi	Zalun
Home deliveries by health staff (%)								28	43.4
Deliveries in RHC delivery room (%)									
Antenatal care coverage (%)								112	88.4
Infant mortality rate / 1000 live births		22.3			18.1			13.6	21.7
Under 5 years mortality rate / 1000 live births		28.1			22.7			27.8	20
Maternal mortality rate / 1000 live births		2.34			2.9			1.2	1.7
No. outpatients	1,250	10,570		2,249	11,185			3,167	14,092
No. inpatients	3,164	1,323		4,212	1,585			5,287	2,123
Deliveries									413

Table 13: Basic healthcare indicators, Ayeyarwady Region townships

Source: Township Healthcare Profiles, 2013.

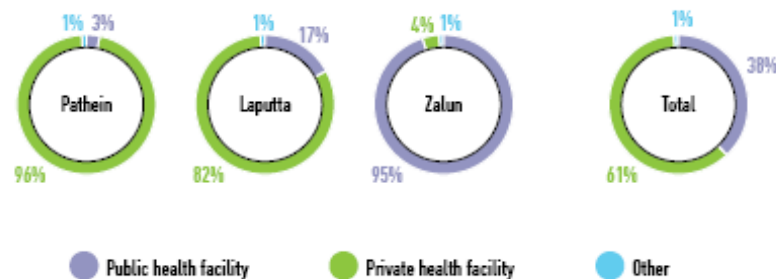
67. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2009-2010.

68. Ibid.

Where the option is available to them, 61 percent of respondents from the community survey rely on private health facilities, versus 38 percent who use public healthcare services. Proximity appears to determine user choice of facilities - whereas 96 percent of respondents in Patheingyi opting for private providers, 95 percent of Zalun respondents use a public health facility, attributing this to distance and lack of other options (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: If you or any of your household members is sick and requires medical attention, which health service/facility do you usually go to?

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeeyarwady Region, May 2014.



As is the case across the country, the Township Medical Officer (TMO) currently plays both a medical and administrative role in townships across Ayeeyarwady. Budgeting and planning activities remain with the Ministry of Health at the Union level, with the township compiling and submitting data on outputs, basic health indicators and township health priorities upwards to the line ministry. This is where decisions on capital spending still take place, as do the vast majority of those on human resources.⁶⁹ The annual budget for healthcare is typically calculated based on previous practice and needs. Zalun has an allocated annual operating budget of Ks 1.62 billion (1.65 m USD) in 2014-15, with no capital allocation recorded.⁷⁰ For Patheingyi, Ks 257.4 million (0.26 m USD) was allocated to the township, though it is likely that funding has been allocated to Patheingyi District for the running of hospitals and other facilities used by township residents.⁷¹

One major change for the planning process is in the procurement of medical supplies and equipment, which is now handled and managed by the Region-level Department of Health for more efficient allocation. Decisions were made with the input of TMOs from the 26 townships in Ayeeyarwady who gathered in Patheingyi to help regional government officials choose a supplier. Some challenges remain: According to health facility managers in the six village tracts/wards covered, the most common shortage is the lack of drugs and medical supplies. In Zalun, supplies covering only around eight months of the year have been received, and the township also lacks storage space for the shipment.

Sixty-five percent of patients at public facilities say they always pay for medicines, while 26 percent sometimes do.

These supply bottlenecks are likely to be one of the explanations for patients making payments at local health facilities, despite a 2013 national policy making essential medicines available free of charge to users of public health services. Sixty-five percent of patients at public facilities say they always pay for medicines, while 26 percent sometimes do (see Figure 16). Of those who paid for medicines, the majority were told by healthcare staff that the government supplies some (essential) medicines while specialist medicines had to be paid for. This is corroborated by public health facility managers who confirmed that treatment, consultation, essential drugs and medical supplies were provided to patients free of charge,

⁶⁹ Subnational Governance in Myanmar and its Implication for Child Rights, UNICEF January 2014.
⁷⁰ Socio-economic Profile, Zalun Township, May 2014.
⁷¹ Ibid.

but patients had to pay when those were not available at the clinic. Despite the new policy, facility managers highlighted insufficient medicines and medical supplies and poor supporting infrastructure and housing at the village level as the most important challenges to improving the quality of basic healthcare services.

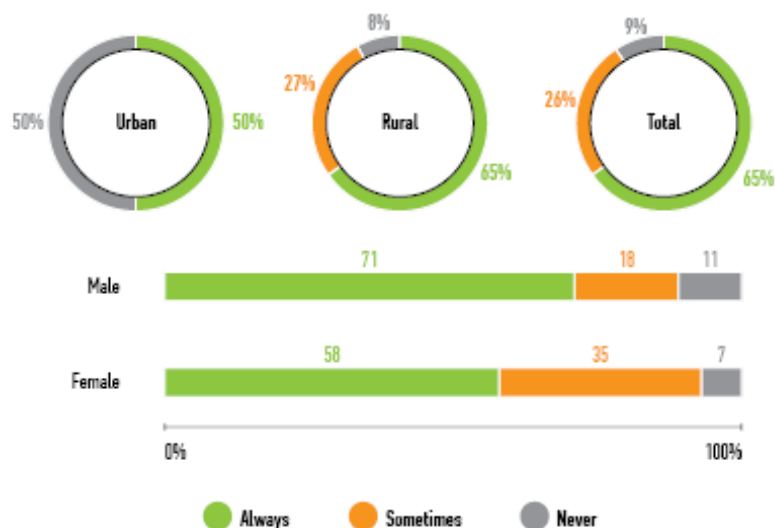


Figure 16: Do you always, have you sometimes or never had to pay for the medicines that the nurse or doctor give to you or a household member, at the public health facility?

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.

Primary education

Like public health, education is a core central government function and responsibility. It has not been devolved to the State or Region level, let alone decentralised to the local or community level. In the past, the education sector has operated as a large centralised organisation controlled by the Ministry of Education, obviously with a presence throughout the country through education officials and teachers, most of whom are also employed directly by the Ministry. With the reforms under way, there have been attempts to seek more of a functional disaggregation between different tiers of government in this sector.

As observed in a recent sector study, access remains a challenge in the delivery of primary education for the country as a whole where “the education system is characterised by poor quality, outdated pedagogy and insufficient geographic coverage, with rural and border areas being poorly served./.../ Roughly half of Myanmar’s children do not complete primary school.”⁷² With a large number of primary schools covering a wide surface area, the management of education facilities can be challenging for administrators in Ayeyarwady—particularly given that the waterways are the only means of transportation in much of the Region. 2011 data indicates that the primary school enrolment rate in Ayeyarwady stood at 88 percent, which is equal to the national average. But only about half (51 %) of children enrolled in primary school in the region complete their schooling on time.⁷³ When asked to reflect on the most important challenges for their primary school to improve the quality of education, of the 13 teachers interviewed, basic infrastructure (including water, electricity,

Administrators are challenged in management of education facilities – given that waterways are the only means of transportation.

72. Zobrist, Brooke and McCormick, Patrick. A Preliminary Assessment of Decentralisation in Education: Experiences in Mon State and Yangon. Subnational governance in Myanmar Discussion Papers. Centre for Economic and Social Development (MDRI-CESD), December 2013.
73. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2009-10. UNICEF.

Table 14: Key primary education resources and indicators, Ayeyarwady Region townships

Source: Township Education Health and GAD offices, Ayeyarwady Region, 2014.

	Labutta	Pathein	Zalun
Post-primary schools	67	-	-
Primary schools	228	249	179
Primary school students	40,863	31,966	8,713
Primary school teacher: student ratio	1:25	1:27	-
Primary school teachers appointed	562	1258	806

Innovative mechanisms such as 'school cluster families' are emerging for addressing communication issues.

toilets), increased teaching capacity and a requirement for more school furniture, equipment and teaching aids were highlighted. For all of these, local solutions could be found.

Coordinating all education activities at the township level, the Township Education Officer (TEO) pays the salaries of all education staff via the headmasters; is involved in the selection, recruitment and training of daily salary teachers, keeps an overview of staff flow and advises the higher level offices on vacancies and staff planning. In addition, the township education department carries out school inspections and deals with serious complaints that cannot be handled by the headmasters. A key mechanism of primary education administration in Ayeyarwady Region is the use of "school cluster families". Comprising of 5-10 schools, these clusters are led by a principal (selected by peers in the group) who is responsible for sharing information communicated by township education officials, helping to mitigate communication issues.

At lower levels, however, the involvement of parents in the planning process was reported to be limited. The budget figures are inconclusive. Allocation of education funds was the highest of all departments in Zalun Township, at Ks 6.158 billion (6.3 m USD) for 2014-15, primarily dedicated to capital spending which comprised Ks 5.69 billion (5.8 m USD).⁷⁴ In Pathein, Ks 3.67 billion (3.75 m USD) was allocated for the same period, but the majority (Ks 3.34 billion-3.4 m USD) was allocated for operational costs.⁷⁵ In addition, some external support is also being provided for individual schools (i.e. the Nippon Foundation is providing some funding for schools in Zalun).

Most recruitment is conducted at levels above the township, but there is an emerging role for TEOs in the hiring and transfer of primary assistant teachers, although the TEO is still required to seek final approval of hires from the district and Region-level education

Box 7: Emerging consultative approach in education sector

Township education staff in Ayeyarwady observe that a more consultative approach has recently been deployed in the planning process. "The head office (the Yangon-based Department of Basic Education)⁷⁶ asks us about our plans for improvement and proposed activities based on our needs," observed one Pathein education official. For the 2014-15 planning, township education staff were required to collate information and proposals from all school headmasters. Guidelines have been prepared and provided to townships on gathering information and sharing it to the village tract/ ward level, and principals are now consulted for their ideas and suggestions. In addition, seminars were recently held at regional level, where 3-4 parents per school were invited to participate and share their views.

74. Socio-economic Profile, Zalun Township, May 2014.

75. Ibid.

76. One of the Union Government departments still maintaining a sizable number of staff in the former capital city

authorities. An initiative to showcase the “ten best and worst” teaching staff has been piloted in the Region, where TEOs are required to submit nominations for their respective townships. But, as noted by one township education official, the assessment lacks clear criteria: “We were asked to report back to the Region Department of Education on the best and worst ten teachers, but here were no instructions on what criteria to use for this. It was very hard to judge, with no indicators or reasoning.”

Another shift is a growing recognition among township education officials of the need for crosssectoral co-ordination. “In the past, school construction was exclusively funded by the Ministry of Education budget,” observes an education official in Zalun. “Now with new contributions to education activities (five schools are being built from development funds), we have to work with the GAD.”

Drinking water

Most households in the Delta rely on the Ayeyarwady river for their supply of drinking water. In this water-rich area, infrastructure development has focussed on roads and other development priorities, as opposed to drinking water. Yet, the quality of the region’s drinking water has emerged as a public health challenge in the past. In early 2000, arsenic contamination of groundwater was detected in groundwater sources.⁷⁷ Around 21 percent of households in Ayeyarwady Region were not using improved water sources in 2010 (comparable to the national average of 18 percent), and prevalence of diarrhoea among children under the age of five years increased from almost 5 percent in 2003 to about 9 percent in 2009-10,⁷⁸ indicating decreased access to safe drinking water for children. Despite the wide availability of water, scarcity of clean drinking water can be a problem for Ayeyarwady residents during the dry season, particularly following the damage caused to water sources by Cyclone Nargis: Many ponds and wells became salinized when a three-metre tidal surge struck the low-lying area of the Delta.⁷⁹

Inhabitants in the Region depend on harvesting rainwater, communal water ponds and tube and open wells for drinking water (see Table 15). Of the 288 community respondents asked, 43 percent rely on a deep tube well, while others use a natural water source such as a river, lake or pond. Only 2 percent use a public water supply connection such as a tap or a pump. The VTAs of the six village tracts/wards considered the condition of the main water facilities to be functioning well, though only two had been involved in or been invited to for a meeting with government officials to talk about the water services in their village tract/ward.

With the restructuring of the rural development portfolio in late 2013, rural water supply is now the responsibility of the Department of Rural Development (DRD), which is part of the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development, while the municipal DAO retains oversight for urban water supply. Water supply is not a key priority for the DAO in Ayeyarwady region, and was not even featured in the budget for Patheingyi Township, where municipal residents are considered to be self-sufficient in accessing household water. Water is a lower priority in some rural areas too: In Zalun, no budget has been allocated to rural water supply for 2014-15.

There is an emerging role for TEOs in the hiring and transfer of primary assistant teachers, although the TEO is still required to seek final approval of hires from the district and Region-level education authorities.

Few VTAs interact with government officials about water services in their village tract.

77. Figures from research by the Save the Children UK, cited in: Delta Alliance – Ayeyarwady Delta, Final Mission Report, 11 December 2013.

78. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2009-10, UNICEF.

79. Delta Alliance – Ayeyarwady Delta, Final Mission Report, 11 December 2013.

Table 15: Basic information on water supply, Ayeerwady Region townships

Source: Township Development Affairs Office and Department of Rural Development, Ayeerwady Region, 2014.

	Labutta	Patheingyi	Zalun
Municipal	No water pipeline system. Water supply from local lake, stored in tanks, distributed to citizens.	No municipal budget dedicated to water supply. Majority of citizens are self-sufficient and use tube wells.	Most villages rely on river water for which households often dig their own wells.
Rural		38 villages with water shortages (of 287) in 2013-14. Plan to cover 24 villages in 2014-15.	Plans for developing two wells and provide water pumps for two villages.

4.3.2 People's perceptions on access to local services

People in Myanmar, especially in rural areas, still expect rather little from their government in terms of service delivery. For a long time Myanmar has had one of the lowest government expenditures for the social sector anywhere in the world (as measured in terms of expenditure to GDP ratio, as well as the percentage of expenditures allocated for these sectors). As a regional comparison, the country spends the least on the education sector and the third least on healthcare among the ASEAN countries, according to a study by ActionAid Myanmar. National-level spending into the social sectors has risen in the past few years. The government allocated 7.5 percent of the Union budget for education in the 2013-14, up from 5.2 percent in 2011-12. And 3.8 percent of the national budget was allocated to healthcare in the 2013-14 fiscal year, up from 1.3 percent in the 2011-12.⁸⁰

This recent rise has resulted in more socio-economic investment and improved service delivery at the township level through increased sector spending and "poverty-reducing" projects prioritised and implemented through more available funds for township development (though the magnitude of this funding remains limited). In a context where the majority of people remain underserved for basic infrastructure and local services, respondents were asked about their perceptions of improvements and whether they felt to be receiving equal treatment to other service users. These observations are naturally subjective, but are interesting for two reasons. Firstly, the data provides some insight on the extent to which investments and related local governance are being felt at the level of the village tract and ward. Secondly, it may help identify areas for possible attention in the future, and highlight where progress is less evident to people in the community.

Perceived improvements on basic services

About one-third perceived improvement in education and roads and a minority noticed improvement in health and water services.

Township residents were asked questions on developments in their communities, and specifically, of their perceptions of the most important improvements affected by the government in their village tract/ ward in the past three years. Responses indicated that there was high awareness of increased socio-economic investment by government, though the impact was more apparent in some townships than others. One third of the 288 respondents (35%) observed improved education facilities and services, while improved roads were noted by 33 percent. Important improvements to local health and water facilities were only observed by 7 percent of respondents respectively, mirroring spending priorities at the national level. Just under a third (29%) of respondents thought that the government has done nothing to improve the situation in the community.

80. Action Aid Myanmar March 2014.

In Patheingyi, improved education facilities or services (53%) and investments into improved roads (40%) were most apparent among survey respondents. This was also the case in Zalun, (42% road, 40% education) and 28 percent of people also noted improved health facilities. In the cyclone-devastated township of Labutta, improvements in education, roads and the electricity connection were observed, but for most part, respondents have not seen any improvements (49%) (see Figure 17). During community dialogues at the village tract/ward level, discussants noted a number of improvements in the past three years, the most common of which was improved education facilities or services.⁸¹ These responses indicate that people are cognisant of the socioeconomic investments being made at the community level. The perception by significant numbers that improvements have not been observed could be a result of the most important of community needs not having been recognised or met.

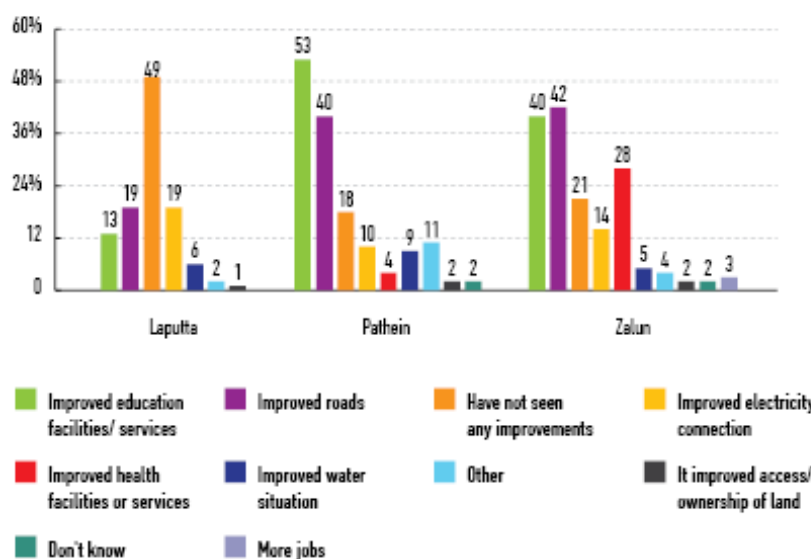


Figure 17: People's views on "What are the most important improvements your government has made to the situation in your village tract/ward over the last three years?"

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.

Primary healthcare

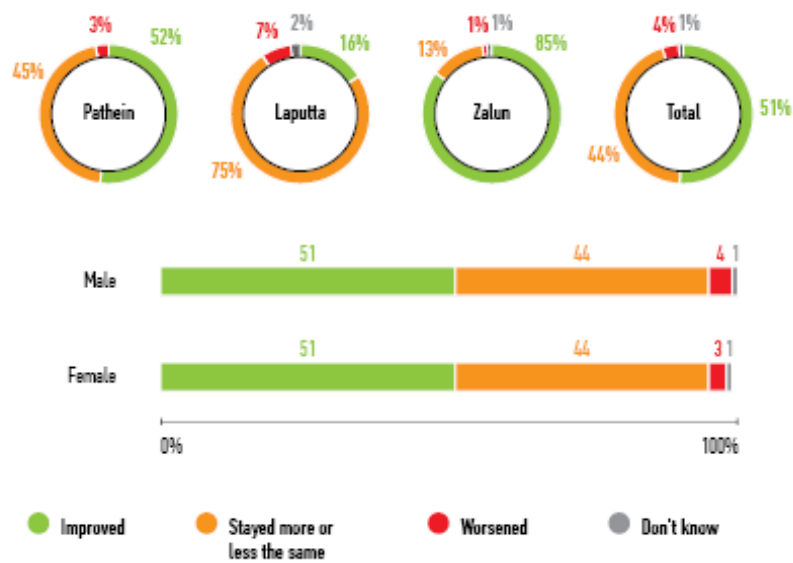
Since the start of reforms, there has been a proliferation of private clinics in urban areas, providing residents with an alternative to public facilities - as appears to have been the case in Patheingyi township. Perceived improvements must be considered in the context of growing choice, which may also reflect on people's perceptions of government performance.

Over half of all respondents to the community survey perceive health services to have improved in their ward/village tract, though the impact is not equally felt across the townships - only 16 percent of Labutta respondents noted improvements, while 75 percent reported that healthcare services stayed "more or less the same". 85 percent of respondents in Zalun observed improvements. Such divergence of opinion is likely related to the development of specific facilities at the local level - 46 percent of all respondents attribute improvements to the construction or renovation of a health facility, while 36 percent cite the improved attitudes of healthcare staff. 26 percent indicate reduced costs for consultations and drugs a significant improvement (see Figure 18).

81. See Annex 4 for profile of respondents at the six dialogues held at the village tract/ward level in Ayeyarwady Region.

Figure 18: Have the health services in your village tract/ward improved over the last three years?

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.



Only 6 percent of respondents have ever been invited or involved in a meeting with government officials to talk about local health services, indicating that there has been little direct engagement between communities and healthcare officials on village-level priorities to date. But when asked about their ideas for how to improve health services further, the majority of the respondents (86%) suggested the construction of a new facility, upgrading existing facilities or investing in more equipment, followed by the hiring of more frontline healthcare staff (44%).

Most respondents (92%) thought that they and their family members receive the same treatment as everyone else in the village.

As it currently stands, 39 percent of respondents are satisfied with health services at their village tract and ward, versus 28 percent who are not. As might be expected in light of perceived improvements, satisfaction rates are highest in Zalun (63%). Most respondents (92%) thought that they and their family members receive the same treatment as everyone else in the village. However, those who thought that they were treated worse than other patients attributed this to discrimination against poor people, who could not afford to pay for gifts for healthcare staff (see Figure 19).

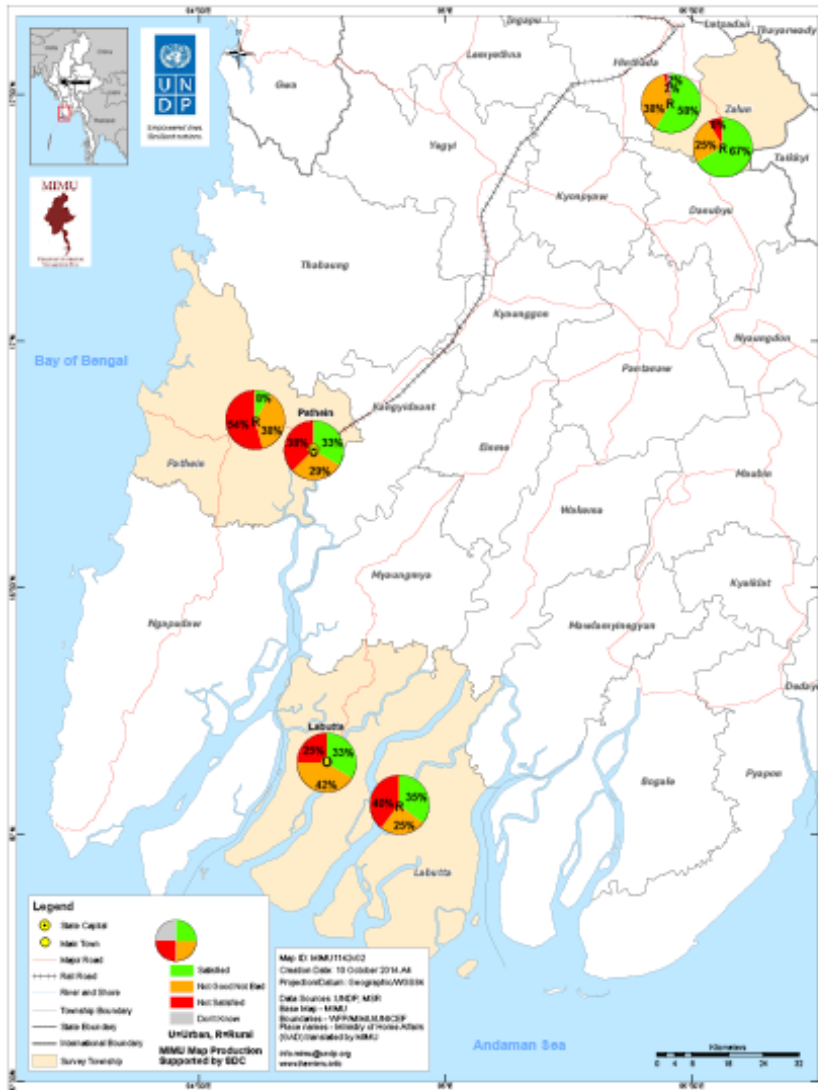


Figure 19: User satisfaction with public health services

Box 8: Community Dialogues: Experiences of local service delivery at healthcare facilities

Members of the community and service providers in six village tracts/wards were asked to discuss the quality of public healthcare, and the equity of treatment at the local level. Issues of access, affordability and equity emerged from the discussions. In Ward 1, Pathein Township, service users spoke of privatisation as having a detrimental impact on affordability and access. "There was an old public clinic within the ward that was leased to a private clinic owner to open a clinic. Since then, the community has faced difficulty in accessing healthcare from public clinics that are far away and costly to travel to. Poor patients cannot afford travel expenses and so do not get treatment."

Access is particularly challenged in rural areas, according to participants at a community dialogue in Myitpauk Village Tract, Labutta Township, where there is no public health facility. Service users need to travel to another village that is only accessible by water transportation. "In an emergency it is difficult to access, and it is unsafe to cross the river at night-time," noted service users. The prevalence of female health staff is perceived to have a bearing on the availability of emergency services. "As healthcare staff are mostly female, they are not available for treatment during the night due to security concerns," noted service users in Pyin Ma Kone Village Tract, Zalun Township.

Issues of equity emerged at the frontline related to socio-economic status of patients. Though this was not evident from the community survey (96 percent of public health facility users in Ayeeyarwady thought that they received the same treatment as others in the village), participants highlighted discrimination against the poor by healthcare staff in Myitpauk Village Tract as an equity concern, as did those in May Yi Lan Village Tract, Zalun Township where one respondent stated that "if the patients cannot afford to give presents or donations to some of the staff at the hospital, they are less likely to receive good healthcare."

This was also a concern in Ward 8 in Labutta Township, where respondents highlighted the cost of hospital fees as a barrier to access. "Hospital fees are very high. If patients do not have money, the hospital does not give treatment to the patients. HIV patients have been discriminated against."

Primary education

The majority - 76 percent of respondents - perceive primary education services to have improved in their ward/village tract in the past three years, most evidently in Zalun (83%) and Pathein (81%). In Labutta, around a third of respondents (35%) thought it was "more or less the same". Heightened perceptions of improvements at the community level are likely related to visibility of infrastructure developments - 86 percent of respondents attribute improvements to the construction or renovation of the building of a new primary school, better maintenance or more classrooms/toilets (see Figure 20).

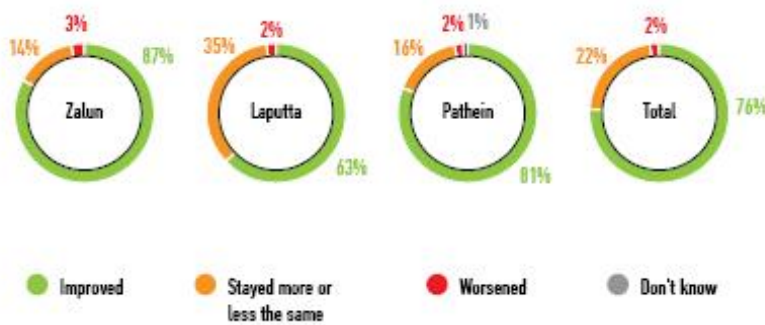


Figure 20: Has primary education in the nearest primary school in your village tract/ward improved, worsened or stayed more or less the same over the last three years?

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.

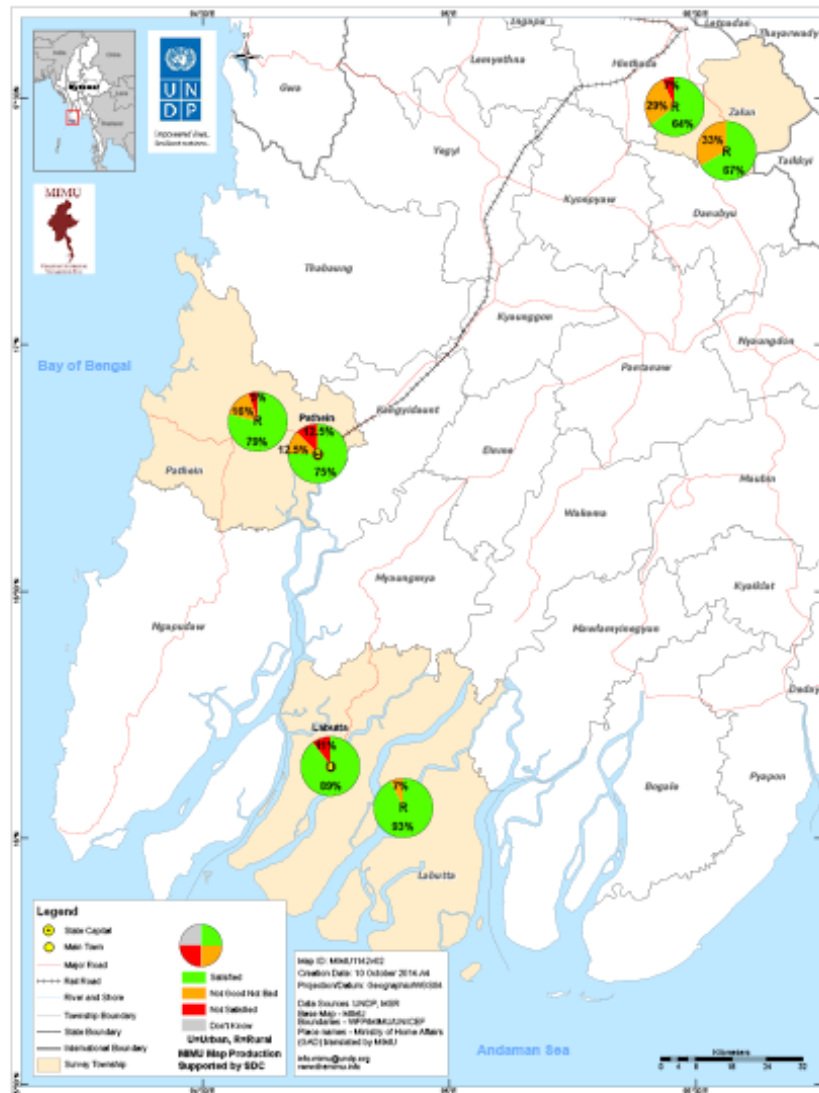
30 percent of respondents (essentially all of those who are parents of school-aged children) have been invited or involved in a meeting with government officials to talk about primary education, indicating that parents have some engagement with education officials to share their suggestions. When asked about their ideas for how to improve primary education services, 44 percent suggested the construction of more schools and classrooms, followed by the hiring of more teachers (38%). The majority of parents - 78 percent (of 100) - are satisfied with primary education services at their village tract whereas 6 percent are not (see Figure 21).

One challenge related to delivery of primary school services is a lack of clarity among respondents on the policy around gifts and donations to primary school teachers. 25 percent of parents always or sometimes provide a gift to the teachers, school principals or the school for the education of their child, some of whom (28%) felt obliged to do so. This pertains to attitudes expressed by parents related to equality of treatment: Nearly all those who responded to the community survey (92%) perceived their children to be receiving equal treatment to other primary school students, but the handful who perceived unfair treatment attributed this to discrimination against poor people who couldn't afford to pay for gifts and donation. Still, examples of sensitivity displayed by frontline service providers to the needs of vulnerable groups emerged from the community dialogues. In Myitpauk Village Tract in Labutta Township, teachers placed the students with hearing problems in the front row of the classroom so that they could hear them speak more easily. It was observed by community members that in general "teachers give encouragement and more support to the disabled students."

Ninety-two perceived their children to be receiving equal treatment to other primary school students.



Figure 21: Parents' satisfaction with primary education



Another access issue that emerges at the frontline concerns access to primary education facilities among urban and rural students. As can be expected, rural students across the three townships are more likely to have to travel further to get to school - some 42 percent must travel for over 15 minutes, against 26 percent of urban students (see Figure 22).

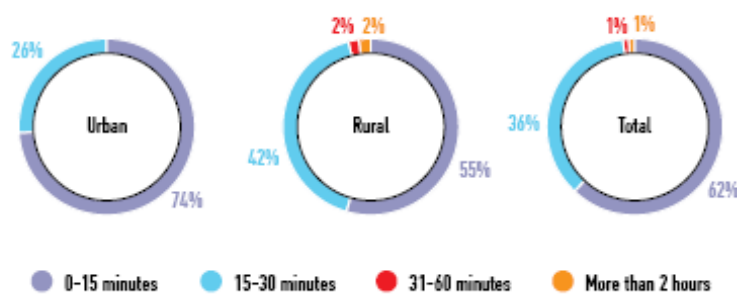


Figure 22: How long does it take for your child/children to get to this primary school?

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.

Drinking water

Most respondents (66%) agreed that the provision of clean drinking water has stayed more or less the same, in the past three years. Respondents in Patheingyi appeared most ambivalent: 22 percent perceived improvements in this area, while 16 percent thought that provision of clean drinking water in that township had worsened in the last three years (see Figure 23). Again, such perceptions are likely related to local area investments in water supply - 56 percent of respondents who observed improvements attributed this to the installation of taps and pumps.

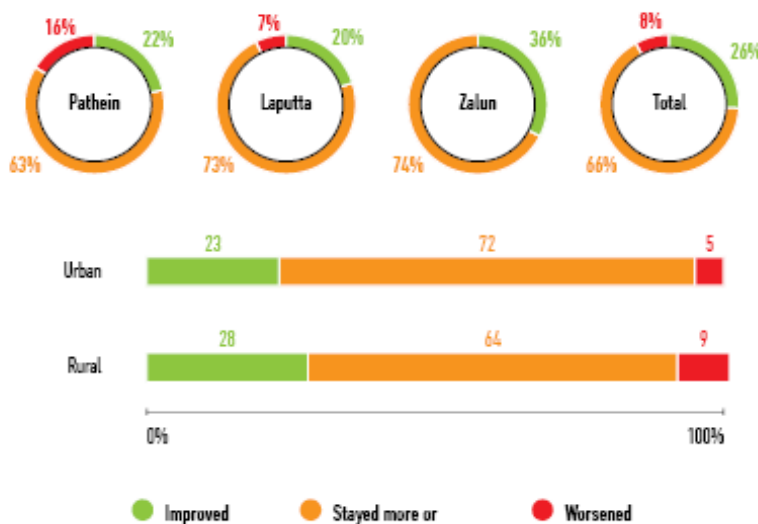


Figure 23: Has the provision of clean drinking water in your village tract/ward improved, worsened or stayed more or less the same over the last three years?

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.

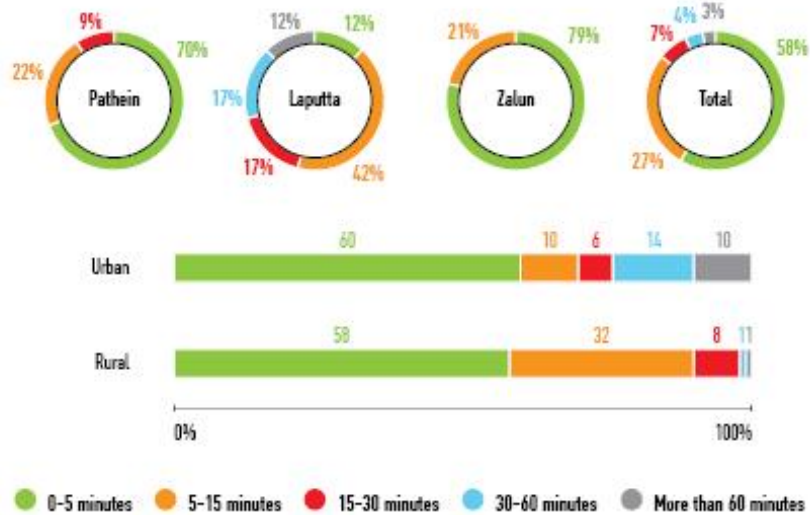
Just 6 percent of respondents have been invited or involved in a meeting with government officials to talk about drinking water, indicating that there has been very limited direct consultation with the community on this issue. Issues related to access emerge from the community survey related to access to drinking water in Ayeyarwady Region that are reflective of discrepancies in local infrastructure development between townships. In Labutta, the vast majority of respondents (88%) must travel for more than five minutes to get to the main drinking water source for their household, compared to an average of 42 percent across the three townships (see Figure 24).

Limited direct consultation has taken place with the community on drinking water.



Figure 24: How long does it take to get to the main source of drinking water for your household?

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.



Perceptions from the community indicate that there is recognition of socio-economic investments trickling down to the village level - primarily in education, followed by healthcare and drinking water. People have not historically relied on government assistance, and are used to addressing problems and everyday challenges by themselves at the community level. Their attitudes to and expectations of basic services are understandably shaped by these experiences. These are, however undergoing change of which the outcome is as yet unpredictable. This is also the case when considering accountability, which is a relatively new concept for Myanmar vis-à-vis local governance.

4.4 Information, transparency and accountability

At this stage in the reform process, the decentralisation of fiscal and administrative accountability below the State or Region remains extremely limited in Myanmar. Decision-making on township development funding remains with the State or Region government, while most township departments continue to function as "service delivery units" at the directive of their line ministries whose regional government departments are themselves in most cases entirely subordinate to their mother ministries at the Union level. For the most part, upward accountability from the township, to the district, State/Region and then Union-level line ministry is very well established, with clearly established reporting mechanisms in place. But there is, as of yet, little formal space for the public to

seek accountability from below, with the VTA, despite the recent introduction of elections, forming no exception. As the newly-elected 'representatives' of the village tracts/ wards, VTAs can be considered as having an implicit mandate to be responsive to the needs and grievances of local residents, though they have no institutional obligation to do so.

Other formal mechanisms available to the people are the dispute resolution and grievance mechanisms at the level of the village tract/ward and township, with the most well-established of these in place for the resolution of land disputes. However, there is no formal administrative recourse mechanism and access to the courts is largely impossible (e.g. for land disputes), or considered futile. Critical to the ability of people to be able to navigate the disputes among themselves and with state authorities, and to seek some form of "answerability" (or responsiveness to complaints, queries and requests) through formal or informal channels, is their access to information on local governance arrangements.

Even less developed are mechanisms for social accountability. The media's ability to hold office holders to account is rather limited at the local level, and CSOs have played and continue to play a very constrained role in Myanmar to date. As observed in a recent study on democratic governance in Myanmar undertaken by UNDP: "As a result of the often bitter and acrimonious relations in the past, especially in areas related to the legal sector, human rights, community relations, transparency and accountability, it is understandable that attitudes on both sides are still characterised by caution and mistrust".⁸² After decades of exclusion, the space for CSOs to participate in these activities is slowly emerging. Arguably, this is happening faster in Ayeyarwady Region than in other States and Regions across the country, where CSOs emerged in response to the devastation wreaked by Cyclone Nargis, developing capacity and experience, and building relationships with communities and the administration.

For political accountability to function, people must be able to choose their political representatives at the various levels of governance. The 2010 Union and State/Region huttaw elections, and the 2012 by-elections in some constituencies, provided the first taste of electoral participation for the people of Myanmar in generations. The elections of the VTAs were a much more subdued and localized affair and had no involvement of political parties. The upcoming general elections in 2015 will represent a new opportunity to exercise people's voting rights in a pluralistic political environment. While there is no equivalent political representation below the State/Region level (except in Self-Administered Areas of which there are none in Ayeyarwady) there are a handful of mechanisms (such as the new election of the VTA) and other additional avenues that could represent further opportunities to claim space and express their voices in matters of local governance.

4.4.1 Access to information: formal and informal channels

In Ayeyarwady, despite a reliance on water transport for mobility across much of the delta, township officials did not perceive accessibility to be a serious challenge for conveying information to the wider public. Various instruments being used by the GAD for sharing information with the public include regular co-ordination meetings, dedicated committee meetings, public meetings at the village level and public display of written notices to communicate government announcements and policies. It should be noted that throughout

82. Brand, Marcus, *Democratic Governance in Myanmar: Situation Analysis*. UNDP, September 2013. Page 121.



Box 9: Information flow

Regular meetings with VTAs (once a month in Zalun and Labutta, and twice-monthly in Pathein) appear to be the primary channel for sharing information from township administration officials pertaining to local development plans or disaster risk reduction, for example. As noted by one Township Administrator, it is common to convey information by phone or through neighbouring VTAs in case of necessity.

its periods of military and authoritarian rule, the state in Myanmar always disposed of a functioning mass-communication system of the socialist type. However, the top-down nature of this communication and the reluctance to provide public access to information that can possibly indicate problems or make the state or public officials appear in a negative light, are still legacies from past practice.

CSO perceive a lack of information sharing from government and Township Administrator hesitant to share information especially with media.

Yet, CSO representatives did not perceive information sharing from township management to the support committees, civil society or people to be very effective. One example cited was the distribution of mobile SIM cards provided by the region government to townships, when no information was made publically available on how these were distributed. There was little mention by township staff of using the media to share information with the public, with the exception of advertising tenders for procurement purposes. There is some hesitation among township management with respect to the media in Ayeyarwady, as reflected by concerns of one Township Administrator that “[...] government employees have to be careful, as there is some finger-pointing in journals and media.” As a corollary, a civil society representative posits that a lack of information sharing is actually preventing balanced media coverage. “In our township, the media is not invited to public meetings so it is hard to know or inform the public on what is really happening.” This is pertinent in light of a high reliance (indicated by community respondents) on the media for news on government policies, laws and directives: 76 percent are dependent on the radio in rural areas and 66 percent on television in the urban areas.

Still, the 10/100 Household Head remains the primary source of government-related information for 75 percent of all respondents. This may be a function of the large number of people and high number of villages that populate the Ayeyarwady Region, meaning that

most households are not in close proximity to the VTA: Only 36 percent of urban respondents relied on the VTA as an information source, and 52 percent of rural dwellers (see Figure 25). This indicates that in rural areas, governance-related communication is mainly local, personal and verbal, rather than centralised and in written form, at least when it comes to the end users, the ordinary citizens.

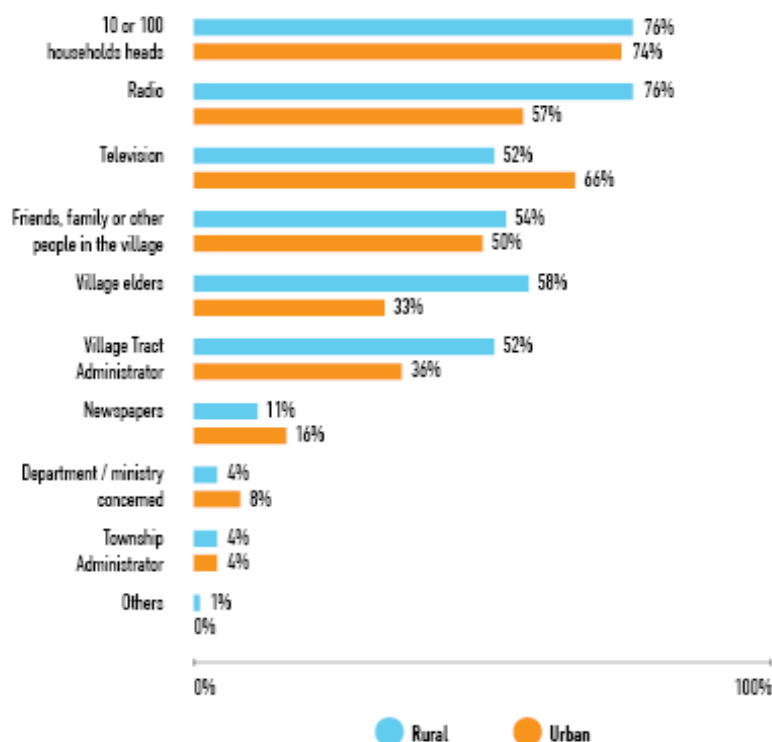


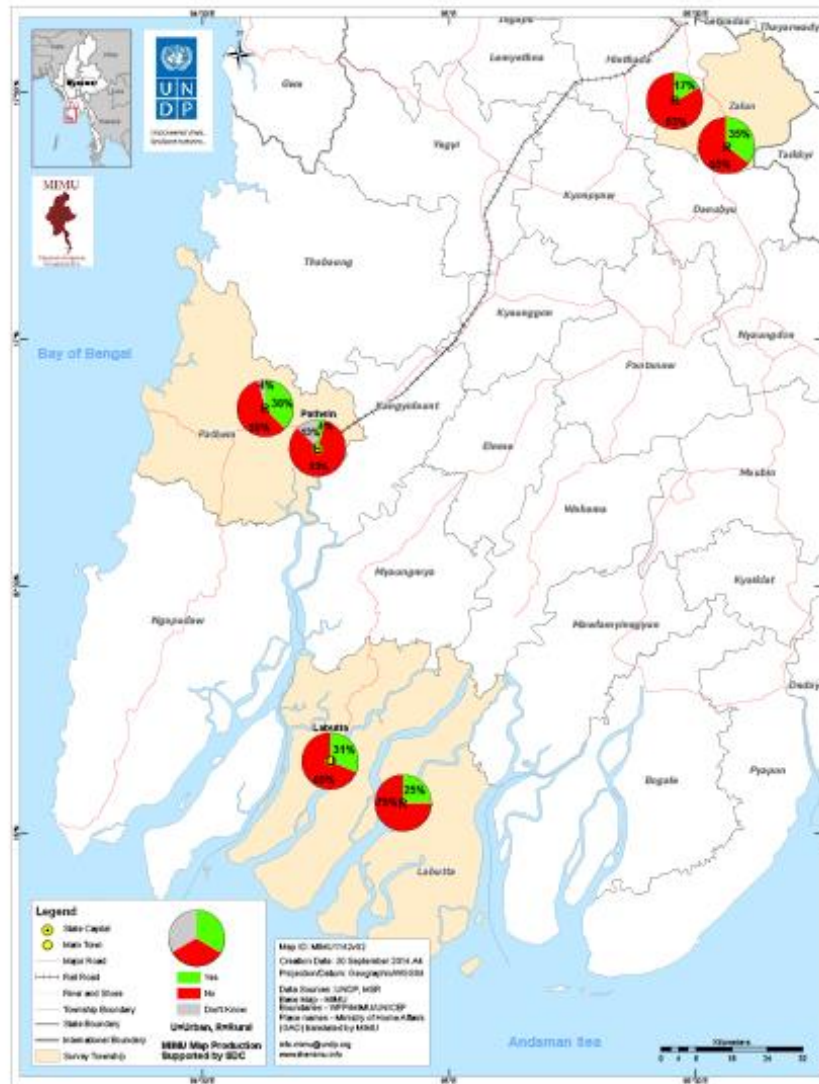
Figure 25: If there are new laws or directives from the government, how would you usually learn about them?

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.

This has implications on information being conveyed from township administration to citizens where the link between the VTA and the 100/10 Household Head becomes critical. The latter is also the key source of information on village tract/ward meetings, from whom 95 percent of participants learn of meetings taking place. But the contradictory perceptions of the VTA and the people indicate that there may be a potential bottleneck related to access to information. Whereas five of the six VTAs thought that the Township Administration was informing people enough about plans for new development projects (such as schools, roads, health facilities), 72 percent of community survey respondents did not think they were receiving enough information of this nature, though this varied by ward/ village tract. This is indicative of an “information disconnect” that is taking place in Ayeyarwady townships from the VTA down to the 10/100 Household Heads and the local community at large (see Figure 26).

Information disconnect exists with VTA believing that people are being informed and people believing that they do not receive enough information on development projects.

Figure 24: Satisfaction with information sharing by government on new projects and initiatives



Box 10: Community Dialogues: Methods for information sharing

VTAAs shared techniques utilised for disseminating information on development projects and plans to their constituents. Consistent with the findings from the community survey, it emerges from the dialogues that the 10/100 Household Heads remain a critical link in sharing information from higher levels of administration.

The VTA disseminates information to 10/100 household heads, which is then shared to community members. One noted that: "Information sharing from village to village has become quicker since roads/transportation networks and mobile communications have improved."

Kyaung Pan Kone Village Tract, Patheingyi Township

With 24 sections within the ward, information is posted at a number of public places in an effort to disseminate it to the entire community. For instance, the VTA shared information about prevention of disasters and instructions from the Union and Region government to the public via the 10/100 Household Heads and a public announcement system.

Ward 1, Patheingyi Township

The VTA disseminated information through a public announcement system and at village tract meetings. The members from the support committees and 10/100 Household Heads also share information.

May Yi Lan Village Tract, Zalun Township

The VTA disseminates meeting invitations by means of a village crier, and information on weather conditions and poverty alleviation programmes through the 10/100 Household Heads.

Pyin Ma Kone Village Tract, Zalun Township



4.4.2 People's awareness of local governance institutions, ongoing reforms and their rights

In a context where access to information can be challenging, to what extent are people in Ayeyarwady also cognisant of the current status of local governance reforms, and the implications for their rights and livelihoods? The reforms with the most immediate implications for communities relate to potential expectations inferred on the VTA as an elected representative, and the creation of new village tract/ward and township-level committees with “persons popularly elected from among local people and social and economic organisations,”⁸³ to create a consultative body for the township management in the setting of local development priorities.

Knowledge about the role of Village Tract Administrator

In Myanmar, administration at the local level is mentioned in the Constitution, which stipulates that “administration of district and township level shall be assigned to the Civil Services personnel” (Article 288) and that the “administration of ward or village-tract shall be assigned in accord with the law to a person whose integrity is respected by the community” (Article 289). This notably does not explicitly foresee or exclude that Ward and VTAs can be elected, which is what was agreed on by the legislature when it amended the 1907 *Ward and Village Tract Administration Act* in early 2012. The elections held in late 2012 were not under the authority of the Union Election Commission and the election laws, but was entirely administered by the GAD under the Ministry of Home Affairs. It also did not include any role of political parties.

In townships across the Ayeyarwady Region, the VTAs were elected by the 10/100 Household Heads.

The VTA is one of the governance institutions people in Myanmar are most familiar with. Its role has changed little for over a century. The VTA was previously selected and recruited by the Township Administrator, who still supervises VTAs, even after the latter have been indirectly elected by local representatives of the communities, based on the new 2012 Act.⁸⁴ In townships across the Ayeyarwady Region, the VTAs were elected by the 10/100 Household Heads, who were nominated and selected by village elders. The VTA-elect was screened by the Township Administrator, and approved by the District Administrator. Of the six VTAs interviewed from Patheingyi, Labutta and Zalun Townships, three were between 41-50 years of age. Four of six had education attainment to the level of middle school, while the majority (four) have held their position within their particular village tract/ward for between 1-3 years.

This represented a break from the past, although the VTA continues to serve as an extension of the township GAD working under the directive of the Township Administrator. Notwithstanding the elections, the formal responsibilities of the VTA still retain many of their traditional core functions, essentially with regard to maintenance of security and administrative control at the local level. The duties and responsibilities of the VTA are listed in detail in the 2012 Law. They include ensuring the security of residents, to prevent crime and supervise ward and village social affairs, alongside a number of punitive measures (such as arrest and fines), as well as policing functions.

83. Notification No 27/2013, Assignment of duties for formation of township and ward/ village tract development support committee. The President's Office, 26 February 2013.

84. According to the 2012 *Ward and Village Tract Law*, the VTA is elected by secret ballot of 10/100 Household Heads, following a screening of the qualifications of interested candidates. The 10/100 Household Heads were elected as representatives of their areas by heads of households. Administrators are to be selected through two rounds of secret voting. The procedure is described in detail in the Mapping of Local Governance in Myanmar - General Report.

Awareness among constituents of their VTA is very high - 72 percent of respondents could name their Ward Administrator in urban areas as 93 percent of rural residents could name their Village Tract Administrator, potentially indicating a high degree of exposure and access (see Figure 27). However, very few people were able to name the elected representative for their constituency in the Region Hluttaw, indicating that it was not the fact of an election having taken place that was the reason for the high degree of familiarity with their respective VTAs. Also, when asked of their perceptions on the role of the VTA, people were more familiar with the traditional roles associated with this function, rather than with the newly-created representative dimension of that office. Most respondents (54%) perceived the conflict mediation role of the VTA as among the most important functions, while 38 percent perceived the task of ensuring peace and security in the village to be important. Given the historical function of VTAs over the past century, as well as the legal mandate enshrined in the *Ward and Village Tract Act*, it does not come as a surprise that expectations related to the "law and order" role of the VTA are more embedded among communities in Ayeeyarwady townships compared with the still tenuous and uncertain "representative" role of the VTA, following their election.

Expectations related to the "law and order" role of the VTA are more embedded among communities compared with the still tenuous and uncertain "representative" role of the VTA, following their election.

Accordingly, consulting and involving villagers in decision-making (13%), and providing villagers with information and directives from the government (10%) are perceived as important functions by far fewer people. There was an expectation among 37 percent of respondents, however, that the VTA elevates local problems to the township administration, which may be reflective of an emerging expectation by constituents of their newly-elected representatives to represent their interest upwards. This may be considered low compared with localities that have experienced democratic local self-government in the past. But in Myanmar, these trends should be seen as encouraging, given the conservative expectations that can be surmised from the revised Village Tract Act in terms of democratisation and better representation.

VTA perceptions on the importance of the various functions they play also provides some insight: All six of the VTAs interviewed cited ensuring peace and security in the village and conflict mediation as important functions of their role, indicating that their executive responsibilities related to crime prevention and disciplinary matters remain a top priority. Four of six VTAs considered the provision of villagers with information and directives from township management and the onus of bringing village-level problems to the township administration for resolution as important, indicating that some VTAs in Ayeeyarwady are beginning to see an obligation to share information "downwards" - even though this is not outlined in their formal roles and responsibilities in the *2012 VTA Law*. However, only one of six VTAs considered involving villagers in decision-making processes at village level to be an important duty, suggesting that any implicit 'consultative' function of the VTA is much less pronounced at this stage. This is compounded by a perceived "weakness" in the engagement and participation of villagers (three of six) and difficulties in organising the community (three of six) when VTAs were asked about the biggest challenges faced in fulfilling their responsibilities. It is therefore clear that despite the election, the VTAs remain mainly upwardly accountable to the TA, rather than downwards to their 'constituencies'.

While many VTAs interviewed considered sharing government information with people important, involving villagers in decision-making was not seen as part of their functions.

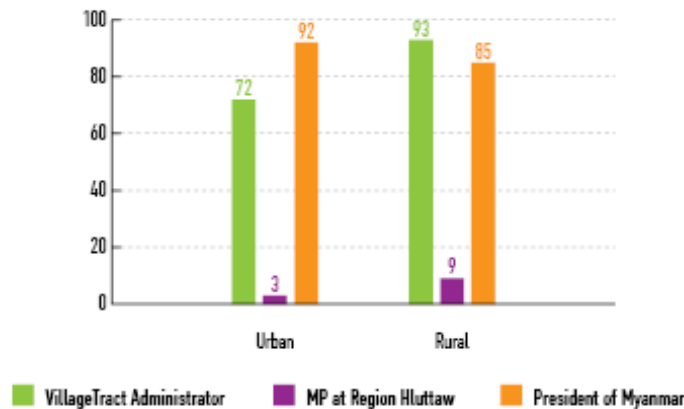
The *2012 VTA Law* provides for the election of VTAs. However, whether this election can be seen as inferring an informal mandate to function as elected representatives of the people in their village tracts/ wards remains to be seen, and will to a large extent depend on local circumstances and the degree of change the GAD is prepared to accept. At the same time,

VTIAs are responsible for a number of executive responsibilities,⁸⁵ including carrying out additional duties assigned by the TA and government departments in accordance with the law.

Another interesting finding is the fact that local residents were able to identify the names of their VTAs much more often than those of the member of the Regional Parliament elected from their townships see Figure 27. While it is typical world over that a person is likely to be more familiar with their local politician or administrator than their regional counterparts, it should be recalled that Regional MPs are elected on a 2-per-township constituency basis and are expected to maintain close links with their electoral base. In addition, they have been elected as political party representatives who are able to campaign freely. In contrast, the VTAs are not party-affiliated, and are not likely to have a strong political standing, but they are much closer to their communities as service providers, but in particular as the closest link between the general population and the state in terms of control, security and general administration - this was seen to be even more pronounced in rural areas than in urban settings.

Figure 27: Knowledge of names of elected representatives, urban-rural breakdown

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.



Awareness of consultative committees at the township level

The 2012 Presidential Notification also provides for the establishment of a Village Tract/Ward Development Support Committee (VTWSC), also an elected body with a remit to discuss the socio-economic needs of residents, to advise the VTA and to elevate matters that cannot be resolved locally to township management, amongst other matters pertaining to local development.⁸⁶ These village tract and ward committees were set up alongside the Township Development Support Committees (TDSCs) in 2013 (see Figure 28).

Given that all of these new committees were set up with the intention to provide for a more participatory approach to development and bottom-up planning, it is worth asking to what extent people have become aware of these new consultative entities. In this context, it was

85. These include: Maintenance of village tract/ward law and order; disciplinary matters; monitoring development projects; helping with rural development and poverty reduction; informing and assisting government agencies on crime prevention; submitting request for public events to the Township Administrator; monitoring overnight guests; issuing entertainments licenses; registration of deaths and births; maintaining irrigation works; and collecting land revenue. Ward or Village Tract Administration Law, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2012, Chapter 4, clause 13.

86. Notification No 27/2013, "Assignment of duties for formation of township and ward/village tract development support committee. The President's Office, 26 February 2013.

revealing to note that across the three townships, only 2 percent of people were aware of new consultative committees at the township level (see Figure 29). While in part a function of how recently these entities were established, this is also indicative of low awareness as to the new mechanisms emerging for interest groups to represent their interests and influence local decision-making. In Ayeyarwady Region, this has a bearing for when considering development planning and the space available for participation of people in that process. Committee members indicated that limited exposure to Township Administration is another challenge to their effectiveness as a sounding board. In Labutta, the TDSC convenes at monthly meetings with other committees and township stakeholders, and do not have separate meetings outside of this to discuss priorities, or dedicated interactions with the TMC.

Only 2 percent were aware of township consultative committees.

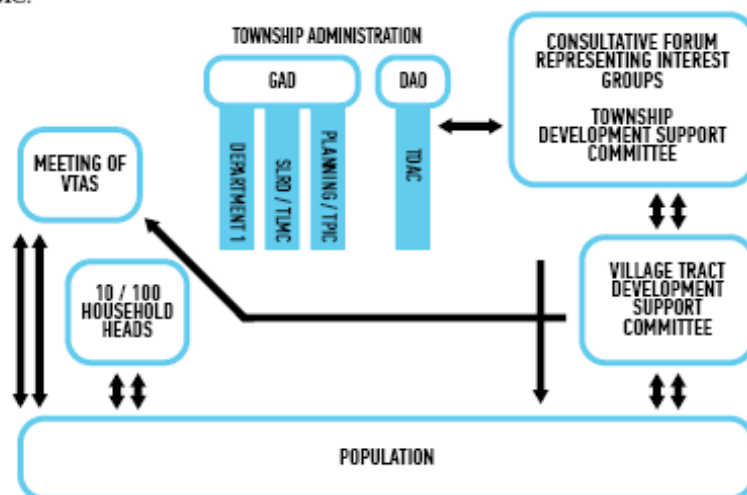


Figure 28: Consultative mechanisms/committees in Ayeyarwady Region⁸⁷

Source: Adapted from Delinas, A. UNDP 2014.

Grievance redressal mechanisms

The grievances the people of Ayeyarwady Region are communicated in a number of channels in the government administration, including the offices of the Chief Minister or even to the President's Office at the Union level. There appears to be a high number of grievances filed at some townships in the Region, many of which are channelled to the GAD office. In Patheingyi Township itself, the GAD recorded 3-4 complaints per day, and estimated a total of 60-80 grievances being filed through the office per month of which around half are related to land disputes.⁸⁸ "The staff spend a lot of time on this issue," says a township official. "To the extent that it would make sense to open a dedicated unit." Region and Village Tract/Ward actors both highlighted grievance redressal as an issue upon reflecting on the findings. In May 2013, Chief Minister Thein Aung pledged to return all the land confiscated by the former military government and businesses to their original owners.⁸⁹ Discussions with township staff and committee members indicated that there exists a lack of clarity on the complaints process itself and the criteria for elevating or handling grievances, with the exception of

Number of complaints have been going up and half are related to land disputes.

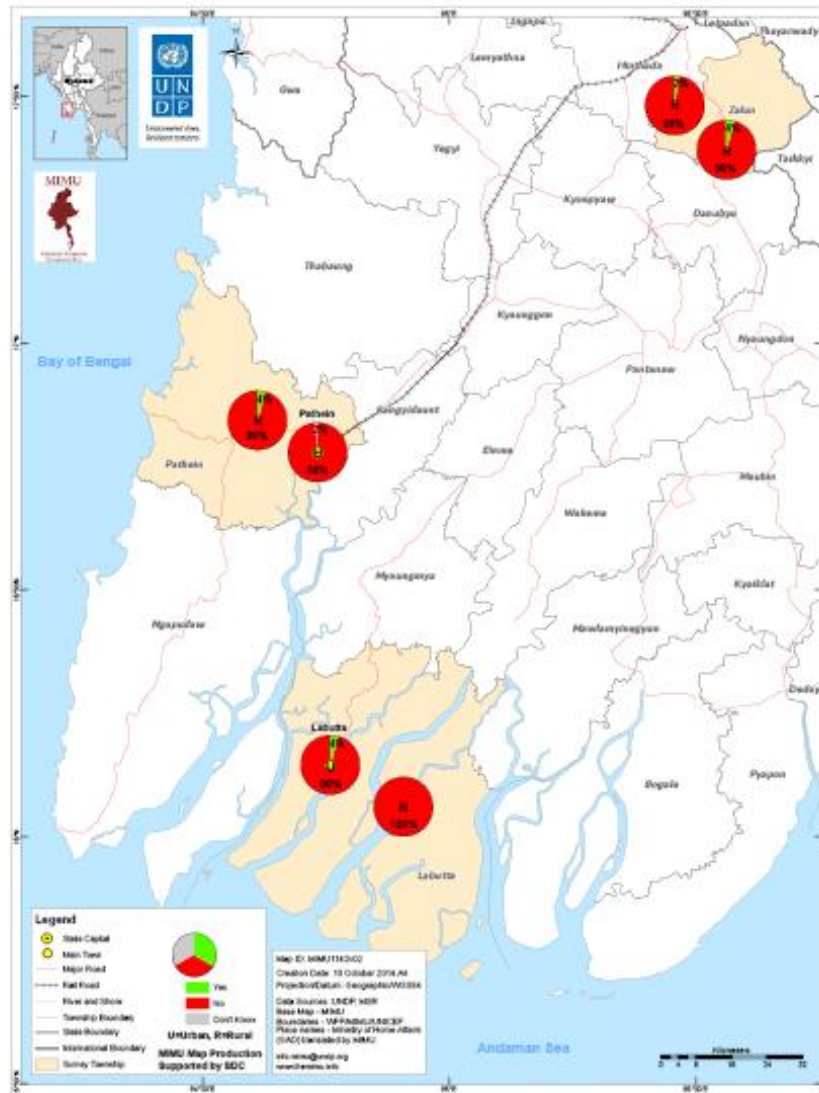
87. The purpose is to show that the GAD's role is coordination and the departments chosen are there to illustrate the link between TPIC and the Planning department.

88. A number of high profile cases of farmers protesting against alleged land seizures have appeared in the media. One example is of nearly 250 farmers protesting a seizure of a 101-hectare plot of land in Ngwe Saung by the prior government, which was pegged for development of a luxury hotel project. Farmers are protesting that they did not receive due compensation. See "Farmers Call on President to Resolve Land Dispute." *The Irrawaddy*, March 2013. Accessed September 8, 2014.

89. Aung Shwe, "Land seized by cronny companies to be returned to locals." *DVR*, June 25 2013. Accessed September 8 2014. <http://www.dvbn.com/news/land-seized-by-cronny-companies-to-be-returned-to-locals/28966>

Figure 29: People's awareness of consultative township committees

Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.



the procedures for land-related disputes which is more clearly defined and has a legal basis in the 2012 *Farmland Law*. The two laws related to the management of land, the *Farmland Law* and the *Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Law*, were approved by the Union Legislature on 30 March 2012. They regulate procedures for registering various types of land and foresee recourse to higher instances within the administrative structure, but at the expense of the possibility to take a land-related case to court.

Land disputes

While disputes related to the inheritance of farmland may be decided by a court, there is no mechanism in the 2012 Farmland Law that allows for disputes involving the allocation or use of farmland to be heard in a court of law. For these, farmers must bring their grievance to a “Farmland Management Body”, which is also an executive branch decision-making body chaired at the local level by the VTA. Complainants dissatisfied with the decision at the village tract/ward level can appeal to equivalent bodies at the township, district, and then the State or Region level.⁹⁰ Also known as the (Farm) Land Management Committee (LMC), it is chaired by the Township Administrator at the township level, with the head of the Settlement and Land Records Department (SLRD) as secretary.⁹¹ The complaints bodies and structures established in relation to the Farmland Law essentially fall short of providing any meaningful legal recourse and remedies for rights-holders against administrative decisions. In accordance with this, respondents to the community survey (72) tended to channel land-related disputes to the VTA first (67%), before approaching the Township Administrator (37%), or the staff at the township-level agricultural office (23%), if they were not happy with the outcome.

The LMC appears to be highly active in townships across Ayeyarwady, and was observed to be the “primary mechanism for (land-related) grievances” by one official. In Zalun, it convenes on a weekly basis to handle approximately 7-8 land disputes received per month. In Pathein, only two land disputes were submitted to the SLRD office between March and April in 2014, but the office continues to work on clearing up a backlog of cases. Some 70 were pending as of March 2014, with about 30 remaining to be resolved in May 2014. This indicates potential issues in Ayeyarwady Region related to “first instance” decision-making on land rights at the village or ward/village tract, with a significant number of rulings by the LMCs being appealed at higher instances. This was noted by Region-level actors, who observed a high frequency of unresolved land dispute cases being referred upwards from the Township Administration.

First instance decision-making on land rights are being appealed at higher levels.

The LMCs are administrative bodies, not courts. They are neither independent nor is there a legal recourse to ensure their impartiality. At all levels they lack popular participation and transparency, and unlike the TMC, they have no “sounding board” to inform their decision-making. Township officials in Pathein and Zalun spoke of the recent formation of a Township Land Utilisation Committee (TLUC), with the aim of returning confiscated farmland to its rightful owners. The TLUC was borne from a union-level initiative - a Land Utilisation Management Central Committee,⁹² which seeks to settle complaints related to

90. Farmland Law 2012. Notification No 62/2012. The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, August 2012. At the highest level, the Farmland Administration Body (FAB) is chaired by the minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MOAI).

91. The Township Planning Officer and head(s) of the Department of Agriculture and Department of Livestock Breeding are also members.

92. Formed in September 2013 under a Union Government Office Notification and led by Vice-president U Nyan Tun.

land seizures.⁹³ Under this central body, sub-committees are to be formed in every State and Region at the district, township and ward levels. Given the high frequency and volume of land disputes in Ayeyarwady Region, it is unsurprising to see the TLUC established and already active in both Patheingyi and Mandalay, with members drawn from the community in the case of the latter.

4.4.3 Social and political accountability

As per the constitutionally prescribed concept of balance of powers between the branches of government, the elected legislature holds the executive politically accountable, while the judiciary provides legal oversight on the activities of public officials. As outlined above, institutions for political accountability remain limited at the township level and below, although some of the existing institutions and consultative mechanisms could in the future develop into bodies that serve as potential entry points for horizontal accountability at the township level.

Elections remain the principal means by which citizens can hold state officials to account, though as observed by the World Bank, they remain a “...very weak and blunt instrument”.⁹⁴ Social accountability represents a range of mechanisms beyond voting that people can deploy to seek responsiveness from public officials, through advocacy campaigns, investigative journalism, public interest lawsuits, and more recently, opportunities for direct dialogue with the government through participatory planning and performance tracking. In more rural traditional settings such mechanisms tend to be less developed, and customary accountability relationships based on social trust and pressure are more likely to be found. In Myanmar the formal institutions for social accountability are less well developed, and accountability occurs in a context where people did not rely much on authorities in the way of basic public services, and where the relationship between civil society and the military government was often contentious. This perception colours the way in which respondents attribute responsibility for resolving local development challenges.

The level of confidence of people in township administration for addressing their development priorities was low.

In considering who held primary responsibility for identified development priorities as outlined earlier, the opinions of respondents varied, with the majority assigning this to the Village Tract Administrator (VTA) (33%) or the Region or Union Government (31%). Only 16 percent conferred responsibility to the Township Administration, which is not the apparent “interface” of local public service delivery for most people. Moreover, the level of confidence in government (at any level) to be responsive to the issue was relatively low. It was felt by over half of the respondents (57%) that the township administration or other government bodies were doing nothing to address this problem. Overall, 28 percent believed that government were still discussing the issue, rising to 39 percent in rural areas.

One of the key means of participation for people in the process of governance is through elections. As provided in the 2008 Constitution, since 2010, the people of Myanmar have had the opportunity to directly elect Members of Parliament at the union (for the two Chambers - the Pyithu Hluttaw and the Amyetha Hluttaw) and State/Region level hluuttaws.⁹⁵ The

93. Notification No. 59/2013 of the Union Government Office, September 16, 2013.

94. “Social Accountability: What Does It Mean for the World Bank?” Chapter 2, Social Accountability Sourcebook, World Bank, 2006.

95. In the country's six Self-Administered Areas (i.e. in Sagaing Region and Shan State) voters also elect members of the assemblies of these areas.

revision of the 1907 *Village Tract/Ward Act* in 2012 additionally introduced the indirect election of VTAs, for whom elections took place across Myanmar in late 2012 and early 2013. Ninety percent of the respondents from the community survey in Ayeyarwady claim to have voted in the elections for the Union-level parliament. The actual turnout figures were estimated to be much lower, however. In between elections, - what other channels do people have to access “space” at the level of the community, where they can influence local decision-making and have a voice? And do any alternative forums exist at the community level where such space can be claimed? The six VTAs indicated that a number of social groups were active in their communities including: women’s groups, socioreligious youth groups, the pagoda board and elders. Also mentioned by VTAs were Parent Teacher Associations (five), and Village Health Committees (four).

Community level groups were playing more a support role than an accountability role.

Answerability at village health facilities

Insights from managers of health facilities indicate that in the health sector “answerability” - or responsiveness to complaints and requests from the level of the village - is not particularly pronounced across the three townships. While all of the six managers had elevated complaints and requests to the TMO, they conveyed that none of the 11 complaints or requests had been successfully resolved. Nearly half were “pending” while only two had been partially resolved.

As the only person who could be considered an elected ‘representative’ of residents in village tract/ ward, the VTA, through participation in discussions with government officials on health services, could in the future constitute a potential channel for driving responsiveness to community complaints and requests. Yet, as it currently stands, this is not the case within the current legal framework and is not stipulated as a core function of the VTA. Indeed, only three of six VTAs interviewed had ever been involved in or had been invited for a meeting to discuss health services in their village tract/ward.

Village Health Committees (VHC) were initially established by Union Ministry of Health to “involve relevant sectors [...] and to mobilise the community more effectively in health activities,” with the inclusion of the relevant health authority and representatives from social organisations as members.⁹⁶ In Ayeyarwady townships, all six facility managers reported the presence of a VHC, which convened in intervals ranging from once a month to twice-yearly. Only in three village tract/wards were the VHCs evidently active however, supporting the provision of labour for small repairs on health centres, checking of medical supply stocks of health facilities and assisting with limited patient transport and care functions.⁹⁷

Of interest for local governance is that VHC members are usually appointed (five of six) but sometimes elected (two of six). This represents a small but distinct opportunity as a mechanism to drive responsiveness to local healthcare needs of the community, and to influence decision making on local health priorities.⁹⁸

96. Country Health Profile, Myanmar World Health Organization, 2004.

97. These committees are essentially humanitarian coordination committees, with no basis in law or regulations, and thus without legal accountability. Such committees do not substitute formal representative bodies nor are they constitutionally or statutorily mandated public institutions. But this is not to say that they cannot occupy important roles that are highly beneficial for communities.

98. One example in Ayeyarwady Region is of a project established by *Medicins du Monde*, a French NGO, in partnership with the Ministry of Health for Pyawon Township in the wake of the 2008 cyclone. A fund was established to finance transportation to hospitals in case of obstetric emergencies and illness of children under five-years of age, which was managed by the VHCs in 25 remote villages. *Medicins du Monde, Burma/ Myanmar: Prevention and treatment of STIs and HIV/Aids and strengthen community health systems.* <http://www.medicinsdumonde.org/gh/International/Burma-Myanmar>. Accessed September 8, 2014.

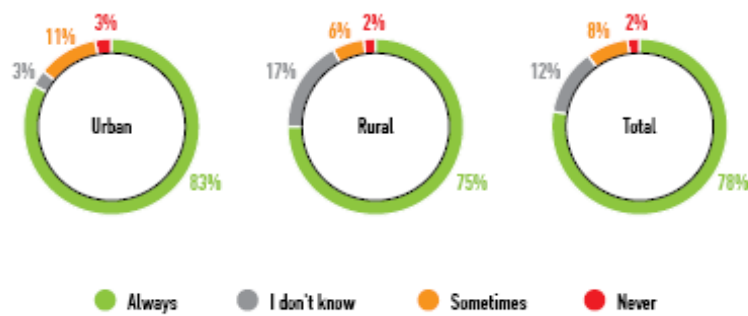
Answerability at primary schools

Similarly, “answerability” to the needs of primary schools at the village level appears to be low. The six principals interviewed reported 12 complaints or requests, of which only two were successful. Promisingly, all six VTAs have been involved or invited for a meeting with government officials to talk about primary education in their community, indicating a potential future entry point for the community to seek responsiveness to their concerns and issues. Currently, it remains outside the scope of the VTAs formal responsibilities.

While parents had never submitted a complaint, the majority had confidence in the school management on their complaints being taken seriously.

Complaints directly from parents on primary education services tend to be channelled to the TEO, who will form an enquiry committee from principals of each School Family Cluster to investigate the issue if required. After the investigation, the committee proposes a decision, which will be communicated to the District Education Officer for approval. Though there is a high degree of confidence overall, 14 percent of urban and 8 percent of rural parents (100 total) were not assured that their complaints would always be taken seriously by school management. On the same token, none of these parents have ever submitted a complaint to the teacher, principal or anyone else about the education of their children (see Figure 30).

Figure 30: Are complaints made by parents never, sometimes or always taken seriously by the management of the school?



Source: Local Governance Mapping, Ayeyarwady Region, May 2014.

Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) exist for every primary school in each of the village tracts/wards where the six VTAs were interviewed.

Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) exist for every primary school in each of the village tracts/wards where the six VTAs were interviewed. These bodies became active under the military government, working to fill shortfalls for basic educational facilities and materials by collecting money for textbooks and handling the basic maintenance of schools buildings. This remains their primary work today, as confirmed by the VTAs and six principals interviewed.

These PTAs meet monthly or quarterly, and five of the six principals report that most members are elected or selected. Perhaps more so than VHCs, PTAs comprising of elected members presents a window of opportunity as a mechanism to drive responsiveness to the needs and concerns of their constituents (parents) and allow them to influence primary education delivery. As noted by one observer, the PTAs already practice “deliberative forms of decision making”, in the form of voting for their own chairpersons and managing small funds. Some PTAs have contacts with international organisations, providing access to

potential financing and new approaches in teaching and management.⁹⁹ This was evident in Ayeyarwady Region in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, when UNICEF transferred funds to PTAs to construct temporary facilities or repair damages to schools. Around four months after the cyclone hit, 215 PTAs had signed up to build safe learning spaces, while 126 had agreed to repair school buildings.¹⁰⁰

Composed of members from both government staff (teachers and school administrators, public health officers) and members of the community, both PTAs and VHCs could be described as hybrid organisations that transverse civil society and the public sector. It is essential that state bodies and non-governmental groups interact in a cooperative manner in such bodies, for information sharing, and to identify scope for joint collaborative action. This is most critical in relation to humanitarian assistance and disaster preparedness, which remains a key policy priority in Ayeyarwady Region.

However, it also has clear benefits for democratic governance if state officials and nongovernmental groups are familiar with each other's capacities, expectations and approaches, which may contribute to governance effectiveness and ultimately better outcomes for ordinary citizens.

Civil society's role in promoting accountability in local governance

Many CSOs in Ayeyarwady are generally active and vocal, and already play a role in public-sector delivery of health and education services, and also as members of the township consultative committees. This is positive, and indicates growing capacity for CSO representatives to play some kind of advocacy role in local governance, though they operate in an environment where the growth of civil society has very been restricted, till recently. This appears to have been the case in Labutta, where the majority of active CSOs were established after 2011-12. Civil society appears to be more established - and more robust - in Patheingyi, where representatives spoke of their relationship with government actors at the Region level to be evolving for the better. One example is the role they played during recent demonstrations in Patheingyi Township, where civil society representatives played an intermediary role between protestors and the Region Government (see Table 16).

One innovative channel for developing civil society's capacity for consultation, input and social accountability is the establishment of a formal forum for CSO representatives to meet with the Region Government on a regular basis. Regional GAD officials describe a meeting that is held every three months, where representatives of the region government meet with CSOs to discuss issues. One CSO representative noted that these are being held in the style of a "Speaker's Corner" (*Hit Taing*) - supposedly the only one in the country where CSOs can speak publically on issues to receive due consideration from government authorities. Representatives from other States and Regions have already visited Ayeyarwady Region to observe this model, with the view to replicating it in their home State or Region.¹⁰¹

Still, CSO representatives cite a key barrier to developing their capacity for advocacy as being limited awareness of the "rules of the game" - the formal and informal institutions

Civil society appears to be more established—and more robust—in Patheingyi, where representatives spoke of their relationship with government actors at the Region level to be evolving for the better.

CSO and Region Government interface through "Speaker's Corner" (*Hit Taing*)- supposedly the only one in the country where

99. Lorch, Jaum. "Myanmar's Civil Society - a Patch for the National Education System? The Emergence of Civil Society in Areas of State Weakness." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2007, Volume 26, Issue 3, p55-88

100. UNICEF Emergency Response 120 Days after Cyclone Nargis. UNICEF Myanmar, Sep 2 2008.

101. Region GAD Office.

CSOs can speak publically on issues to receive due consideration from government authorities.

and processes of township governance - and how they can navigate these to more effectively serve the interests of the local community or seek information on how decisions are made for local development priorities.

Table 16: Active Civil Society Organisations in Labutta

Name of organisation	Activities	Established	Status	Funding
Union of Farmers and Farmland Workers	Protecting interests of farmers and farmland workers in regard to confiscated lands	2012	Not registered	Self-help
Share Ayeyarwady	Environmental conservation	2012	Registered	Self-help
Free Funeral Association	Funerals	2012	Not registered	Self-help
Myitta Yeik	Healthcare	2012	Not registered	Self-help
Lin Let Kyal (Bright Star)	Educational support	2012	Not registered	Self-help
Hna-lone-hla Association	Healthcare	2011	Not registered	Self-help
"A-phyu-yaung" (White colour)	Sports, health and education	2011	Not registered	Self-help



5. Conclusions

Ayeyarwady Region suffered terribly in the wake of the 2008 cyclone. However, some of the legacies of the post-disaster response are turning to the Region's advantage in terms of developing cooperative structures, a stronger role for civil society and a more open and transparent local government.

5.1 Developmental planning and participation

Capacity development challenges remain a key impediment to more effective use of the newly created mechanisms and institutions. In many cases, office holders, committee members and the general public are unclear about roles and mandates, and what is expected of them. This may also be due to the fact that while broader responsibilities and assigned tasks for the Support Committees are outlined in a Presidential Notification, no detailed procedures or terms of reference exist yet. There was also no evidence of committee members having received specific training related to their work. This could be addressed by a concerted effort to identify capacity shortfalls, and conduct capacity building as part of a longer-term institution building strategy, with clear goals and parameters, rather than on an ad hoc basis.

There are significant institutional shortcomings in relation to internal information flow, coordination, and communication. Understandably, these "soft skills" of local governance will take longer to emerge than the mere establishment of institutions and issuance of rules and directives. However, only a conscious and focused effort will be able to address these shortfalls.

The role of women as local governance actors, or rather the almost complete absence of them, is one of the key observations that can be drawn from the study. Women make up low numbers of decision-making officials at the local government level in townships, only 8 have been elected as VTAs, and none on township consultative bodies. Without adequate consultation from current office holders and members, women's needs and priorities are unlikely to be reflected in a meaningful way. Lower participation of women, as opposed to men, at village-level meetings suggests potential for wider inclusion of the community in consultations related to local development projects, and more attention to gender equality in particular.

5.2 Basic service delivery

People in Ayeyarwady Region have not historically relied on government assistance, and are used to addressing problems and everyday challenges by themselves at the community level. Their attitudes to and expectations of basic services are understandably shaped by these experiences. Perceptions from the community indicates that there is recognition of socio-economic investments trickling down to the village level - primarily in education, followed by healthcare and drinking water.

In Ayeyarwady, there are examples of gradual administrative decentralization taking place in some service areas. One major change for the healthcare planning process is in the procurement of medical supplies and equipment at the region level, with the input from Ayeyarwady's 26 Township Medical Officers. New initiatives are also being trialled to overcome challenges pertaining to access and communications. A key mechanism of primary education administration in Ayeyarwady Region is the use of "school cluster families," where principals nominated by area peers become the focal point for communication.

Yet, instructions and directives cannot be equated with service delivery in a democratic governance context. They are of course important for the rule of law and the maintenance of public security, public health, and safety. However, the attitudinal changes that will be required to transform governance from control and top-down administration to something that is more participatory and responsive have yet to take root at the local level in Ayeyarwady Region.

5.3 Information, transparency and accountability

The surveys have indicated that in rural areas governance-related communication is mainly local, personal and verbal, rather than centralised and in written form, at least when it comes to the end users, the ordinary citizens. The 10/100 Household Head remains the primary source of such information, and the role and capacities of these local leaders deserve a closer look. Local government staff appears in need to be introduced to using the media more effectively to share information with the public. Township managers may need to overcome their hesitations with respect to the media in Ayeyarwady. At the same time, in order to fulfil its role and responsibly, media needs to be fully informed about the work of local government and should provide accurate reporting, as well as help inform citizens about policies, directives, but also opportunities and rights whenever possible. Townships could have dedicated public information officers whose primary role is to inform the general public in appropriate and innovative ways, and local governance institutions could gain from proactively seeking and requesting input and feedback from the communities they are supposed to serve.

The fact that VTAs have been appointed following an election, does not in itself amount to the democratisation of local governance. However, what matters for local institutions and mechanisms is not only the legal mandate of institutions but also the perceived role, the community expectation and the level of personal initiative that results from the fact that office holders are now elected. This appears to be gradually shifting in Ayeyarwady townships, as evidenced from the emphasis on information sharing and a more proactive role as community representatives of some VTAs.

It seems that for the time being, the recently established formal consultative bodies do not yet enjoy much legitimacy, as they are little known, not very representative and do not really have much impact. Questions also remain as to the credibility of the relevant election processes in place. Focal ministries for such committees may need to devise accountability mechanisms to monitor their effectiveness and also take into account dimensions such as transparency, consultativeness and impact. Conflicts of interest would need to be increasingly addressed as such committees gain importance in the decision-making on public funds. Formal mechanisms for grievance redressal are also being questioned for their effectiveness - particularly for land disputes, where a high number continue to be elevated up to and beyond the township - and their lack of transparency and popular participation.

After decades of exclusion, the opportunity for CSOs to evolve as local governance actors - beyond humanitarian and social welfare support - is emerging. Arguably, this is happening faster in Ayeyarwady Region than in other States or Regions across the country, where local CSOs have developed capacity and experience in their response to Cyclone Nargis. In addition, formal space is being created for CSOs to engage with government and assume

more of an advocacy role. Regional GAD officials describe a meeting that is held every three months, where representatives of the region government meet with CSOs to discuss issues: supposedly the only one in the country where CSOs can speak publicly on issues to receive due consideration from government authorities. Still, civil society representatives cite a key barrier to developing their capacity for social accountability as being limited awareness of the “rules of the game,” or the formal institutions and processes of local governance. This is an area where capacity building and the development of peer networks could raise awareness.

Institutional reform often happens through experimentation and by allowing a degree of local improvisation, and the experience of Ayeeyarwady suggests that this is an effective approach. At the same time, a lack of coherence and clarity on rules and mandates can have a price in effectiveness and predictability. In Ayeeyarwady, both of these aspects appear to be in play. On the positive side, the revival of the PTAs and VHCs as community-level bodies for influencing and supporting service delivery is a good example of local creativity and initiative. Meanwhile, urban development is another area where the potential implications of further decentralisation can be observed. Municipal authorities are experimenting with cost-sharing models, directly engaging and negotiating with citizens to drive development of the municipal road infrastructure in a bid to overcome resource constraints. It will be important to continue conducting frank (self) assessments of how well newly-created institutions have worked, and adjust accordingly.



6. Annexes

Annex 1: Composition of township committees in Ayeyarwady Region

Composition of Township Planning and Implementation Committee in three townships, Ayeyarwady Region

Role	Labutta	Patheingyi	Zalun
Chair	TA	TA	TA
Secretary	Staff Officer of Planning Department	Staff Officer of Planning Department	Staff Officer of Planning Department
Member	Staff Officer of Agriculture Department	Staff Officer of Immigration	DTA
Member	Staff Officer of Land Registration Department	Staff Officer of Land Registration Department	Staff Officer of Land Registration Department
Member	Staff Officer of Livestock Department	Staff Officer of Agricultural Production Department	Staff Officer of Agricultural Production Department
Member	Staff Officer of Electrical Department	Staff Officer of Livestock	Staff Officer of Livestock
Member	Staff Officer of Fisheries Department	Staff Officer of Fisheries	Staff Officer of Fisheries
Member	Staff Officer of Education Department	Staff Officer of Revenue	Staff Officer of Municipal
Member	Staff Officer of Revenue Department	Transportation Committee	Staff Officer of Forestry
		Businessmen	Staff Officer of Electrical Power
		Elders and respected persons	Staff Officer of Education
		Deputy Township Education Officer	Staff Officer of Health
			Staff Officer of Revenue
			Staff Officer of Post and Communications
			Staff Officer of Myanmar Economic Bank
			Staff Officer of Agricultural Development Bank
			Staff Officer of Department of Microfinance
			Staff Officer of Cooperatives
			Staff officer of the Department of Jute Production
			Staff Officer of the Department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry
			Representative of Planning Department 1
			Representative of Planning Department 1
			Representative of GAD 1
			Representative of GAD 2

Role	Position	Labutta	Pathain	Zalun
Chair	Township Administrator - GAO	✓	✓	✓
Member	Township Police Officer	✓	✓	✓
Member	Township Law Officer		✓	
Member	Township Planning Officer	✓	✓	✓
Member	Township Agricultural Office		Township Immigration Officer	
Member	Township Education Officer	✓	✓	✓
Member	Township Municipal Affairs Officer	✓	✓	
Secretary	Township Revenue Officer	Trade Promotion Department Officer	Township Agricultural Office	
Joint Secretary	Deputy Township Administrator - GAO	✓	✓	✓

Composition of Township Management Committee against national guidance

✓ = Equates with national guidance

Annex 2: Ratings from focus group discussions, members of township support committees

In order to receive feedback from key stakeholders on developments in local governance, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were organised in each township with members of the advisory committees (TDAC, TDSC). To stimulate a dialogue, the committee members in each township were asked to come to agreement on the performance of the township government (GAD and other departments) on several key governance indicators.

They could give each indicator a score between “very bad”, “bad”, “not good/not bad”, “good” or “very good” and were asked to justify their scores.

Ratings assigned by committee members by township in Focus Group Discussions

	Labutta ¹⁰²	Pathein ¹⁰³	Zalun ¹⁰⁴
1. How do you rate the information the township management provides to committees, non-government organisations and citizens (either directly or via the village tract administrators) about:	Not good / not bad	Good	Bad
a. Plans and budgets for the township			
b. Progress regarding the implementation of projects	Not good / not bad	Not good / not bad	Not good / not bad
2. How do you rate the involvement of the various township level support committees in the township decision-making process? Can you give examples of how the work of the committees informs and influences policies/activities of the township management?	Not good / not bad	Bad	Good
3. How do you rate the responsiveness of the township management to the needs of its citizens? Does it actively listen to the needs of its citizens and does it take adequate action to address these needs?	Bad	Not good / not bad	Good
4. How do you rate the interaction between the support committee members (TDSC and TDAC) and citizens in this township? Do these committee members actively engage with citizens and do they share relevant news and information about developments in the township? What can be done to improve this?	Not good / not bad	Good	Good
5. The president has at various occasions stressed the importance of clean government. How do you rate the activities implemented by the township management to prevent corruption in this township?	Bad	Bad	Good
6. How do you rate the information sharing between committees esp. TDSC/TDAC and /TA?	Good	Not good / not bad	Good
7. How do you rate the overall functioning of the township management (GAD and departments together) in this township?	Not good / not bad	Not good / not bad	Good

102. One member of the TDSC, and one member of the TDAC attended.

103. 4 people attended with 2 members from the TDAC and 2 from the TDSC.

104. 5 people attended, with 3 members from the TDSC, 1 from the TDAC and one local businessman.

Annex 3: Ratings from focus group discussion, representatives of Civil Society Organisations

In addition to listening to the opinions of the committee members, the research team organised a similar discussion session with representatives from CSO representatives in each of the three townships (both registered and non-registered organisations).

Question	Labutta ¹⁰⁵	Pathein ¹⁰⁶	Zalun ¹⁰⁷
1. How do you rate the information the township management provides to committees, nongovernment organisations and citizens (either directly or via the village tract administrators) about: a. Plans and budgets for the township	Very bad	Very bad	Bad
b. Progress regarding the implementation of projects	Very bad	Very bad	Bad
2. How do you rate the involvement of the various township level support committees and/or citizens in the township decision-making process? Do you think that the establishment of the committees has had a positive or negative impact on your work as CSOs/and the development of the township in general?	Very bad	Bad	Bad
3. How do you rate the responsiveness of the township management to the needs of its citizens? Does it actively listen to the needs of citizens? Does it take adequate action to address these needs?	Very bad	Bad	Bad
4. How do you rate the interaction between the CSOs and citizens in this township? What can be done to improve this?	Bad	Good	Very good
5. The president has at various occasions stressed the importance of clean government. How do you rate the activities implemented by the township management to prevent corruption in this township?	Bad	Bad	Bad
6. How do you rate the overall functioning of the township management (GAD and key departments) in this township?	Not good/ not bad	Not good/ not bad	Not good/ not bad

Ratings assigned by CSO representatives by township in Focus Group Discussions

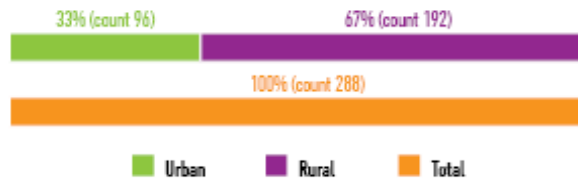
105. 9 attendees from 7 CSOs attended.

106. Up to 15 people attended representing 5 organizations.

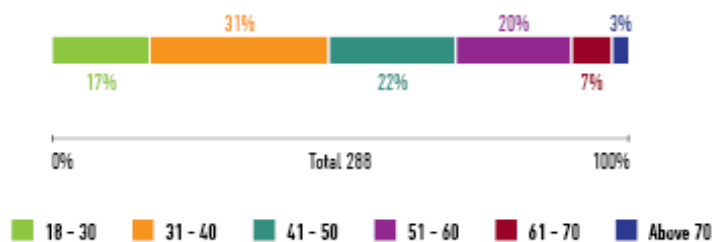
107. Representatives from 2 CSOs attended.

Annex 4: Community survey, respondent's profile

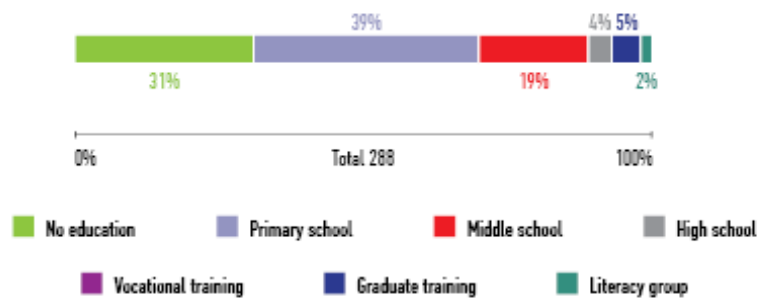
Urban-rural split



Age group

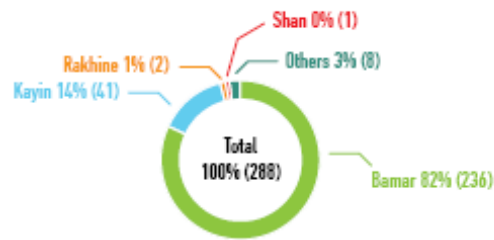


Education attainment

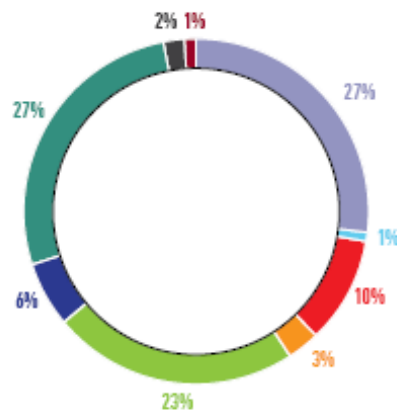


Main language used in household





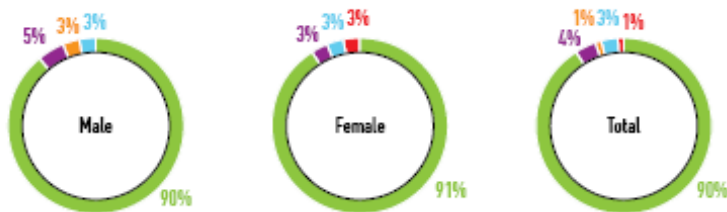
Ethnicity



Main activity of this household to generate an income or food?

n=288

- Crop farming (owner/tenant/labourer)
- Livestock
- Fishery
- Government staff
- Own business or self employed
- Employment in the private sector
- Casual work
- Pension/retired
- Remittance (receiving money from others)



Land use registration status

n=72

- Yes it is registered
- No it is not registered
- Ownership is disputed
- I have applied for registration but still waiting
- Don't know

Annex 4: Community dialogues, respondent profiles

Respondents by village tract/ ward

Village Tract/ Ward	Date	Total participants	Service providers	Service users	Men	Women
Kyaung Pan Kone Village Tract, Patheingyi Township	18 May 2014	51	19	32	34	17
Ward 1, Patheingyi Township	22 May 2014	52	15	37	29	23
Myitpauk Village Tract, Labutta Township	18 May 2014	33	12	21	18	15
Ward 8, Labutta Township	22 May 2014	43	15	28	25	18
May Yi Lan Village Tract, Zalu Township	17 May 2014	58	28	30	41	17
Pyin Ma Kone Village Tract, Zalu Township	21 May 2014	38	15	23	22	16

Total respondents in Ayeyarwady Region

Discussion group	Representative	Male	Female	Total
Service providers	Village administration	55	1	56
	Support committee members	20	0	20
	Teachers	5	15	20
	Health staff	3	6	9
Service users	Youth	13	7	20
	CSO	17	9	26
	School committee	4	0	4
	Women's group	0	25	25
	Citizen	53	42	95
Total		169	105	274

Annex 5: Community dialogues: Action plans

Township	Village/ Ward	Actors	Context/problem	Action agreed
Labutta Township	Ward 8	Local authorities/ citizens	There was discrimination against people in the health centre believed to be related to socioeconomic factors and disabilities.	Together, local authorities and citizens will submit a proposal to the Health Ministry regarding discrimination in the Hospital by health staff against people from lower social-economic backgrounds and those living with HIV.
Labutta Township	Myitpau k Village Tract	VTA/Teachers/citizens	Lack of furniture for the school and of housing for the teachers. Moreover, there is no clean drinking water available in the school nor standard toilets. The conditions of the roads that lead to the building are not good.	The teachers will cooperate with the VTA to submit the needs of the school to the township administration. At the same time, citizens will provide voluntary labour to develop the school.
Patheingyi Township	Ward 1	WA/ Citizens/CSO	The public clinic was leased out to a private company, due to which healthcare was no longer free of charge.	The Ward Administrator agreed to return the private clinic for public use, and encouraged the community to coordinate and sustain it. The citizens and CSO agreed to support the clinic to provide free treatment.
Patheingyi Township	Ward 1	WA/NGO/CBO/ business people	General lack of infrastructure (furniture, no partitions, classrooms) in school. There is also a shortage of teachers	The administration will coordinate with NGOs, CBOs and business people to fulfill the need for school equipment. The service users agreed to support in school development by donation from rich households and labour contribution.
Patheingyi Township	Ward 1	WA/Citizens	Flooding and poor conditions of roads.	The Ward Administrator reported flooding to the Township Development Affairs Office. The citizens will contribute to repairing the water shutter and road by contributing labour and donating money through donations.

Community dialogues:
Action plans

Annex 6: Interim-finding workshop - Proposed Actions

Interim-finding workshop - Proposed Actions

Group	Priority	Short term actions	Medium/long term actions	Capacity Support Required
Village tract/ ward	People's low awareness of civic affairs	Organize 10-person strong groups for education support to raise awareness at the community level. Those groups could potentially raise funds and provide financial support to families who cannot otherwise afford to send their children to school.	Set up self-help libraries at the community level.	Institutional support from the administration/ government is needed to execute. Education system reforms.
Township level	Poor information flow between township administration and other organisations and departments	Organize committees and hold meetings at township level as means (of sharing information and) of finding solutions. Organise regular meetings at the village/ward level (to share information).	Establish village libraries for raising public awareness and knowledge to reach out to the communities. Improve rule of law (at the township level) Take steps to change the mindset of the people (raise civic awareness).	Public support of such initiatives. Capacity building for CSOs to strengthen their participation (in civic affairs and information sharing).
State level	Coordination challenges among administrations and departments at both the township and regional level	Draft procedures and policy for township and district administrations for more effective execution of their duties. Give authority to those local administrations in order to better facilitate inter-agency collaboration. Empower committed individuals and officials to handle disputes and make them accountable for their work. Send officials abroad to study various administrative systems and policies for better coordination and more effective executive of duties.	Disseminate information and make public announcements through department websites (and other platforms). Publish procedures and processes of departments. Promote e-governance by adopting better information technology and using e-mail for better and more efficient communication.	Capacity building on the meaning and execution of good governance (among public administrators). Need for more funding and directing budget allocation for such improvements and developments.

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