



Listening to Voices

Myanmar's Foot Soldiers Speak

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First Edition

All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF)

Chin National Front (CNF)

Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO)

Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)

Karen National Union (KNU)

New Mon State Party (NMSP)

Project implementation by: Amie Kirkham and Soth Plai Ngarm

Edited by: Quinn Davis, James O'Keefe and Amelia Breeze

Layout by: Boonruang Song-ngam

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABSDF	All Burma Students Democratic Front
CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CDA	CDA Collaborative Learning Projects
CNF	Chin National Front
CPCS	Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
DCA	Dan Church Aid
GPH	Government of the Philippines
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
KIO	Kachin Independence Organisation
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
KNU	Karen National Union
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NMSP	New Mon State Party
NSAGs	Non-State Armed Groups

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This publication elevates the voices of foot soldiers from six Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) from Myanmar; highlighting their needs, concerns and challenges regarding the Myanmar peace process and their future.¹ Using *listening methodology*, this project conducted listening conversations with one hundred foot soldiers from the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), Chin National Front (CNF), Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), Karen National Union (KNU), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and the New Mon State Party (NMSP). From these conversations, key themes and commonalities were identified and are detailed in the following sections.

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) recognises the diverse range of voices in Myanmar between the armed groups involved in conflict and between individuals within these groups. Listening methodology seeks to identify common themes as well as differences between individuals' opinions. Using this methodology to gather opinions from a range of NSAGs allowed us to highlight the common themes as well as differences between groups, which are detailed in group summaries in the final section of the publication.

Background

Political reform and the Myanmar Government's renewed commitment to engage with NSAGs in peace talks is considered Myanmar's best opportunity to achieve peace in decades. While significant progress has been made towards peace at the top-level, this transitional period remains sensitive and many groups within the

¹ Throughout this publication the NSAGs organisational names have been used instead of the name of the armed wing of each of the organisations.

country have yet to be engaged in the peace process. As Myanmar searches for solutions to an armed conflict spanning six decades, listening to the diversity of voices within this context is crucial to finding effective solutions and building a holistic and inclusive peace process.

Foot soldiers play a fundamental role in the Myanmar conflict and have experienced first-hand, the harsh realities of fighting on the frontlines. These individuals will not sit at negotiation tables but the decisions made in top-level discussions will directly impact their futures. Foot soldiers are also amongst the most militarised, both as individuals and as a group in any conflict context. Not only will foot soldiers experience the most dramatic adjustments to their everyday lives once conflict ends, they are also critical to the success of the peace process and therefore must be consulted on steps that will occur once ceasefire agreements have been made. For these reasons, it is important to give voice to and understand the concerns, needs and challenges of foot soldiers in the Myanmar peace process.

Research Design

Since 2008, CPCS has conducted research using listening methodology to publicise diverse voices from within Myanmar through our *Listening Series*, which aims to inform debate, policy and conflict dynamics within the country. The series uses methodology modelled on CDA Collaborative Learning Project's listening methodology,² recognised as an effective method of gathering a range of individual opinions and identifying key themes from a wide cross-section of people.

² CDA Collaborative Learning Projects website: http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/aboutus_history.php

Through the use of listening methodology, this project places emphasis on creating relaxed conversational environments to hear key messages from foot soldiers from the six participating NSAGs. Throughout the conversations a range of topics relating to the peace process in Myanmar were discussed. Through a series of synthesis workshops with *listeners*³ and CPCS' internal analyses, a set of key themes have been identified as *most commonly heard* across all conversations.

Summary of Findings

While there are significant differences between armed groups and between individual soldiers belonging to each NSAG, sixteen themes most commonly heard across all conversations were identified and are listed by priority in Table 1.

³ *Listeners* refers to the individuals who conducted listening conversations for this project.

Table 1: Most Commonly Heard Themes From Foot Soldiers

1. Some positive feelings about the peace process.
2. The desire to have a sincere and genuine peace process.
3. The need for trust building.
4. It is too early to consider giving up arms.
5. There is increased freedom of movement but more is needed.
6. The need for a reduction of military presence in ethnic states and clearer demarcation of areas of control.
7. Commitment to follow armed group leadership.
8. The desire for self-autonomy, self-determination and equal rights.
9. If *real peace*⁴ can be achieved, the desire to be civilians or in an ethnic or state security force.
10. The need for reintegration assistance programs.
11. The desire for more information about the peace process.
12. The need for ceasefire monitoring groups.
13. The desire for business and economic development.
14. The want for better communication between ethnic armed groups and the Tatmadaw.⁵
15. The need for unity within ethnic armed groups.
16. The need for more frequent peace dialogue between parties with negotiators.

From the listening conversations, ten key themes emerged relating to the concerns and needs of foot soldiers in peace negotiations and

⁴ References to the term *real peace* held different meanings for each participant and armed group. However, the three commonalities heard from all foot soldiers relating to the meaning of real peace were, achieving the goals of their particular armed group, the ability to live free from violence and oppression and the desire for the peace process to progress to a stage where both parties (NSAGs and Government) were genuinely committed to achieving lasting peace.

⁵ Tatmadaw refers to Myanmar National Army.

agreements. These ten themes, listed below in Table 2, function as key messages for armed group leadership and Myanmar Government officials.

Table 2: Key Messages for Armed Group Leadership and Myanmar Government Officials

1. There is a need for trust building and sincerity from all parties in peace agreements⁶ and their implementation.
2. Demobilisation must to be based on a realistic view of the peace process and the points committed to in peace agreements. It will be possible only when peace agreements have been successfully implemented.
3. Parties to the conflict must maintain integrity, treat each other equally and be accountable to points agreed upon in ceasefire and peace agreements.
4. Foot soldiers want a federal system with strong state autonomy, equal rights at the state level, ethnic minority recognition and cultural respect.
5. Foot soldiers want basic human rights.
6. Foot soldiers need increased access to information to be better informed about the peace process.
7. To add legitimacy to the peace process, ceasefire monitoring should be developed, respected and mandated for every group.
8. Natural resources should be protected, utilised and remain under the autonomy of the state they are located within.
9. Foot soldiers want to avoid the breakdown that occurred in past peace processes.
10. If real peace is achieved, foot soldiers would like to join a state security force or reintegrate into civilian life.

⁶ The term peace agreements is used generally to include any peace related agreement, including preliminary agreements, memorandum of understanding and ceasefire agreements.

In addition, identified themes relating to the current and future on-the-ground needs and concerns of foot soldiers have relevant implications for International Non-Government Organisations (INGOs) and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). These are detailed below, in Table 3.

Table 3: Key Messages for INGOs and NGOs	
1. Civilian Reintegration Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three to five years financial support. • Access to land to live with families and conduct livelihood activities. • Economic opportunities. • Vocational training. • Education for soldiers and their families. • Identification cards.
2. Natural Resource Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community benefits from natural resource development. • Good-practice in natural resource management.
3. Basic Human Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom from all forms of violence. • Ethnic minority recognition. • Freedom of movement.
4. Adherence to Ceasefire Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INGO or a neutral group to conduct ceasefire monitoring for all ceasefire agreements.
5. Basic Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education facilities and infrastructure. • Healthcare infrastructure (health centre and access to medical care). • Housing and village infrastructure.

6. Right to
Protect
Oneself and
Community
From Harm

- Soldiers must maintain the capacity to protect themselves, their families and their communities.

7. Business
Development
for Financial
Security

- Opportunities to engage in business development.

Recommendations

The most prominent themes and messages heard from non-ranked soldiers should be acknowledged, addressed and supported by all groups working for peace in Myanmar. CPCS has combined key messages with the main themes heard and internal analysis of the Myanmar context to formulate recommendations for key actors.

To NSAG leadership and the Myanmar Government:

- 1) Ceasefire monitoring initiatives by a neutral third party and/or community led group should be implemented to build trust, and improve accountability.
- 2) Demobilisation programs must be based on a realistic understanding of the situation for soldiers on-the-ground and should be implemented only once a ceasefire is in place and trust has been built.
- 3) Demobilisation and reintegration programming should engage soldiers, taking into account the needs and opinions of soldiers and allowing them to have input into the development of these processes.

- 4) Information sharing initiatives should be undertaken with foot soldiers from all groups to share information about the peace process, the political situation, and realistic next steps.
- 5) Programmes should be set up during the initial stage of the peace process aimed at preparing soldiers for reintegration into civilian life, allowing them the option to diversify their skills while they are still soldiers.
- 6) A good-governance approach to natural resource development should be explored to ensure that communities benefit from resource development that occurs within their state.

To NGOs and INGOs:

- 1) Reintegration support should be provided for soldiers including three to five years financial support, access to land, vocational training, education for soldiers and their families and the development of economic opportunities.
- 2) Ceasefire agreements should be supported by community based neutral monitoring groups or INGOs.
- 3) Support to provide basic infrastructure should be implemented with specific attention being given to education and healthcare facilities, and village infrastructure.
- 4) Natural resource management planning should be supported including a good-governance approach to ensure that communities benefit from resources development and negative social and environmental impacts are mitigated. This should be undertaken in conjunction with the Myanmar Government and NSAG leadership.
- 5) Programming initiatives should be developed to ensure and target the delivery of basic human rights to all people living in Myanmar; specifically, respect for ethnic minority recognition and the rights of soldiers to maintain the capacity to protect themselves, their families and their communities.

INTRODUCTION

Since September 2011, the Myanmar Government has shown a commitment to engaging armed groups in a long-term peace process. The Government's willingness to discuss ethnic issues and work with armed groups in a series of peace-related dialogue and ceasefire agreements has demonstrated their active involvement in the peace process and is considered Myanmar's best opportunity to achieve peace. While significant progress has been made in high-level discussions and the signing of ceasefire agreements, the peace process has yet to engage the wider population, and the situation in Myanmar remains in a sensitive transitional stage.

Part of the complexity of the Myanmar conflict can be attributed to the existence of multiple ethnic groups and the many languages spoken within the country, as well as the diverse geography and geographic isolation of many groups of people. The presence of over fifteen active NSAGs in Myanmar reflects the country's diversity.⁷ These armed groups represent various ethnic backgrounds, speak different languages and have varying relationships to the communities they represent. After more than six decades of armed conflict, all of these actors have different grievances, needs and objectives that must be addressed in the peace process. The wide range of actors that need to be incorporated into the process has become one of its defining characteristics, contributing to the complex and dynamic context in the country.

CPCS' research publications are primarily motivated by practical lessons learned from on-the-ground experience, as well as situational analysis of conflict dynamics. Through these ongoing analyses, and from our experience and consultation with a range of individuals

⁷ Figure cited from Myanmar Peace Monitor, retrieved 13 March, 2014, from: www.mmpeacemonitor.org

within Myanmar, CPCS has identified that the voices of non-ranked soldiers are missing from Myanmar's peace process.

While NSAG leadership are engaged in negotiations and dialogue, it is unclear how those on the frontlines of conflict feel about the peace process and their futures. Foot soldiers from armed groups in Myanmar are among the most militarised groups in the country and many have been fighting on the frontlines for decades. Most foot soldiers remain in geographically isolated locations with restricted access to travel and all remain armed. Operating within military structures with strict hierarchical systems, non-ranked soldiers have even less opportunity than most to express their personal opinions, needs and concerns in the peace process.

Engaging foot soldiers in the peace process contributes to wider participation, helping to build a sense of ownership and legitimacy in Myanmar's peace process and strengthening the effectiveness of the process by ensuring that it can meet the basic needs of all groups. For armed groups in particular, a consultative and inclusive peace process will facilitate the development of contextually appropriate post-conflict programming, creating a more inclusive and sustainable peace process.

One regional example where an armed group played a leading role in the development of their own process is in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)–Government of the Philippines (GPH) peace process, where the term normalization was used instead of the more generic terms of *reintegration* and *demobilisation*. The term normalization was developed by the MILF, who conceptualised their own reintegration and demobilisation processes as being centred around the return to conditions where communities can regain their desired quality of life, sustainable livelihoods and political participation within a peaceful society. The use of this term highlights the importance for soldiers to be able to create their own transitional

process, as they understand it, and to avoid being constrained by a one-size-fits-all model that does not cater to their unique needs and grievances. This is not to say that it will be exactly the same for soldiers in Myanmar, but that soldiers must be a part of creating processes that will affect their futures.

This publication aims to elevate the voices of foot soldiers in the country, and to initiate this conversation by consulting foot soldiers on their opinions, needs and perceived challenges in relation to the Myanmar peace process.

Research Objectives

This project has two main objectives:

- 1) To gain an understanding of the opinions, perceived challenges and concerns of foot soldiers in relation to the peace process and their futures.
- 2) To elevate the voices of foot soldiers so that they are heard by armed group leadership, the Myanmar Government, NGOs and INGOs and considered in top-level decisions that will affect their futures.

Content and Structure

The main body of the publication is divided into four sections. The first section details the methodology used and explains the research process. The most commonly heard themes, introduced in the executive summary, are expanded and explained further in the next section. The third section provides analysis and implications of the findings. The publication closes with specific descriptions of the main themes heard for each of the NSAGs included in this project.

RESEARCH DESIGN

For foot soldiers in Myanmar, uncertainty remains surrounding the strength and durability of newly signed agreements. Soldiers continue to experience restrictions of movement and, in some areas, open combat. Given these sensitivities as well as the hierarchical nature of military structures, non-ranked soldiers have limited opportunity to be heard in the peace process and are logistically difficult to reach.

For these reasons listening methodology was used to elevate the voices of foot soldiers, conducting listening conversations with one hundred non-ranked soldiers from the armed groups ABSDF, CNF, KIO, KNPP, KNU and NMSP. To ensure participants were comfortable and able to express opinions most important to them, listening conversations took place in the participants' language of choice, in a flexible and informal manner.

Listening methodology is recognised as an effective method of gathering a range of individual opinions and identifying key themes from wide groups of people. The methodology recognises that people living in any given context have first-hand experience, knowledge and the best understanding of contextual dynamics. Thus, they are the most important people to listen to. Listening methodology engages participants in flexible, informal conversations avoiding a more formal interview process. This approach seeks to create a space where participants feel comfortable sharing concerns and messages most important to them. Through a synthesis and analysis process, broad themes and common issues can be identified from a wide cross-section of people.

CPCS, as a conflict transformation organisation, recognises the value of building an inclusive peace process through engaging a wide range of voices. Since 2008, CPCS has conducted research using listening

methodology to publicise diverse voices from within Myanmar through our *Listening Series*.

For this project CPCS has adopted and slightly modified CDA Collaborative Learning Development's version of listening methodology to accommodate and better suit the unique context, challenges and objectives of the research. Modifications were judged necessary to strengthen the methodology when speaking to soldiers and working in a conflict context. For example, the CPCS facilitation team did not accompany listening teams when they travelled to armed group camps. Instead a daily processing tool was developed that can be used by listening teams without the presence of the facilitation team.

CPCS conceptualises listening methodology as a qualitative, subject orientated approach used to analyse the direct experiences of participants. It can be used to identify key themes, trends and common issues from a wide-range of people. Listening projects conduct a comprehensive and systematic exploration of the ideas and insights of people living in and affected by a particular situation. This creates an opportunity to elevate and publicise individual or group voices that are less often heard; facilitating a channel to share opinions on a particular situation or plan for the future.

To respect individual privacy, all participants in this project, including listening team members and soldiers who shared their opinions, remain anonymous. Names have also been omitted in the belief that the quotes detailed in the following pages represent key issues and view-points shared by many participants, not just one.

Facilitation and Listening Teams

A facilitation team comprised of four CPCS staff made up the core research team for this project. The facilitation team was responsible for training and processing workshops, documentation, logistical

arrangements, internal analysis of results and production of the publication.

Additionally, this project depended heavily on the support of key individuals who generously accepted requests to be part of listening teams. CPCS extended invitations to selected individuals believed to be most suitable to conduct listening conversations. These individuals were primarily NGO workers living inside Myanmar or in Thai-Myanmar border areas.

Listening team members were selected based on their dual position as both insiders, with their familiarity and knowledge of armed group controlled areas and surrounding states, their ethnic background and ability to speak the language of respective armed groups, and their position as outsiders; because as non-members of the armed group they retain a level of neutrality.⁸

Stage One: Training Workshops

The initial stage consisted of two-day training workshops with listening teams. The main objectives of these workshops were to share information with listeners about the foot soldiers project and listening methodology, whilst equipping listeners with the skills to conduct conversations with foot soldiers.

Stage Two: Conducting Listening Conversations

Stage two began immediately after the training workshops so that newly acquired skills could be applied as soon as possible. Listeners travelled to locations specified by armed group leadership to meet with foot soldiers.

⁷ To be able to speak to the ABSDF the listening team was more closely linked to the armed group.

Two listeners were present at each listening conversation. As previously mentioned, emphasis was placed on creating a relaxed environment to encourage soldiers to share the information most important to them. Conversations were conducted in the participants language of choice to avoid difficulties that arise with the use of a translator.

During conversations, a range of topics relating to foot soldiers in the Myanmar peace process were discussed. A set of guide questions (see Appendix) were used by listeners to direct conversations and to ensure that a variety of topics were spoken about. Guide questions were used as a loose framework for conversations but were not strictly adhered to, allowing for more flexible, flowing conversations.

Table 4: Demographic of Soldiers by Group, Location and Gender

ABSDF	Seven male soldiers from the ABSDF were spoken to in Mae Sariang, on the Thai-Myanmar border.
CNF	Eleven male soldiers from the CNF were spoken to at Camp Victoria near Tlangpi, in Chin State.
KIO	A total of twenty-one soldiers from the KIO were spoken to near Laiza in Kachin State in the Brigade five area. Ten soldiers were female and the remaining eleven male.
KNPP	Ten male soldiers from the KNPP were spoken to in Nan Soi, in the Mae Hong Song province of Northern Thailand.
KNU	A total of forty-one male soldiers from the KNU were spoken to by four listening teams. These teams travelled to Nyaunglebin District, Mergi-Taviy District, Dooplaya District and Hpa'an District in Karen State to speak with soldiers from Battalions three, four, six and seven. Conversations with KNU soldiers were conducted in multiple locations due to the wide geographic spread of KNU battalions and the diversity between them. A wider range of conversations was needed to ensure the diversity of voices from within the KNU was heard.
NMSP	From the NMSP, ten male soldiers were spoken to in three locations around Mawlamyine in Mon State.

Stage Three: Recording, Processing and Analysis

Listeners used three tools to record data from the conversations with foot soldiers: notebooks, logbooks and noted down quotes. Listeners were encouraged to avoid taking notes during conversations to ensure that participants felt comfortable and to maintain an informal

atmosphere. Instead, the details of each conversation were recorded immediately after every conversation in a notebook. Additionally, at the end of each day listeners used a logbook to record what they *heard the most* from all conversations that day. The use of logbooks acted as a daily debriefing and processing exercise where listeners sat together and discuss the themes they had heard the most from the conversations. Differences and disagreements were also recorded in logbooks. If listeners heard a phrase during the conversation that they felt captured the essence of a main point, they noted down the quote during the conversation.

Stage Four: Processing Workshops

After the completion of listening conversations, listeners attended a processing workshop, alongside teams who had spoken with other armed groups. Listeners were asked to report what they heard the most from all conversations. After each group had presented their results, the CPCS facilitation team analysed and synthesised the information and presented back to listeners the key themes heard overall. Listeners were then asked collectively to prioritise these points. The process was repeated for issues heard for each guide question, highlighting key themes heard across all listening conversations.

Stage Five: CPCS Internal Analysis

Finally, CPCS conducted an internal analysis, reviewing all recorded data from notebooks, logbooks and recorded quotes. The team also reassessed documentation from the processing workshops to ensure key themes and common issues identified accurately reflected what was heard from soldiers in the listening conversations.

Limitations

As with all research this project has limitations. It should be understood that this project provides a snapshot analysis of the voices of foot soldiers from six NSAGs. The Myanmar context is complex and dynamic and will continue to change. Similarly, opinions, challenges and concerns for non-ranked soldiers will continue to change with evolving circumstances. This publication records these voices at one given time.

Speaking with six NSAGs means gaps still remain in ensuring the voices of all foot soldiers are heard. Engaging with non-ranked soldiers from the remaining NSAGs in Myanmar as well as the Tatmadaw is one area where further research will be expanded on. To build a sustainable and transformative peace process it is important for the voices of non-ranked soldiers from all groups to be heard, understood and considered.

This publication sheds light on some of the most important issues for foot soldiers but it is not an exhaustive list of all opinions, concerns and perceived challenges – Only the most prevalent.

KEY THEMES

This section expands the key themes detailed in Table 1 (see page 10) in the executive summary, explaining the main points in more detail. The sixteen most commonly heard themes have been categorised into three overarching themes identified as *general reflections from foot soldiers, needs and concerns in peace negotiations and ceasefire agreements*, and *current and future on-the-ground (tangible or material) needs and concerns*.

General Reflections and Opinions

Some of the themes identified were general reflections and opinions held by soldiers in relation to the peace process. These themes do not reflect any specific needs or challenges but capture foot soldier's overall view of the process and how they would respond to changes that may occur.

Desire for Peace

One primary theme heard throughout the conversations from soldiers was the desire for peace. One soldier from the KNPP concisely stated: "All people want peace". This desire for peace was accompanied by the desire to live peacefully, have increased freedom of movement, a basic level of security and human rights and an overall desire for communities to live in a society free from violence.

These aspirations were expressed by one NMSP soldier: "I hope and wish to see the new generation enjoy the taste of peace if I don't see it in my life time". Soldiers felt strongly that they were fighting for peace, as expressed by another soldier from the KNU: "I have decided to be an armed revolutionary my whole life because I want true peace".

Positive Feelings About the Peace Process

Soldiers from all groups also reported positive feelings about the current peace process and hoped that it could achieve peace. One KNU soldier stated: “I want this peace process to be successful. After peace, the next generations can live peacefully”. One soldier from the CNF expressed: “The ceasefire and peace process had a positive impact because those living in ceasefire areas benefited”. Another KNU soldier added: “I really like the peace process, I want peace. I am not doing the revolution just because I want to do it”.

Others expressed more reserved feelings, such as the opinion it was better to be involved in a peace process than to have nothing at all, articulated here by a soldier from the CNF: “It’s better to have a peace process than not to have one, we know communities really want peace”. Other soldiers expressed their desire for the peace process to progress further. One KNPP soldier stated: “We want peace talks to continue and we want our leaders to try to negotiate to get agreements for the good of our next generation”.

Some soldiers articulated more positive feelings about the current peace process, in comparison to past efforts due to the involvement of many NSAGs, civil society actors and the international community. Additionally, some soldiers held positive feelings towards ceasefire agreements, which they felt were beneficial for communities as well.

Many soldiers referenced the desire for *real, genuine, true or lasting* peace. One KNU soldier expressed: “I see the peace process positively but there must be true peace”, while a soldier from the KIO stated: “I want true peace, before it wasn’t true peace so it must be true peace this time”. The specific meaning of these types of peace varied between individuals and was often unique to each armed group. However, three similarities were heard across all groups. *Real,*

genuine, true or lasting peace for most soldiers meant achieving the goals of their particular armed group, the desire for the peace process to progress to a stage where both parties (NSAGs and Myanmar Government) were genuinely committed to achieving lasting peace and the freedom to live free from oppression and violence.

Support for the engagement of armed group leadership in the peace process was also a common theme. This support was often reported by soldiers who had limited knowledge of the peace process, but who felt armed group leader's engagement in the process was a positive development. One KNU soldier stated: "I see the peace process positively and the action of our leadership as positive", while another said: "Our leadership is discussing peace so we expect a lot from that. Since then we can now breath more easily than before, I am very happy. I really want peace in the future. It is needed".

Almost exclusively, positive feelings about the peace process were linked to increased freedom of movement, the need for a genuine and sincere peace process, the need for mutual respect between parties and respect for the points agreed to in ceasefire agreements.

Follow Leadership

In relation to future developments in the peace process, soldiers expressed an overarching commitment to follow the decisions of their respective armed group leadership. When discussing demobilisation, soldiers voiced a resistance to disarming, yet asserted they will disarm if their leadership commands them to do so. One KNU soldier highlighted this sentiment, stating that he would follow the decisions of his leaders: "If they say fight or if they say peace". Another KNU soldier expressed his commitment to his leaders' commands: "If my leadership tells me not to shoot, I will not shoot. Even if I am being shot at by the other side".

Soldiers were uncertain about the outcomes of the peace process but had confidence that their leadership was doing their best, representing the needs of all soldiers. One KIO soldier expressed: “I think our leaders are doing good things for us. I don’t know exactly but if it is for peace it is good”. Soldiers believed their leadership was trying to overcome challenges in the peace process and affirmed they would accept the outcomes reached at the negotiation table.

Needs and Concerns in Peace Negotiation and Ceasefire Agreements

Throughout conversations soldiers expressed a range of opinions reflecting their needs and concerns in current peace negotiations and ceasefire agreements. All of these points demonstrate that the Myanmar peace process is still in its initial stages and highlight the need to further strengthen and build stability.

The Need for a Sincere and Genuine Peace Process

One key concern expressed by soldiers was the need for legitimacy in the peace process and the desire for it to be sincere and genuine. Soldiers were uncertain whether the Government is sincere in their engagement in the peace process and aspirations to achieve lasting peace. Some soldiers voiced doubts surrounding the possibility of achieving true peace in this process, while others reported positive views of the peace process but had doubts regarding its implementation. As mentioned above, soldiers reported their desire for *real, genuine, true* and *lasting* peace. The desire for real peace was usually accompanied by references to past breakdowns in ceasefire and peace agreements and associated concerns surrounding the sincerity of the process.

Some soldiers expressed the opinion that the Government might be using the peace process as an opportunity to identify NSAGs

weaknesses, or to re-arm and replenish their resources in preparation for continued conflict while NSAGs were focused on negotiations. Several soldiers reiterated the need for a process where all parties are committed to achieving lasting peace and equality. Many soldiers referenced past breakdowns in ceasefire agreements and emphasised the need to avoid a repetition of this in current ceasefire agreements.

Mutual Respect and Adherence to Ceasefire Agreement

Soldiers explained that mutual respect between all parties is needed for the peace process to be successful. Mutual respect was often mentioned in relation to the need for adherence to ceasefire agreements, reports of breaches to ceasefire agreements and concerns about the sincerity of the peace process.

Generally, foot soldiers identified the need for all parties to respect the terms and conditions of agreements equally. Soldiers expressed a desire to create stronger links between what is discussed and agreed upon in peace/ceasefire agreements and implementation. Specific points of contention included soldiers carrying arms outside of their demarcated territory when agreements restricted this movement. Soldiers voiced a need for Tatmadaw soldiers to ask permission before entering their territory. One KNU soldier expressed: “Tatmadaw soldiers bring arms when they come into our regions. Don’t we have the right to hold arms? We follow the rules”.

As a solution, many soldiers suggested that there should be better demarcation of territorial zones with the expectation that more clearly marked areas of control would help restrict soldiers from carrying arms outside of their own areas. As one CNF soldier stated: “We want the Myanmar Government to state exact boundaries for Chin State”, and another KNU soldier reiterated: “I want the territories to be clearly demarcated”.

Another point mentioned regarding adherence to ceasefire agreements signed was the need for both sides to abide by conditions relating to the mobilisation of troops. A strong theme conveyed in conversations was that agreements detailed both sides refrain from increasing military strength, yet foot soldiers who participated in this project had observed reinforcement of Tatmadaw forces.

Soldiers were concerned that the Government had continued to mobilise troops, reinforced frontline bunkers and military camps, conducted military drills in NSAGs areas of control and failed to evacuate camps they had agreed to withdraw from. A soldier from the KNU expressed:

The most important point for us is for the Tatmadaw not to do any military mobilisation, strengthening their numbers of soldiers, since now it is time to reduce the military. The ceasefire agreement has been announced publically so they have to reduce their military forces. They have asked us to reduce ours. But they mobilise their armed force. This is a challenge for us.

Soldiers wanted to see a reduction of armed force presence in their states, which they believed would indicate mutual respect and a level of sincerity on behalf of the Government and strengthen the peace process.

Trust building

The need for trust building between conflicting parties, and also in the peace process itself, was expressed by soldiers who highlighted the importance of mutual trust. One ABSDF soldier shared his thoughts that for the peace process to be successful: “both sides need to trust each other”.

Apprehension was heard in conversations as soldiers spoke about their lack of trust towards the Government as well as reservations towards the peace process due to breakdowns in past ceasefire agreements. Articulating his feelings of mistrust, one soldier from the NMSP compared the relationship between NSAGs and the Government to that of a fish and a fisherman, stating: “It’s like fishing, the fisherman knows what the fish likes. Likewise, we also need to know why he wants that fish”. Soldiers also expressed the hope that trust would increase in the future.

Some soldiers mentioned the need for greater transparency in the form of information sharing to help build trust, while others expressed the need for ceasefire monitoring (explained further on page 32) as a mechanism that would help build trust between all parties.

Too Early to Consider Demobilisation

The strongest consensus between soldiers from all groups was the belief it is too early to consider demobilising and, in particular, too early to consider disarmament. Soldiers emphasised the need to wait and see what happens now that ceasefire agreements have been signed and reinforced their need to retain arms to maintain their ability to defend themselves and communities if ceasefire agreements breakdown and fighting resumes. One ABSDF soldier explained: “It is too early to think about disarmament...disarming should come last”.

Soldiers cited breaches to current ceasefire agreements seen in the visible recruitment of Tatmadaw troops, reinforcement of frontline barracks, Tatmadaw drills training and Tatmadaw soldiers entering NSAG’s areas of control while carrying arms as reasons that demobilisation and disarmament could not happen yet.

Distrust in the Tatmadaw and uncertainty surrounding the Government’s sincerity in the peace process were reported as

other obstacles to the possibility of demobilisation/disarmament for soldiers. Some soldiers thought that peace negotiations could be used as an opportunity for the Tatmadaw to consolidate their military strength and find out about NSAG's weaknesses, adding to the feeling that it is too soon to disarm.

Soldiers communicated that the idea of disarming was not appropriate given their current circumstances and highlighted how disarming did not fit with the realities that they face as foot soldiers. One KNPP soldier expressed: "We need real peace before we can disarm". When visited by listening teams KIO foot soldiers were engaged in armed combat and NMSP leadership thought it was inappropriate to discuss disarmament at this point in time.

Even with strong emphasis placed on soldiers' need to remain armed, soldiers also stated they would follow the decisions of their leadership and, although currently an unlikely scenario, would disarm if ordered to. Additionally, some soldiers mentioned that they would consider laying their weapons down if the Tatmadaw also demobilised, but for only NSAGs to demobilise is not possible as it would leave them vulnerable to potential attacks.

Ceasefire Monitoring

Soldiers' concerns over breaches in ceasefire agreements motivated reports of the need for ceasefire monitoring, preferably by a neutral group with the ability to act as an intermediary between the conflict parties. Foot soldiers believed that ceasefire monitoring should be included in the conditions of the peace talks and that the presence of a neutral, international peace process monitoring committee would further strengthen Myanmar's progress towards peace. Many soldiers articulated that the establishment of monitoring groups would help to build trust and mutual respect between soldiers from NSAGs and Government forces.

The Need For Unity

Though less commonly heard, the need for unity within armed groups, ethnic states and between all NSAGs emerged as a theme in listening conversations. Most commonly, soldiers communicated that increased unity between NSAGs was an essential step towards an inclusive peace process where all NSAGs are able to sign a collective agreement with the Government. Some soldiers expressed concerns about the lack of unity in their own states, highlighting diversity and the presence of many ethnic minority groups with multiple languages and dialects. Soldiers felt this could be a challenge to negotiating peace and to forming a strong federal state system. Other soldiers expressed the need for unity within their armed group to effectively pursue their goals.

Communication Between Leaders

Soldiers suggested that leaders from their armed group and the Government should meet more often. A KNU soldier expressed: “When leaders meet they must talk on good terms and use good language and it cannot be done in one session”. Another KNU soldier stated: “leaders of the two parties should meet quite often. Now they meet and then there is a big absence, why not have frequent meetings, to help the agreement?”.

Soldiers noted a need for transparency in the discussions between armed group leaders and the Government, suggesting that topics covered in formal negotiations should be shared with the public. Some also believed better communication between the Tatmadaw and NSAGs leadership was necessary to maintain awareness of the other party’s movements when travelling outside of demarcated zones of control.

Self-Determination, Self-Autonomy and Equal Rights

Conversations with soldiers reflected a desire to achieve self-determination, self-autonomy, equal rights and freedom from the peace process. Freedom was explained as freedom of movement; to live and access livelihood opportunities; the ability to travel; and to be able to speak and communicate openly.

The need for equal rights was also expressed by many soldiers in relation to the Panglong Agreement and General Aung San's phrase *One Kyat for Burma, one Kyat for ethnic people*. In addition, soldiers repeatedly conveyed the need for equal rights for all people living in Myanmar, as one KNU soldier explained: "After the negotiation and when there is peace, can our people have equal rights? If not, it will be the same thing. I hope to really see peace and equal rights".

The desire for federalism and a federal system of governance was a recurring theme heard from soldiers. For some, this desire was accompanied by the requirement that the central Government treat all federal leaders/states equally: "like brothers and sisters" (KNPP soldier). Some soldiers stated that there must be equal representation of ethnic populations in the federal police force and federal army, with ethnic minorities holding the position of commander-in-chief proportionately and on a rotational system.

The desire for self-autonomy and self-determination was also heard as a common theme. Soldiers spoke of having independence from the Myanmar Government and having the ability to govern their own states. Many soldiers were unclear on the terminology to use but advocated for control of their own state, rather than national Government jurisdiction, as articulated by a KNU soldier: "I want my state back".

Need for Basic Human Rights

Some of the concerns expressed by the soldiers reflect a desire for basic human rights, including the desire to live freely, have freedom of movement and to live free from torture and forced labor. Soldiers felt that the establishment of basic human rights should be the foundation of the peace process.

The need for basic human rights for communities was often reported along with the desire for freedom for soldiers to return to their villages and families after they have reintegrated into civilian life. Female soldiers from the KIO specifically mentioned the lack of basic human security, explaining that people, especially women, don't feel at ease in their villages. These soldiers illustrated how many people feel insecure and lack a sense of ownership, commenting: "Even though we are living in our house, we feel that we are guests".

Soldiers also discussed their right to self-defense and the need to protect their families and communities from harm. This desire was often referenced in relation to the right to carry arms and the theme that it is too early to think about demobilisation.

Freedom of Movement

Many positive feelings about the peace process were accompanied by reports of increased freedom of movement. Soldiers were happy about increased agency to travel and move freely in and outside of their armed group territory. One soldier from the KNU reported: "Now there is more freedom of movement than before...now it is easier to come and go", while another KNU soldier explained: "Before I could only go home secretly. Now I go home openly. I often go back home". Freedom of movement emerged as one of the most important themes for soldiers in the peace process and was heard repeatedly.

Many soldiers said that freedom of movement was an important component of *real, true* or *genuine* peace detailed previously. Expressed here by one KNPP soldier: “[I want leadership] to discuss real peace [at negotiation tables], which means people can move freely from one place to another and live and work peacefully”.

Another reason the peace process was viewed positively was the belief that current ceasefire agreements had created increased freedom of movement. Soldiers reported a reduction in check-points when they travelled to their villages. As a result, peace talks were encouraged to facilitate continued freedom of movement and the ability to live freely. Soldiers also communicated the benefits of freedom of movement for communities, who were experiencing better access to transportation. One KNPP soldier reported: “The Government and KNPP should talk until there is peace so that the civilians also can experience peace and more freedom to travel”.

While soldiers expressed positive feelings about increased freedom of movement, there was also a strong desire for *more* freedom of movement. Some soldiers reported continued restrictions on travel. A KNPP soldier expressed: “If I go back to visit my village now, my family and relatives will shout at me. They still have fear to interact with me”.

Need For More Information

Many soldiers, especially in the initial stages of conversations, reported limited knowledge of the peace process. Some revealed a general understanding that their leadership was engaged in the peace process but most lacked knowledge of specific details. One KIO soldier expressed: “I heard that our leaders are doing the peace process but I don’t know exactly”.

It was apparent that soldiers had not been previously consulted on their opinions, needs and desires in the peace process as throughout the project participants expressed surprise at being approached. The listening teams observed that many soldiers had difficulty commenting on the peace process, due to the limited information they possessed, combined with unfamiliarity expressing their personal opinions. However, listening teams reported that soldiers spoke more after the initial stages of conversation, shared more information than they had anticipated and were excited and appreciative of the opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions.

Additionally, soldiers reported a need to consult and share information with communities. A soldier from the KNPP stated:

It is not enough to consult with only the community leaders. There is also a need to consult with other community members. To get ideas from everyone, it is important for the leaders who attend the meeting to disseminate the information and get ideas from the people.

Civilian Life or Federal Army

Discussions were also held with soldiers about their future, *if* real peace is achieved. All soldiers maintained that they would serve their NSAG as long as they are required but *if real* peace was achieved, they would either integrate into a federal army or return to civilian life.

Soldiers who indicated a preference to integrate into a federal army stated they would only leave their armed group if their service was no longer needed and they were advised to do so by their leadership. Many conveyed that they would prefer to integrate into a federal

army, as they lack alternative skills after a lifetime of serving in a combatant role. Others indicated their preference to integrate into a federal system was in the hope of continuing to protect and serve the people of their state. These soldiers explained that they had dedicated their lives to their state and ethnic communities and wanted to maintain their current lifestyles.

Equally common was the desire to reintegrate into civilian life. Soldiers stated that in the event they were no longer needed by their armed group, they would prefer to move back to their villages and live with their families. One KNU soldier commented: “I want to return to my village and live peacefully, I have seen too much bloodshed”.

In addition, some soldiers expressed interest in having a dual role as a civilian with a part time role in a state security force. As one CNF soldier articulated: “I have two shoulders, each side can carry for each role”.

Current and Future On-The-Ground Needs and Concerns

The remaining key themes that emerged from conversations relate to the current and future on-the-ground needs of foot soldiers, primarily with regard to reintegration support and economic development.

Reintegration: Wants and Challenges

Many soldiers reiterated that if they were to reintegrate into the community, they would like to continue to support their state, giving examples of working as teachers and nurses, while others expressed interest in taking on specific livelihood activities such as agriculture, business, trading, logging, tree planting, haircutting, livestock breeding or carpentry.

The majority of soldiers also expressed a range of concerns regarding the process of reintegration, most of which were related to lack of

skills. To pursue alternative lifestyles, soldiers believed they would require additional skills and capital, as returning to their communities would mean starting from 'scratch' or 'point zero'. While some recalled past experience with farming and agricultural activities, they could no longer remember how to conduct them. For most, long experiences in combat roles left soldiers feeling unprepared for other occupations.

These sentiments are captured in the following statement from a soldier from the KNPP:

If I have to go back, I am worried that I have to restart everything from the very beginning. Even to build a house, I have to start to get one pillar. I don't have money. I just know how to hold the gun. There will be difficulty. I don't know where to live, whether I have to live in a place I was told to live or in my own village.

Soldiers communicated they would like guidance from armed group leaders and help with the reintegration process to civilian life. Some soldiers expressed the need for rehabilitation training and support, due to the immense differences between military and civilian life even in the ability to socialise and interact with others in villages. When soldiers forecasted challenges that would lie ahead, many were unsure how to visualise the process of reintegration.

Reintegration Support Needed

In general, soldiers reported that they would need between three to five years reintegration support.⁹ Soldiers suggested that assistance could be in the form of financial support, food security, vocational

⁹ Although less commonly heard, some soldiers said they did not expect or need any support and were happy to go back to their villages and provide for themselves.

training, economic opportunity and housing assistance. A KNPP soldier expressed:

We should be assisted for at least three years to start our life again. We should be provided food security at the very beginning because we cannot immediately harvest the fruitful plants as soon as we go back. We still have to work.

Emerging from concerns relating to lack of skills, soldiers voiced a desire for vocational training to help them access new occupations. Soldiers also recognised their need for assistance to raise the required capital, for example allocation of land and seeds to begin planting, or tractors and farming tools to undertake agricultural activities. Soldiers understood that it would take time to benefit from harvesting crops and requested additional support for this interim period.

The need for basic services including healthcare, education and identification cards was also recognised by soldiers. The issue of basic education for soldiers as well as for their communities and families was a reoccurring theme. One KNU soldier expressed:

I have never studied in a school. Since there has always been war, I did not have any desire to go to school either. But I want my daughter to be educated and if my son is educated he can do more for the good of the ethnic nationalities.

Similar sentiments were expressed by a soldier from the KNPP, who stated:

I am illiterate so I need to find any work for my living. I want my children to be educated. I don't want them to be illiterate. I want to be with my family, having a house, and working on my own farm.

The need for basic infrastructure was heard from soldiers, including educational facilities such as schools, healthcare facilities (including medical centres and access to medical care), housing, roads and markets at which to sell their produce. One KNU soldier reaffirmed: “In my area, I want to improve schools, clinics, roads and bridges so that they are convenient for us. It is a demand”.

Resource development also emerged as a theme among reintegration needs and concerns. Soldiers voiced a desire for the protection of natural resources, the ownership of natural resources to remain within their state and the right of ethnic groups to benefit from resource development in their states. Soldiers were concerned about international companies undertaking resource development in their states and that the Government would not direct revenue from these projects into the state that the resources came from. Although less frequently heard, there was some reference to the need for demining as land that will be used for farming in the future contains landmines.

Lastly, soldiers expressed the desire for economic development within their states as a way to achieve financial security. Many soldiers encouraged the idea of their NSAG engaging in such activities.

ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overarching trends that emerge from this project show that foot soldiers from all six NSAGs are primarily concerned with achieving peace and the immediate outcomes of the peace process. Assumptions are commonly made that soldiers are more concerned with alternative economic and livelihood opportunities. The opposite is seen through the concerns held by foot soldiers surrounding the desire for peace and a genuine and sincere peace process, as well as the need for trust building. Themes heard from soldiers relating to reintegration into civilian life and reintegration support are present but are a lower priority for soldiers.

Suggestions from soldiers for ways to strengthen the peace process include the need for international ceasefire monitoring groups, better communication between leaders, the need for unity and more frequent peace dialogue, and further demonstrate foot soldiers' investment in the success of the peace process and the achievement of peace. They also show that for soldiers in on-the-ground combat roles the peace process is still in its early stages. This is supported by reports of breaches to ceasefire agreements and the distrust expressed by many soldiers.

Soldiers had difficulty discussing reintegration and their needs if they were to transition into civilian life because they had rarely contemplated life outside their combatant roles in NSAGs or their options if peace is achieved. Most discussion of reintegration into civilian life or integration into a federal security force was based on the hypothetical assumption that real peace had and could be achieved. While some improvements were reported such as greater freedom of movement and less human rights abuses, from the perspective of foot soldiers the peace process is still in an early stage and its outcome remains uncertain.

Soldiers' reports of breaches to ceasefire agreements as well as the desire held by soldiers for the reduction of military presence in ethnic states, provide insight into the reasons why soldiers find it challenging to envisage their future past a combat role in their respective NSAGs.

For foot soldiers, the sentiment that it is too early to consider demobilisation or disarmament programmes is supported by their reports of breaches to ceasefire agreements and findings that demonstrate the initial stage that the peace process is in. It is clear from the information shared by foot soldiers that demobilisation programmes must be based on a realistic view of the peace process. They must also be based on a contextually grounded analysis that is centered around the top-level political situation as well as the challenges and needs of people whom the programmes are designed for and who must agree to demobilisation and disarmament initiatives.

Soldiers' resistance to demobilisation and disarmament coupled with the observed difficulty for soldiers to envisage their futures highlights the need for information sharing and an increased effort to engage soldiers so that they can become part of their own reintegration and demobilisation processes in the future. The complexity of addressing the needs and grievances of the range of soldiers in Myanmar requires engagement of soldiers and inclusion of their opinions and understandings of the current situation and their future. Innovative approaches must be developed that cater to the unique context for soldiers in Myanmar.

As outlined in the introductory chapter, foot soldiers are a crucial group to engage in peace process and, as one of the most militarised groups, have some of the highest potential to become spoilers if they feel they are not being engaged or adequately represented in the process.

The theme detailing soldiers' desire for self-autonomy, self-determination and equal rights provide insight into the motivations for individual foot soldiers as well as groups that engage in conflict. The desire for equal rights reinforces the position that conflict in Myanmar is, for most NSAGs, about equal rights and more specifically about equal ethnic rights as opposed to being more centered on a struggle for democracy.

Soldiers desire for self-autonomy and self-determination demonstrates the need to provide foot soldiers with more information. Self-autonomy and self-determination¹⁰ may not be realistic outcomes in the current peace process and have the potential to create unrealistic and exaggerated expectations for soldiers. Unrealistic expectations could create tension in the future as the peace process progresses past the initial ceasefire agreement stages if the expectations of soldiers are not met. Exaggerated expectations can be mitigated through information sharing with non-ranked soldiers to build a more informed understanding of political processes and likely outcomes. This compliments the desire heard from soldiers for more information about the peace process and events that are currently occurring.

Soldiers' commitment to follow the decisions made by their leadership is a positive finding. While soldiers may not have enough information about the peace process, commitment to follow leadership demonstrates trust within NSAGs and confidence that leadership represent the needs of foot soldiers. Reports that soldiers from all NSAGs are committed to following their leadership bodes well with adherence to the future decisions that NSAG leadership will make at top-level discussions as long as their needs are met.

¹⁰ Self-determination understood as meaning an independent state or self-governing region.

GROUP SUMMARIES

This section acknowledges the differences between each armed group and provides summaries of common themes heard from each of the NSAGs who participated in the project.



All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF)

Table 5: Most Commonly Heard Themes From ABSDF Foot Soldiers

1. It is too early to sign a peace agreement.
2. The desire for a sincere and genuine peace process.
3. The need for a more inclusive peace process and a country-wide ceasefire agreement.
4. The desire to maintain military capacity for self-defence.
5. The desire for the ABSDF to be politically engaged.
6. The desire to engage in business development.
7. The desire for vocational training.
8. If real peace is achieved, a desire to reintegrate into civilian life, or integrate into a federal security force.

Too Early to Sign a Peace Agreement

One key message heard from soldiers from the ABSDF was that it is too early to sign a peace agreement with the Myanmar Government. This feeling was linked to distrust in the Government and past experiences of ceasefire agreements breaking down. Many soldiers expressed the desire to: “wait and see”, how the peace process develops before they decide if it is positive or negative. Reservations towards signing an agreement were linked to the belief that real democracy had not yet been achieved.

Desire for a Sincere and Genuine Peace Process

The above theme (that it is too early to sign an agreement) was referenced in combination with hopes that the process, and all parties, were sincere in their desire for peace and would adhere to agreements signed.

Soldiers highlighted the importance of achieving real peace, defining it as the cessation of conflict coupled with true democracy and a federal system of governance. Soldiers also explained that mutual trust and respect were needed and necessary to achieve real peace. Throughout the conversations, ABSDF soldiers expressed the need for stronger relationships to be built between themselves and the Government, which would help both parties to see sincerity in the peace process and is necessary before true peace can be achieved.

Inclusivity and a Country-Wide Ceasefire Agreement

During the conversations, soldiers commented on the need for a more inclusive peace process. Soldiers spoke about the importance of inclusive political dialogue and the need for a nation-wide ceasefire agreement between the Government and all NSAGs. One soldier explained: “Real peace can only be reached through all-inclusive political dialogue conducted outside of parliament and with participation from ethnic armed groups, community based organisations, Government, the military and political parties”.

Soldiers highlighted the important role that a nation-wide ceasefire can play, particularly in creating leverage for NSAGs if talks breakdown between the Government and one particular group. Soldiers explained that an inclusive agreement would strengthen the position of NSAGs to put pressure on all other parties to abide by the terms committed to in the ceasefire agreement.

Military Capacity for Self-Defense

One theme expressed by ABSDF foot soldiers was the desire to maintain military capacity for self-defense. This desire was linked to soldier's uncertainty about the peace process and their feelings that they must wait and see if the process is sincere. Soldiers discussed the need for the ABSDF to maintain military capacity in case the peace process breaks down, voiced concern for civilians and expressed that communities always suffer the most when fighting occurs.

Political Engagement

Another key theme expressed by soldiers was the desire for the ABSDF to be politically engaged. Soldiers reported the need for ABSDF leadership to engage in political activities to move forward and to prepare for future peace agreements and roles they might have. The desire for the ABSDF to be politically engaged was coupled with concern that if the ABSDF failed to engage they would be disadvantaged compared to other NSAGs who were engaged in dialogue and negotiations with the Government.

Business Development

Conversations with ABSDF foot soldiers reflected the desire for ABSDF leadership to engage in business development opportunities. Soldiers expressed concern about their future and identified the need for an alternative means of economic security. Concern was conveyed that the ABSDF might begin to receive less funding from the ABSDF diaspora if a ceasefire agreement is signed.

Reintegrate or a Federal Security Force

Soldiers asserted that if they were no longer needed by the ABSDF they would like to either, return to civilian life, or integrate into a federal security force. Soldiers who said they would prefer to integrate

into a federal security force emphasised that they would only do this if they were no longer needed by the ABSDF and if true democracy had been achieved.

Options For Reintegration

Soldiers were concerned that they did not have the skills necessary to reintegrate into civilian life or to engage in alternative livelihood activities. Many recognised that they would require alternative vocational training and education to make this transition.

Many of the soldiers who participated in these conversations were unable to explain exactly what type of livelihood or economic activity they would like to pursue if they reintegrate into civilian life, but voiced their need for training and support to be able to take care of their families.

Further Analysis

Unlike all other NSAGs in Myanmar, the ABSDF is not formed along ethnic lines. This accounts for why we did not hear about the need for self-autonomy or self-determination from foot soldiers from this group. Instead, ABSDF foot soldiers spoke more about the need for true democracy as their central goal as well as the need for equal rights for all ethnic groups.

In conversations with ABSDF soldiers, the listening team observed that soldiers had a significant amount of knowledge about the peace process and political processes. This contrasts with soldiers from other NSAGs who took part in this research; all other listening teams noted that soldiers had limited knowledge of the peace process and political process. Listeners also noted the alignment of the desires of foot soldiers from the ABSDF with ABSDF leadership.



Chin National Front (CNF)

Table 6: Most Commonly Heard Themes From CNF Foot Soldiers

1. Positive feelings about the peace process.
2. The peace process has generated increased freedom and human rights.
3. The desire for sincerity in the peace process.
4. It is too early to think about demobilisation.
5. The desire for reintegration support.
6. Concerns that the peace process will break down.
7. The need for trust building.
8. The need for a ceasefire monitoring committee.
9. The need for unity among people living in Chin State.

Positive View of the Peace Process

The strongest theme heard from CNF foot soldiers throughout conversations was an overarching positive opinion of the peace process. Listening conversations highlighted a strong desire for peace among foot soldiers, the majority of whom acknowledged ceasefire agreements as an important step towards the establishment of stable peace in Myanmar. One soldier stated: “It is very good to have a peace process rather than having no peace process”. Foot soldiers indicated that they welcomed the peace process because it has brought relief from conflict and violence, as one soldier commented: “It is very good to have a peace process rather than fighting”. The

majority of soldiers remained hopeful that this process will bring a more peaceful future.

Greater Freedom and Human Rights

Most soldiers spoke about increased freedom and human rights, that have contributed to their positive views of the peace process. Several soldiers pointed to less travel restrictions and a decrease in violence in communities. Others acknowledged greater enjoyment of human rights, including a greater sense of security for communities. Many soldiers reported that these positive developments had motivated their acceptance of the peace process as well as its potential to facilitate real peace in Myanmar.

The Need For a Sincere Peace Process

While soldiers acknowledged the positive impacts of the peace process, several also expressed concerns over how long lasting these benefits would be. Past breakdowns in peace agreements coupled with reports that not all aspects of the ceasefire agreements were being adhered to created feelings of mistrust towards the Myanmar Government, and a strong feeling that there must be sincerity in the process. One soldier conveyed: “The Tatmadaw do not follow the agreements that we signed recently, so how can we believe they will follow if we sign the new ones”.

During conversations, soldiers reported difficulty implementing the points detailed in the ceasefire agreement and breaches to the agreement on the part of the Tatmadaw. Soldiers explained that these situations contributed to distrust in the peace process and highlighted the need for trust building.

Too Early for Demobilisation

Soldiers felt that it was too early to consider demobilisation. Throughout conversations, CNF foot soldiers voiced the belief that the preservation of a Chin State army was essential to the security of Chin State. Many soldiers reported the need for the continued existence of the CNF as a crucial aspect for stability in the future and many noted it as a requirement if they were to consider reintegrating into civilian life.

Several soldiers stated they would only consider returning home if CNF maintained its own military force and there was no longer a need for soldiers to serve. In this context, soldiers emphasised they would rather reintegrate into civilian life than join a national security force which they considered to be: “Under the Myanmar Government and not independent”. One soldier concluded: “We strongly believe that there should be a Chin army to protect Chin State. We do not accept border guard forces. So as long as we get a federal state and have our Chin army to protect Chin State, we are okay to be civilians”.

Reintegration Assistance

When envisioning reintegration into civilian life, the majority of CNF foot soldiers expressed a clear need for assistance, highlighting the difficulty of transitioning into civilian life after many years in a combat role. Many soldiers advocated that successful reintegration could only be achieved with support from the Government or armed group leaders. Soldiers communicated a lack of skills and knowledge outside a military career that they believed would make it difficult to establish alternative lifestyles. One soldier commented: “Yes, we want [reintegration assistance] very much. If we settle down with our family, with a good life, we will accept all kinds of jobs. But we have to start our life from zero, so as long as we get support, we will accept”.

There was a widespread consensus among CNF foot soldiers that reintegration support should provide alternative economic security. One soldier reported: “We need support from the Government to start a business or we may do robbery for a living”. Ideas of the type of assistance that should be offered included financial assistance, skills training and education.

Concerns That the Peace Process will Break Down

Another theme that emerged across all conversations was the concern that the peace process will breakdown. Soldiers cited a number of potential spoilers that could undermine the process and threaten the development of peace in Myanmar, including power struggles among top military leaders and potential changes in leadership in the upcoming 2015 elections. Soldiers thought that a change in Government could stall the process and expressed concern that if peace talks breakdown or are suspended, they would be difficult to resume.

Trust Building

The need for trust building was reinforced across all listening conversations with CNF foot soldiers. Many soldiers said their lack of trust motivated the need to remain prepared militarily to protect Chin State. Past breakdowns in ceasefire agreements and breaches of points agreed to in the current ceasefire agreement motivated a lack of trust and a desire for trust building between the CNF and Myanmar Government. As one soldier voiced: “What I am concerned about in the peace process is the Government. We don’t trust the Government because the Government breaks our agreements very often”. Soldiers pointed to this lack of trust as an obstacle to more stable and effective peace negotiations between the Government and the CNF.

Ceasefire Monitoring Committee

To build trust and sincerity in the peace process, CNF foot soldiers advocated for the establishment of a ceasefire monitoring committee. Many soldiers voiced concerns over problems adhering to conditions in peace agreements and highlighted the need for a committee to mediate between conflict parties and ensure the full implementation of terms committed to in the ceasefire agreement. A number of foot soldiers expressed the belief that: “An active peace monitoring group”, was the most important thing that needed to be included in the peace process. Soldiers described this group as assisting in the enforcement of peace agreements and reducing the chance of spoilers or delays in negotiations.

CNF soldiers believed a ceasefire committee would strengthen the peace process, pressure conflict parties to adhere to agreements and reinforce the internal structures of peace in the country. One soldier asserted: “We want CNF and the Government to be pressured from the international community, like CPCS and other civil society actors, to make sure the peace process happens. We believe that to get a real peace process, it needs to be inclusive”. Soldiers discussed how a ceasefire monitoring committee would help engage a more diverse range of stakeholders including civil society actors and religious organisations and could help to stabilise the peace process.

The Need for Unity

The final theme heard in CNF listening conversations was the need for unity among people living in Chin State. Soldiers highlighted the diversity that exists within Chin State, home to people from a number of different ethnicities, customs, languages and political parties. Foot soldiers expressed concern over the ability of people in Chin State to remain united under a federal system. Others expressed concern that

the Government would exploit existing divisions among individuals in Chin State to threaten claims of self-determination. One soldier observed: “After over sixty years under military Government, we don’t trust each other among Chin people. I worry that Chin people will be biased”, while another stated: “I worry that if we have a federal Government, our unity may break. If we have many parties, I worry that we will be separated”. Soldiers were concerned about the future and the potential division that could be created due to the diversity in Chin State.

Further Analysis

Additional themes surrounding border demarcation, ethnic rights and representation in the federal army were heard from CNF but are not listed in the main themes table.

CNF foot soldiers reported difficulties with the presence of other armed groups, originally from India, living inside their demarcated zones of control. CNF soldiers emphasised the importance of including issues relating to border control and zones of territorial demarcation in the peace process. One soldier asserted: “We want the Myanmar Government to state the exact boundary for Chin State. If we get a federal state, an exact boundary is very important”. CNF soldiers reported that Government forces continue to enter CNF controlled areas without permission and believed establishing clear lines of authority was essential to maintain adherence to the points included in ceasefire agreements.

A final point emphasised by soldiers was the need for equal ethnic representation within the federal army. Like other armed groups, CNF soldiers expressed a particularly strong commitment to decentralised, independent state control and ethnic rights. Soldiers reported the importance of an ethnically diverse federal army and

stated that this was an important indication of *real* peace. One soldier reiterated:

We want a federal army that is based on equal ethnic representation. We do not accept when there are more Burmans than others in the army. We all [ethnic groups] should have the same number of soldiers to protect the country and the term of a federal army leader should be rotated throughout ethnic groups.



Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO)

Table 7: Most Commonly Heard Themes From KIO Foot Soldiers

1. The desire for genuine peace.
2. It is too early to think about demobilisation.
3. The need for trust building and desire for a sincere peace process.
4. Support for KIO leadership.
5. The desire for more information on the peace process.
6. The need for reintegration support.

Desire For Real or Genuine Peace

The desire for *real* or *genuine* peace emerged as a common theme from KIO foot soldiers. Soldiers described the concept of real peace in a number of ways, yet most reiterated that *real* peace required Government adherence to peace agreements, the demands of the KIO met and a widespread sense of security in Kachin State. One foot soldier explained: “I want genuine peace where we will be able to live freely and happily...I want genuine peace”.

Many soldiers expressed positive sentiments about the peace process while others reported that it was too soon to tell if the peace process could achieve *real* peace. One soldier conveyed: “Since I have not seen anything, we can’t say for sure. Presently both sides are still negotiating. It is not easy”. Another soldier reported:

For me, I see the present peace process is good and should continue since it is for all of us. From this peace process we expect to have freedom or independence. We worry about many things. That's why we want our leaders to arrange a peace process that leads to genuine peace.

The desire for real peace and uncertainty surrounding the peace process were linked to breakdowns in past agreements. Foot soldiers recounted their experiences with previous agreements and reported their disappointment when they had broken down.

Too Early For Demobilisation

Another key theme heard from KIO soldiers was that it is too early to begin demobilisation and more specifically disarmament processes. This theme was primarily motivated by concerns over the potential for the peace process to breakdown. Soldiers reported that despite progress in the peace process, armed conflict continued in some areas of Kachin State and, they needed to remain prepared militarily.

In addition, soldiers were concerned that disarmament may be a one-sided process, where the Government would continue to maintain their national forces. Soldiers felt that this would leave KIO soldiers vulnerable to Government attacks, as one soldier explained: "It is impossible to disarm. If they just ask us to disarm and announce there is peace, what will we do if they attack us again later, when we don't have any arms?".

Trust Building and a Sincere Peace Process

The above concerns about demobilisation were spoken about in combination with the desire for a sincere peace process and the

need for trust building. Soldiers spoke about their lack of trust in the Government and were concerned that the Tatmadaw continued to build their military strength. One soldier explained:

We heard that they [the Government] are taking time to reinforce ammunition, rations and soldiers, even with the peace process, to attack us again. Such things are not good. Although we trust them and undertake a peace process, it is useless to continue the peace process if they are lying to us.

Soldiers highlighted the need for trust building between the KIO and Government officials to strengthen current peace negotiations and build the foundations of a stable peace process in Myanmar.

Commitment to Follow KIO Leadership

Throughout listening conversations, KIO foot soldiers affirmed their commitment to KIO leadership. Soldiers believed KIO leaders were adequately representing their voices in the peace process. One soldier commented: “We are doing what we are ordered. We believe in our leaders and we just accept what they are ordering is good for all of us”. Trusting KIO leadership emerged as an important theme for KIO foot soldiers, the majority of whom were fighting on the front lines, and had limited knowledge about the peace process.

Soldiers viewed KIO leaders’ engagement in the peace process positively. One soldier articulated: “I accept that the peace process is good. We believe in our leaders but I can’t say exactly what will happen since we have not seen anything”. Soldiers conveyed trust in the decisions of KIO leaders, respect for their ability to negotiate on behalf of KIO soldiers and a commitment to follow the decisions of their leaders, whether it involved continued combat or disarmament.

The Need for More Information

Soldiers from the KIO were engaged in active fighting on the front lines and thus, the details of the peace process were rarely contemplated or discussed in depth. Many said they had heard of the peace process but were unclear what it entailed. Others expressed they had: “heard a little” about the peace process or had no knowledge of it at all. The majority of soldiers voiced the belief that their time fighting on the front line prevented them from engaging more and accessing information about the peace process. Being in *combat mode*, as one soldier explained, meant there was little time for soldiers to think about the larger picture of peace, and the progress of the process. One soldier asserted: “Since I have been on the front line the whole time, I don’t have any knowledge about the peace talks”, and another added: “We, all the soldiers on the front line, have to be ready for fighting at any time. That is why in this situation I don’t know how to talk about the peace process and discussions”.

Need for Reintegration Support

When discussing reintegration into civilian life, soldiers explained that they would consider it if remaining part of the KIO was no longer an option and they were encouraged by their leaders to reintegrate. Almost all soldiers rejected the idea of joining a boarder guard force, exhibiting a clear preference for integrating into civilian life.

Consistent with other groups, KIO soldiers highlighted the need for reintegration assistance. Soldiers voiced concerns over their lack of skills and reported that they had been fighting for so long that they had no home or livelihood options to return to. Many soldiers felt reintegration would be difficult and highlighted their need for reintegration support including land, financial support and skills training. One soldier asserted: “The first need will be space to live, that is a house for my family and then some capital to start livelihoods

and living. Before our livelihood was slash and burn agriculture. If, in this situation, I am asked to go back to civilian life, I have to start everything from the very beginning". The need for land to resettle was a prevalent theme expressed by many soldiers. Even those who had homes to return to did not feel ownership of their land.

Further Analysis

Other themes were raised that are not included in the main points table. A number of foot soldiers expressed gratitude at being approached and given the opportunity to express their views and opinions on the peace process. Many commented they had never been asked about their feelings or thoughts on the current situation in Myanmar: "Nobody came and talked to us like this," one soldier stated: "We are very grateful".

Other soldiers emphasised the need for ethnic rights and equal representation under a federal government. One soldier stated that he would be happy under a federal system if the Government treated everyone equally. Additional needs included wider acknowledgement of Kachin culture (eg. Kachin focused education), economic development, and the ability to choose a livelihood activity or to own a business.

Several soldiers also raised the issue of development in Kachin State. Many expressed a concern for their children's education and the desire for more schools and universities in the area: "My family is now in an IDP camp. I am worrying about the future and education of my children", a soldier stated. Others hoped to see economic development in Kachin State, and more opportunities to establish businesses.



Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)

Table 8: Most Commonly Heard Themes From KNPP Foot Soldiers

1. Positive feelings towards the peace process.
2. The desire for a sincere and genuine peace process.
3. The need for adherence to ceasefire agreements.
4. The desire for more information.
5. Positive feelings about increased freedom of movement.
6. It is too early to consider demobilisation.
7. If *real* peace is achieved, the desire to reintegrate into civilian life or remain in a state security force.
8. The desire for reintegration support.
9. Commitment to follow KNPP leadership.

Positive Feelings Towards the Peace Process

Overall, KNPP foot soldiers expressed positive feelings towards the peace process. Many believed that peace talks were a constructive development in Myanmar, pointing to increased freedom of movement throughout the country. Others discussed perceived benefits of the ceasefire agreement, one soldier elaborated: “Ceasefire and peace is good for the people. It is good if we have peace. The soldiers are very tired already. It is good that we have a ceasefire now because we don’t need to fight”.

Some soldiers explained that they were pleased and excited by the inclusion of civil society in the process, as it has provided hope. Soldiers see the participation of civil society as a positive sign of sincerity and a step in the right direction, facilitating transparency and inclusivity. A soldier affirmed: “I feel more satisfied this time because there is civil society involvement”.

Almost all soldiers stressed a widespread desire for peace. One soldier asserted: “Peace is good, we all want it”, and another stated: “Make the peace process well. We want to live peacefully”. Some soldiers expressed weariness after decades of KNPP engagement in armed conflict and hoped to stop fighting. Expressed by one KNPP soldier: “I don’t want to hold the gun anymore. I feel pity for my life and his [Tatmadaw soldier] life. If he shoots me, then I have to shoot him”.

Many expressed a desire for the process to succeed and hoped that peace could ultimately be achieved, not only for themselves, but for the whole nation. Conversations with soldiers revealed an eagerness for continued progression of peace talks and for the full implementation of peace agreements. This was believed by most soldiers to be Myanmar’s best hope for achieving peace. One soldier reinforced: “Government and the KNPP should talk until there is peace so that the civilians also can experience peace and freedom”, and another asserted: “We want peace talks to continue”.

A Sincere and Genuine Peace Process

Although soldiers held positive views of peace making efforts, many expressed reservations about the peace process. The majority of these concerns were rooted in issues of trust, a lack of knowledge about the process and past experiences of peace agreements breaking down. Many soldiers cited the failed ceasefire agreement of 1994/95 as a major source of uncertainty regarding current negotiations. These reservations appeared to be heightened by reports that the

Government was continuing to fortify and mobilise its troops, as one soldier articulated: “The Government side should withdraw their troops and demobilise the troops. I don’t want it to be happened again like the 1994 experiences when the Government troops suddenly intruded and attacked us after giving ceasefire agreements”.

In addition, uncertainty also stemmed from common perceptions that the current peace process had yet to show a number of clear tangible benefits for KNPP soldiers and Karenni communities. One soldier articulated: “I still have doubt. If nothing has happened yet, it means nothing has changed”. Without clear indications of peace in the country, the majority of soldiers felt there was still a possibility of negotiations breaking down. One soldiers stated: “If peace is broken down again, the people will suffer again. If the people suffer then we will also suffer”.

These reservations surrounding the current peace process were linked to a strong desire for a sincere and genuine peace process among KNPP soldiers. In discussing hopes for the future, many soldiers used the term *real* peace to describe a lasting peace where individuals were able to live freely, without violence, discrimination or persecution. Some soldiers elaborated: “*Real* peace means people can move freely from one place to another, living and working peacefully”, and: “I really want peace. However, it should be implemented by real goodwill and willingness to have peace. People are already happy with ceasefire. They don’t even understand much that this is just ceasefire, not yet peace. They will be much happier if they have real peace”.

Others expanded the idea of real peace to include concepts like self-determination and equal ethnic rights. Soldiers attested that a genuine and sincere peace process would be one that acknowledged the rights of all ethnic groups in Myanmar under an equal federal system. One soldier explained: “We fight for self-determination to

live peacefully and use our own language. Give us self-determination and allow people to move freely”, while another voiced: “If the Government have consideration and have a real desire for freedom and equal rights for Karenni people, it will be good”.

Adherence to Ceasefire Agreements

In the hope of achieving true and lasting peace, a number of foot soldiers detailed their desire for both armed groups and Government forces to abide by the conditions of the ceasefire agreements. Conversations reflected that this desire also extends to the cessation of new troop recruitment and to the restriction of travel throughout demarcated zones whilst armed and in uniform. Some soldiers expressed the opinion that ceasefire agreement implementation had been more evident among NSAGs than the Government. One soldier stated: “Both sides need to follow the rules. For example, we are not allowed to carry guns in town but the Government soldiers carry their guns in town”. Another reiterated: “We want to ask [the Government] to withdraw the front line military camps, not to recruit new soldiers. For our side, we don’t do such actions anymore and they should be the same like us”.

In relation to these concerns of ceasefire agreement and implementation, soldiers raised the need for trust building between NSAGs and the Government. Many believed that demobilisation would not be possible without greater trust and confidence in the Government’s intentions. One soldier explained: “Disarmament can happen slowly. It can happen only after building trust”.

More Information About the Peace Process

Throughout the conversations, listeners observed that although soldiers expressed an awareness of the ongoing peace negotiations between KNPP leaders and the Government, most lacked more

specific knowledge about the process. Many explained they do not have access to details of the ceasefire agreement and are not sure what the agreement entails: “I don’t know about the agreements. It should be made known to us”, one soldier stated. Due to the lack of information some soldiers were apprehensive about discussing their opinions relating to the peace process. One soldier commented: “I don’t understand and I don’t have knowledge about peace agreements, thus, I don’t know what to include in the discussion”.

Although soldiers expressed concern about the lack of information available, many reiterated confidence in KNPP leadership and willingness to follow their commands and directions. One soldier declared: “We as soldiers must follow our leaders’ orders. If they say fight, then we will fight”.

Increased Freedom of Movement

Freedom of movement was raised as an important element and point of focus in the peace process. Although peace negotiations have begun and ceasefire agreements have been signed, travel is still restricted. While many KNPP soldiers acknowledged increased mobility since the launch of peace negotiations, soldiers also expressed a desire to be able to move more freely and have greater access to livelihood opportunities for themselves and their families. As stated above, to many soldiers the term *real* peace meant freedom to travel in the country without restrictions. Soldiers reported: “We must have freedom to move”, and: “We will not hold a gun if we can freely move and work for our living”.

Too Early to Demobilise

The majority of soldiers expressed the belief that it is currently too early to begin the demobilisation process. Many explained they felt a need to retain their arms to defend themselves and protect Karenni communities as there was still uncertainty surrounding the sincerity

of the peace process and the Government's commitment to peace. One soldier concluded: "Disarmament depends on the Government- if there is repression we will continue fighting".

A number of soldiers communicated that demobilisation would not be possible unless they felt confident that current negotiations would bring real peace, including the freedom to live without oppression and discrimination. One soldier explained: "We don't need to hold the gun if we were not oppressed. If they attack us, then we need to fight back. When there is war, we need to hold the gun even if we don't want to".

Others affirmed their commitment to KNPP leaders, stating that demobilisation depended on the decisions of the leadership. Soldiers asserted that if they were ordered to fight, they would do so, in the same way they would disarm if KNPP leadership commanded it. One soldier spoke about demobilisation saying: "It depends on the leaders. If we were asked to fight, then we will fight".

Civilian Life or a State Security Force

Regarding reintegration, soldiers asserted that if real peace is achieved, they would prefer to reintegrate into civilian life or remain in a state security force rather than a border guard force. Soldiers who expressed a desire to return to civilian life conveyed feelings of fatigue. Most KNPP soldiers had been fighting for the majority of their lives and expressed hopes of reuniting with families and returning to previous communities. One soldier reflected:

I don't want young people to hold guns. It is not good. It is about killing people. If they hold guns they will get hurt physically and mentally. Mentally they will slow down. A soldier's life is so tiring. They just follow the orders and cannot think anything anymore.

Additionally, other soldiers articulated their preference for a continued role in a military or security capacity. Envisioning this future, soldiers mentioned a desire to remain within the KNPP if they were needed but expressed the desire to join a federal army if *real* peace had been achieved and membership in the KNPP was no longer possible. For many, the preference to remain in a security role emerged from the desire to continue to protect civilians, not only internally, but from potential international forces. “There are two reasons that I still want to have a security role”, a soldier explained, “One is for the security of our State and our people because the situation is not yet to be trusted. Another is to protect from foreign countries”.

Desire for Reintegration Support

Most foot soldiers thought that reintegration would be challenging and were concerned that they did not have the required skills. Many soldiers recognised that they would need support, alternative economic opportunities and skills training.

One soldier articulated the challenges of reintegration:

If I have to go back, I am worried that I have to restart everything from the very beginning. Even to build a house, I have to start by getting one pillar. I don't have money. I just know how to hold the gun. There will be difficulty. I don't know where to live-whether I have to live in a place I was told to live or in my own village.

A number of soldiers reiterated that reintegration would require them to: “Restart life from the very beginning”.

Some soldiers were specific about what forms of reintegration support they would require. Many mentioned a need for land to grow crops,

and expressed a desire to resume ownership of their original lands. One soldier told us: “If we have to stay in other places [allocated relocation], we are just like refugees because we do not possess anything. The lands must be claimed by the original inhabitants. In our place of origin, we have our own lands and farms”. Yet, soldiers stressed that returning home would also require Government demilitarisation and the clearing of land. A soldier explained: “If the military camps are still existing there and landmines are still being planted, we cannot do anything for our living”.

In particular, soldiers communicated a desire to settle on the eastern side of the Salween River, which they believed held better agricultural opportunities, compared with the western side, which has suffered heavy deforestation. One soldier conveyed:

I want to reside in eastern Salween River bank because if I go inside, it would be like entering into a pot which can easily be covered. Salween basin is rich in natural resources like wood and bamboo to build a house. There are still wild lands and we can make it into cultivated lands.

Others expanded ideas of support to include the provision of capital and other basic needs necessary to establish new lifestyles, including food staples and farm equipment. “If there is peace, I want to have a civilian life: having a house and doing farming. I will work on my own farm. For that, I need farming tools [machines] and a market for selling my products”, one soldier stated.

Another common concern heard surrounding reintegration was lack of education and knowledge needed to start a new life outside the military. “I worry about how to survive continually, as I lack education,” a soldier articulated. Often these concerns extended to family members as well and were expressed alongside a desire to see

greater development, such as the construction of schools, hospitals, and other social service centers. One soldier spoke of his education: “I am illiterate so I need to find any work for my living. I want my children to be educated. I don’t want them to be illiterate. I want to be with my family, having a house, and working in my own farms”.

Commitment to KNPP Leadership

As referred to in relation to demobilisation, a recurring theme that arose during the listening conversations was soldiers’ commitment to KNPP leadership. While soldiers discussed their own aspirations for the peace process and for themselves, they frequently stressed that they would follow the orders of their leadership. When discussing a range of topics including demobilisation, the current status of the peace process, the possibility of *real peace* or their futures, soldiers continuously referred to KNPP leadership, expressing commitment to their leader’s decisions and ability to represent the needs and concerns of all soldiers. One soldier concluded: “We will follow the leaders because we are soldiers”.

Further Analysis

Other important concepts heard in some conversations were soldiers’ suggestions to strengthen the current peace process. A few mentioned the importance of including civil society members and international actors in negotiations. One soldier in particular, highlighted the need to consult communities in the process to engage local stakeholders and ensure the validity of the process. As expressed above, lack of information has perpetuated feelings of isolation and mistrust among foot soldiers, engaging communities and increasing access to information, soldiers believed, would support the progression of peace in Myanmar.



Karen National Union (KNU)

Table 9: Most Commonly Heard Themes From KNU Foot Soldiers

1. It is too early to think about demobilisation.
2. A desire for real peace and a sincere and genuine peace process.
3. Commitment to follow KNU leadership.
4. The need for a reduction of military presence in KNU areas.
5. Positive feelings about increased freedom of movement.
6. The desire for self-determination, self-autonomy and equal rights.
7. The need for adherence to ceasefire agreements.
8. The need for trust building.
9. If real peace is achieved, soldiers would like to reintegrate into civilian life, to remain in the KNU or join a federal security force if it is controlled by KNU leadership.
10. If real peace is achieved, there is a need for reintegration assistance and support.
11. The desire for more information about the peace process.
12. Better communication is needed between the KNU and Government leadership.
13. The need for more unity within the KNU.

Too Early To Think About Demobilisation

The most prevalent theme heard from KNU soldiers is that it is too early to think about demobilisation or disarmament. Soldiers reported strong sentiments about retaining arms. One soldier expressed: “If I disarm, it would be like cutting my head off”, emphasising his need to be able to protect himself as well as other civilians in Karen State. Though soldiers reported resistance to demobilisation, they affirmed their commitment to the decisions of their leadership, as one soldier articulated: “My desire is not to disarm but if my leadership decides to disarm, then I think I will have to disarm”.

Real Peace and a Sincere Peace Process

KNU soldiers expressed mixed feelings towards the peace process. Opinions towards the current process were both positive and negative but the desire for real peace and the desire for a sincere and genuine peace process were two common themes that emerged from conversations with all KNU soldiers.

Soldiers described real peace as freedom to live, freedom of movement, freedom to conduct livelihood activities, freedom to communicate and speak openly and the freedom to start businesses and live in tranquility. One soldier explained: “Peace means being able to have secured livelihoods and to live freely in tranquility for citizens”. Another soldier described real peace as: “One group of people loving another and enjoying equal rights”, while others expressed their awareness and commitment to achieving real peace, stated by one soldier: “There will be difficulties, if we want it, we must work to get it”. Referring to the outcome of the peace process, another soldier stated: “The peace process lets us live comfortably and there is no need to fight anymore. We can sleep well at night”.

The desire for a sincere and genuine peace process was linked to negative sentiment surrounding distrust of the Myanmar Government

forces. One soldier explained: “I am very happy that now we are in the peace process. It is very good but if they [the Tatmadaw] attack us, we would fight back”. Many soldiers expressed difficulty in trusting the Government military and their intentions in the peace process.

Soldiers spoke about their desire for a sincere peace process coupled with a concern that the peace process would break down, voiced by one soldier: “I am concerned that there will be more war. If there is an armed conflict, the people and all of us will lose and suffer. I do not want war to happen again”. These feelings were also linked to the need for trust building (detailed on page 76).

Commitment to Follow KNU Leadership

Foot soldiers’ commitment to follow the decisions of KNU leadership was another theme strongly expressed. Soldiers articulated confidence in their leader’s engagement in the peace process and stated they would follow the commands and guidance of their leadership.

Reduction of Military Presence and Adherence to Ceasefire Agreements

In the processing workshop and in Table 8, the themes *reduction of military presence* and *adherence to points agreed on in ceasefire agreements* were recorded as two separate themes heard in most listening conversations. We list them separately in the table but the two points are combined in this section for descriptive coherence, as they were closely linked in conversations.

The need for reduction of military presence was situated within the wider theme of adherence to ceasefire agreements. Soldiers said that the points detailed in ceasefire agreements restricted military mobilisation, required reduction of military strength from both sides

and prohibited soldiers from carrying arms in areas outside of their demarcated zones of control. Soldiers reported that these terms are not always adhered to and spoke about instances where soldiers had carried arms in KNU controlled areas, a visible increase in military units and reinforcing frontline barracks.

Soldiers were concerned about the presence of Tatmadaw soldiers in KNU controlled areas despite commitments to withdraw detailed in ceasefire agreements. One soldier asserted:

The most important point is not to do any military mobilisation, strengthening their number of soldiers, since now it is time to retreat the military. It just is not possible to extend their camps. The [ceasefire] agreement has been announced publicly so they have to reduce their military forces. They have asked us to reduce ours. But they mobilise their armed forces. This is a challenge for us.

Another soldier stated: “There is no precise territory demarcation or cooperation. The Myanmar Military is not retreating from KNU territory. They are mobilising troops, more camps, more arms supply”.

Soldiers felt strongly that both sides must adhere to the terms of the ceasefire agreement. One soldier explained: “It is important to do things that have been decided in the peace process - making sure the talk and the work agree”. Another soldier explained: “Placing military camps in front of the village is not true peace”.

Soldiers articulated a desire for Government troops to stay within their demarcated areas and refrain from strengthening their military forces. Explained by one soldier: “Nobody should be carrying guns because of ceasefire agreements”, while another highlighted that: “It is important to make sure the guns are silent during peace making”.

Freedom Of Movement

Consistent with many of the other armed groups, KNU soldiers articulated positive feelings about increased freedom of movement as a result of the peace process. Soldiers reported increased ability to travel and the belief that their lives are easier now they can visit villages, which was not previously possible. This sentiment was captured by one soldier who commented:

During the time after the peace process has been established, it is much easier to live and to move around. Because, before we lived in the forests and in the mountains so it is very difficult with insects biting us. Now, it is much easier to go from one village to another and we are less afraid to do so.

Other reports of increased freedom of movement include: “Before I can only go home secretly. Now I get to go home...openly. I often go back home”.

In addition to positive feelings about the increase in freedom of movement, soldiers expressed the need for *more*. One soldier explained: “I am also hoping for a freer situation. Only then we will be able to contact the population transparently and have freedom of movement”.

Freedom, Self-Determination, Self-Autonomy and Equal Rights

A strong theme heard from KNU soldiers was the desire for freedom, self-determination, self-autonomy and equal rights. One soldier stated: “If we can have our own country, our own state, it would be better. That is something I want to demand”. Another explained: “What I really want is self-determination [for Karen State], equal

rights, lasting peace, security of life for all the people and a pleasant family life”.

Linked to this desire for freedom, soldiers highlighted the desire to live free from human rights abuses. Many soldiers referred to torture, forced labour, being forced to clear landmines and other violence committed by Government forces as motivations for joining the KNU. For many, the guarantee of human rights was seen as an essential step towards achieving real peace.

With reference to equal rights some KNU soldiers referred to General Aung San’s *one kyat for Karen, one kyat for Burmese* slogan, saying that this would be a good model for equal rights. Soldiers expressed uncertainty as to whether equal rights could be achieved. According to one soldier: “The leadership has discussed [peace]. There is peace now, so for our ethnic nationality group will we have equal rights? If not, nothing can be done. I hope that we will have equal rights”. Another soldier commented: “I want peace to be equal, without discriminating social class”.

Trust Building

The need for trust building is another theme that emerged from conversations with KNU soldiers. While many soldiers highlighted the need for trust building directly, others did so through reports of lack of trust towards the Tatmadaw and concerns of the peace process’s sincerity. Some articulated difficulty in trusting their enemies. One soldier stated: “Generally speaking, it is hard to say if the peace process is positive or negative. It is hard to trust the enemies”. Another soldier referenced the proverb: “Show money, get rice”, explaining that he was concerned the Government was making a show of the peace process to secure funds and international support.

The need for trust building and distrust towards the Government forces was influenced by several factors including past breakdowns in the peace agreement, visible military presence and activities in KNU areas, violations of ceasefire agreement terms and the fear of being exploited for natural resources.

Soldiers voiced the need for trust building initiatives advocating the importance of mutual trust for the success of the peace process. Soldiers believed hard work, understanding and commitment from both sides was required for lasting peace. One soldier explained: “Both parties must have mutual understanding to have peace”, while another soldier asserted: “In the ceasefire, both parties must have trust. They must build trust”.

Civilian Life or State Security Force

All KNU soldiers expressed strong feelings of loyalty and commitment to the KNU, however, soldiers stated that if real peace was established and KNU leaders no longer need them, they would like to either reintegrate into civilian life or integrate into a state security force.

Many soldiers said they would like to go back to their villages, live with their families and undertake agricultural activities. One soldier shared his desire: “If there will be true peace, I think I would go back home, live happily with my family and do my farming”. Another explained: “If there is true peace, I want to live my life as a civilian. I want to go back to farming and living with tranquility with my parents”.

Soldiers who said they would join state security forces were resistant to the idea that they would leave the KNU. Most stated they would only integrate into another security force if it was controlled by the KNU and if KNU leadership advised them to do so. Many soldiers also emphasised that there would always be a need for a security force to

protect the Karen people. As one soldier articulated: “If there is no armed forces, the thieves and bad guys will start acting up”.

Reintegration Support Needed

In relation to support needed for reintegration, most soldiers expressed the desire for food security for three to five years, land for agricultural activities and housing and capital to begin these activities. Some soldiers referred to specific support such as five years of food support and twenty hectares of land to establish a house and farming activities, while others stated they would need general assistance.

Some soldiers claimed they would not ask for any support and said that achieving peace would satisfy their needs. Others stated they did not know what support they might need, only that they perceived there would be challenges reintegrating and would like the support of their leadership.

Soldiers also referred to the need for infrastructure to be established in the form of schools, healthcare centres, roads, bridges and communication facilities. One soldier expressed: “If there is absolute peace, I would like the authorities to repair hospitals, schools, roads and bridges in our region”.

Soldiers were interested in undertaking a range of activities if they joined civilian life including agricultural activities and farming, becoming drivers, working in the timber industry or engaging in business initiatives.

Additionally, many soldiers referred to the need for services such as education and healthcare. Education was wanted for both soldiers and their families. One soldier expressed: “I want my children to be educated. I do not want them to end up like me. I have no expectations”.

More Information Needed

Many soldiers reported that they did not know what the process was, while others said they knew that a peace process was happening, were supportive of their leaders engagement in the process but had limited knowledge and understanding of the process. Many soldiers expressed a desire for more access to information about the peace process itself, as well as the negotiations and agreements their leadership is engaged in.

Consistent with many of the other groups, listening teams who spoke with KNU soldiers observed that soldiers, especially at the beginning of conversations, had trouble speaking about the peace process.

Better Communication Between Leadership

Another, less prevalent theme, that was heard from conversations was the need for better communication between the KNU leadership and the Myanmar Government. Soldiers thought that more problems could be solved through dialogue as opposed to armed conflict and that leaders should spend more time talking and meet more frequently. One soldier explained: “It is important that the leadership meet often to discuss peace”. Some soldiers thought that these meetings should be transparent and their content shared with the public.

Increased Unity

The last theme that emerged is the need for more unity within the KNU. Soldiers discussed internal divisions between KNU leadership and variance between goals that different leaders had. The general opinion among soldiers was that the KNU would be stronger if it was more united and all members shared the same goals.

Further Analysis

There are three points that were heard more or heard exclusively from KNU soldiers when compared with other NSAGs. The first is that soldiers are concerned about Government administration delivering services in KNU controlled areas. Soldiers expressed concern that the Government administration may impose on the pre-established KNU administration structure. One soldier referenced the Government measuring land the KNU had already measured. Another highlighted the need for caution towards Government hospitals and roads that are being established in KNU areas and the idea that while a national census may be beneficial to the Government, Karen people should treat it with caution.

Secondly, more prominent in KNU conversations was the fear of exploitation of natural resources located in Karen State. Soldiers expressed concern that the Government and big business would assert control of natural resources and that resource revenues would not benefit Karen people.

One point not mentioned in the above description of the themes heard most from Karen soldiers is the desire to preserve Karen culture. This theme does not fit within any of the main themes but is important to mention. Soldiers expressed concerns that they may lose their culture, traditions and language and emphasised the importance for the Karen culture to be preserved and celebrated.



New Mon State Party (NMSP)

Table 10: Most Commonly Heard Themes From NMSP Foot Soldiers

1. Positive feelings about the peace process.
2. The desire for progression of the peace process.
3. The desire to regain the Mon people’s lost heritage.
4. The desire for self-autonomy and self-determination.
5. The desire to see the peace process continue more quickly.
6. It is too early to consider demobilisation.
7. The desire for equal rights.

Positive Feelings About The Peace Process

The main theme heard from NMSP soldiers was positive feelings about the peace process, primarily surrounding the noted improvements that have been observed since the signing of the ceasefire agreement. Some soldiers expressed the belief that the current process has brought greater freedoms and rights, creating hope that the process can bring peace to Myanmar. One soldier affirmed: “Regarding the peace process, I think we are having more rights now. Compared to the past, we can see good result this time”.

The most commonly referenced improvement was increased freedom of movement for soldiers and civilians. Soldiers reported greater mobility in the region, explaining civilians could move more freely without the presence of several check-points. One soldier

stated: “The situation now is better than past experiences because in the past the food, clothes, shelter, security, transportation and communication were so difficult, but now it has progressed”.

Progression of the Peace Process

During conversations, NMSP soldiers frequently spoke of a desire for the peace process to gain momentum and progress past the ceasefire stage. Soldiers signified the importance of preventing breakdowns or restrictions in the current peace process. Some referenced the 2015 elections, raising concerns on whether a change in Government would impact the peace process and undermine current agreements.

The continuation of momentum was also linked to the desire for *true* or *real* peace, a concept discussed by many soldiers. According to NMSP foot soldiers, true peace encompassed the ideas of freedom of movement, ethnic rights, social services such as healthcare and education as well as security and stability for Mon communities. Often notions of true peace were raised alongside concerns about the slow progress of the current peace process and the desire to achieve peace. One soldier stated: “If it’s true peace, it’s good”. While hopeful for the future, many soldiers expressed the belief that the current peace negotiations have not yet brought true peace to the NMSP and to Myanmar.

Soldiers also spoke about the need to implement the terms of peace agreements to ensure progression of the process and to achieve the objectives of the NMSP. Some expressed concerns on what they viewed as current lack in Government implementation of these points, one soldier asserted: “The main concern and the most horrific word for our ethnic people is if their [Myanmar Government] word and action is different. They should have a strong reason to not break the peace accord. They should keep their words and promises”.

Often, these statements were linked to past experiences surrounding breakdowns in ceasefire agreements. Some soldiers expressed a concern that history would repeat itself, and thus, there was a need to maintain some level of military readiness. One soldier stated: “My concern is they will not keep their promise...from 1995/1996 until 2010, we are still in a ceasefire stage. I am concerned the current situation will happen like that. Therefore, it is important that we need to maintain our military strength and unity”.

Consistent with these concerns, soldiers discussed the need for ceasefire monitoring to ensure implementation of agreements and support the progression of peace in the area. One soldier envisioned the role of a ceasefire monitoring committee, stating: “A monitoring committee should be presented during the meeting. If they can prove that they keep their words, it is certain that there will be peace”.

Others mentioned the slow gains in the peace process, expressing apprehension surrounding the length of the negotiations and the time it took to establish agreements with other NSAGs. Often, the slow pace of the peace process was discussed with regard to inclusivity. Soldiers articulated the belief that a more inclusive process that engaged more NSAGs, would prompt greater progression and have a better chance of achieving real peace. One soldier stated: “It’s taking too long for the Government to talk to other ethnic groups and some are still fighting, [peace talks] should happen simultaneously”, while another expressed: “I would like to add that the Government should meet with all ethnic groups at the same time, not on a group by group basis”.

Regaining Mon’s Lost Heritage, Self-autonomy and Self-determination

In the key themes table, the themes *desire to regain mon’s lost heritage* and *the desire for self-autonomy and self-determination*

are listed separately but during conversations, discussion was closely linked. For this reason they are expanded together in this section.

Throughout conversations, many NMSP foot soldiers expressed aspirations for autonomy and self-determination. A strong sense of Mon identity pervaded most discussions, particularly in relation to how NMSP soldiers envisioned the future of Mon State. Many soldiers spoke about the need for Mon focused social systems such as education and healthcare, an independent Mon Government and leadership, as well as economic development in Mon State. One soldier explained: “In the areas where the majority of the population are Mon, our rights should be in the hands of our people”.

For a number of soldiers, these conversations were framed in reference to regaining the lost Mon dynasty, and reaffirming the significance of Mon culture and traditions. One soldier articulated: “The most important thing is to regain our lost heritage”. More frequently, these conceptions of Mon dynasty and cultural heritage were tied to territorial claims. Several soldiers stressed the importance of returning to their ancestral lands, reinforcing the desire for self-autonomy for Mon State. As one soldier explained, sovereignty could be achieved by: “returning to our ancient great grandparent’s lands”. He continued stating: “It is preferable to live in our own territory and to obtain ethnic rights which all ethnic people deserved”. Another soldier reiterated:

To be honest, my feeling is the land that used to belong to our Mon people should be returned to us and we should enjoy self-determination. Therefore, our livelihood and living standard will enhance, and everyone will be able to participate in the process of developing the nation.

Demobilisation

NMSP felt that it was too early to discuss demobilisation.¹¹ Throughout conversations, foot soldiers emphasised the importance of remaining militarily ready to defend themselves from an attack, particularly in light of past failed negotiations and agreements that had failed in the past.

Equal Rights

Another theme that emerged from conversations with soldiers from NMSP was the desire for equal ethnic rights. Similar to other groups, many soldiers quoted General Aung San's *one kyat for Burma, one kyat for Mon*, as the model for equal rights for all ethnic groups in Myanmar. One soldier explained: "The most crucial issue to be discussed is ethnic people's rights. There will be less difficulties in the future and peaceful livelihoods for people if there are ethnic rights". Soldiers from the NMSP also highlighted the need for equal revenue distribution in resource development.

Further Analysis

Although not detailed as a common theme heard in conversations with soldiers from NMSP, a main point that emerged for listeners was the need for economic development in Mon State, including improved economic opportunities and improved livelihood opportunities. Soldiers hoped that better economic opportunity would be achieved with the progression of the peace process. One soldier voiced this aspiration: "I hope there will be more job opportunities for people if there is real and unconditional peace".

¹¹ Listeners had permission from NMSP leadership to speak to foot soldiers but were asked not to discuss demobilisation or disarmament as they thought it was too early to talk about this topic.

TERMINOLOGIES

- Ceasefire Agreement:** An interim cessation of hostilities whilst more permanent solutions are explored.
- Demobilisation:** Demobilisation is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups.¹²
- Federalism:** The meaning of *federalism*, in this publication, refers to a democratic system of governance where each state within a country is granted equal representation and high level of state autonomy/self governance.
- Foot Soldiers:** The term foot soldiers refer to soldiers with no military ranking. The term is used interchangeably with the term *soldiers* and *non-ranked soldiers* throughout this publication.
- Freedom:** Throughout this publication, the term freedom can refer to the ability to move and travel without hindrance, unrestricted access to employment and livelihood opportunities and the desire for the installation of a democratic political system and more generally to mean the ability to live free from structures of violence or oppression.
- Listeners:** *Listeners* refers to the individuals who conducted listening conversations for this project.

¹² UNICEF (2006) Guidelines on Humanitarian Negotiations with Armed Groups. Retrieved 05 December, 2013, from http://www.unicef.org/emergencies/files/guidelines_negotiations_armed_groups.pdf

Myanmar:	In 1989 the then military Government changed the official name from Burma to Myanmar. They are alternative forms in the Burmese language, but their use has become a politicised issue. The name Myanmar will be used in this publication and is not intended as a political statement.
Non-Ranked:	A soldier without military ranking.
Non-State Armed Group:	In this publication the term <i>Non-State Armed Group</i> refers collectively to any, or all, of the armed groups in opposition to the Myanmar Government.
Normalization:	Term used in the MILF–Philippine Government Comprehensive Peace Agreement referring to the return to conditions where communities can return to their desired quality of life, sustainable livelihoods and political participation within a peaceful society.
Peacebuilding:	This term may include providing humanitarian relief, protecting human rights, ensuring security, establishing nonviolent modes of resolving conflicts, fostering reconciliation, providing trauma-healing services, repatriating refugees and resettling internally displaced persons, supporting broad-based education, and aiding in economic reconstruction. It also includes conflict prevention meaning preventing the recurrence of violence, as well as conflict management and

post-conflict recovery. In a larger sense, peacebuilding involves a transformation toward more manageable, peaceful relationships and governance structures—the long-term process of addressing root causes and effects, reconciling differences, normalising relations, and building institutions that can manage conflict without resorting to violence.¹³

Peace Agreements:

Used generally in this publication to mean any peace related agreement including preliminary peace related agreement, ceasefire agreement, Memorandum Of Understanding etc.

Peace Process:

Series of steps or phases in a negotiation or mediation that are necessary to eventually reach a peace agreement and sometimes to implement one. These steps are not necessarily sequential or linear. They may include confidence-building measures, risk-reduction strategies, good offices, fact-finding or observer missions, conciliation and mediation efforts, and deployment of international forces.¹⁴

Reintegration:

The process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is a social and economic process with an open time frame, primarily taking

¹³ United States Institute for Peace (2011) Peace Terms, Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding. Retrieved 05 December, 2013, from <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/files/peaceterms.pdf>

¹⁴ United States Institute for Peace (2011) Peace Terms, Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding. Retrieved 05 December, from <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/files/peaceterms.pdf>

place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility and often necessitates long-term external assistance.¹⁵

Real, true or, lasting peace: Throughout this project soldiers spoke of real, true or lasting peace. The meanings of these terms differed between individuals and between NSAGs. Overall, these terms referred to a commitment and sincerity from all groups involved in the Myanmar conflict to achieve peace and the establishment of sustainable cessation of fighting in Myanmar.

Self-Autonomy: An arrangement whereby a region of a country is granted extensive self-governance or de facto self-rule.¹⁶

Self-Determination: The right of a people to determine their own political status. That could refer to full independence, or it could mean a greater degree of autonomy and linguistic or religious identity within an existing state.¹⁷

Tatmadaw: Burmese term for the Myanmar National Armed Forces.

¹⁵ Ball & Van De Goor, (2006), Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael. Retrieved 05 December, 2013 from www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/20060800_cru_paper_ddr.pdf

¹⁶ United States Institute for Peace (2011) Peace Terms, Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding. Retrieved 05 December, 2013, from <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/files/peaceterms.pdf>

¹⁷ United States Institute for Peace (2011) Peace Terms, Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding. Retrieved 05 December, 2013, from <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/files/peaceterms.pdf>

APPENDIX

Guide Questions

1. **What are your opinions and feelings about the peace process?**

Key words: opinions, peace process

2. **What would you talk about if you were at the peace negotiations?**

Key words: negotiations, topics

3. **For you, what are the most important things that need to be included in the peace process?**

Key words: negotiations, issues of importance

4. **What do you want to get from the peace process?**

Key words: peace process, wants

5. **What is your biggest concern about the peace process?**

Key words: personal concern

6. **If there is peace in the future, what would be the biggest challenges for you personally?**

Key words: personal challenges, peace

7. **What would help you to overcome these challenges?**

Key words: overcoming challenges, peace

8. **How do you feel about demobilisation?**

Key words: demobilisation, willingness

9. What would help you put down your arms/what would you need to demobilise?

Key words: assistance, needs, disarmament

10. Do you want to reintegrate into civilian life?

Key words: wants, reintegration, civilian life

11. What would help you to reintegrate into civilian life?

Key words: reintegration, assistance

12. Or, would you prefer to be in another security force?

Key word: alternative combatant role

13. Overall do you see the peace process as positive or negative?

Key words: peace process, positive/negative



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