

LOCAL GOVERNANCE MAPPING

Mapping Highlights: Mon State



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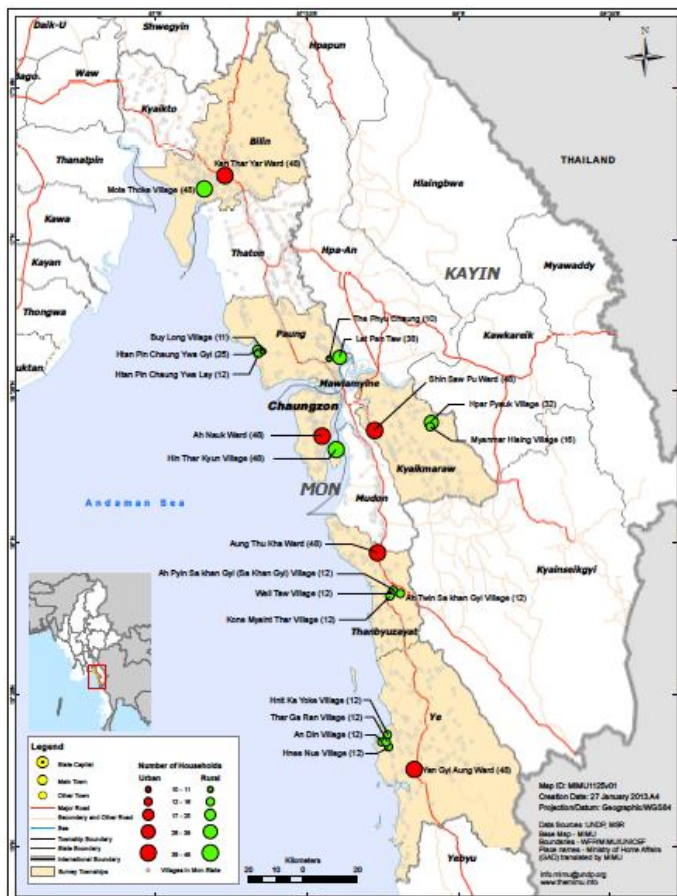
Between December 2013 and January 2014 UNDP engaged in a mapping of the quality of local governance and service delivery in Mon State as part of the pilot phase of a nationwide local governance mapping exercise.

This brief highlights some of the key findings of the mapping in Mon State. The findings are structured along the five core principles of good local governance that form the basis of the mapping framework and methodology designed for Myanmar. These are:

- Effectiveness and efficiency
- Transparency and rule of law
- Accountability
- Participation
- Equity

This brief also presents key process outcomes of the mapping, along with potential entry points for action.

TOWNSHIPS SELECTED FOR THE MAPPING IN MON



FACTS ABOUT MON

- **Estimated population:** 1.9 million.
- **Total number of townships:** 10.
- **Key features:** high population density, relatively accessible, wealthy.
- **Ethnic composition:** predominantly Mon, Bamar and Karen.
- **Security situation:** stabilised following the ratification of a ceasefire agreement in 2012 between the Union Government and the Mon National Liberation Army.

MAPPING METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE - MON

In Mon State, citizen, civil society and government respondents from **Bilin, Chaungzon, Kyaikmaraw, Paung, Thanbyuzayat** and **Ye** townships shared their perceptions and experiences related to local governance and service delivery of primary education, primary health care, and water. Tools that were used include:

Citizen Report Card (CRC): 576 citizens interviewed.

Interviews with Frontline Service Providers (FSP): 96 interviews conducted with Village Tract Administrators, primary school principals, primary school teachers, and heads of health care facilities and health care staff.

Community Dialogues (CD): 12 community dialogues conducted, in 2 village tracts/wards per township, with a total of 239 service users and 144 service providers participating.

Governance Self-Assessment (GSA): A day-long workshop conducted in each of the 6 townships with 50-60 participants, including local government representatives, committee members, and civil society representatives.

Background Studies: Desk review and interviews conducted with local government and civil society representatives in 3 of the 6 townships (Ye, Chaungzon and Bilin).

State-level Interim Findings Presentation & Reflection: A day-long workshop held in Mawlamyine with a total of 90 participants to reflect on the findings and discuss the way forward.

For a full overview of the methodology see the [Fast Facts Local Governance Mapping in Myanmar](#).

BACKGROUND: MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Since the adoption of the new Constitution in 2008, several policy initiatives have been enacted which have facilitated local governance reform. Amongst others, these include:

- **Farmland Law** (2012) providing for the establishment of the Township Farmland Management Committee.
- **Ward or Village Tract Administration Law** (2012) providing for elected Village Tract Administrators.
- **Presidential Directive** (2013) calling for 3 new committees to be established:
 - Township Development Support Committee
 - Village Tract Development Supportive Committee
 - Township Municipal Affairs Committee
- **State and Region *Hluttaw* Law** (2013).
- **Anti-corruption Law** (2013).

Source: MIMU/UNDP Myanmar.

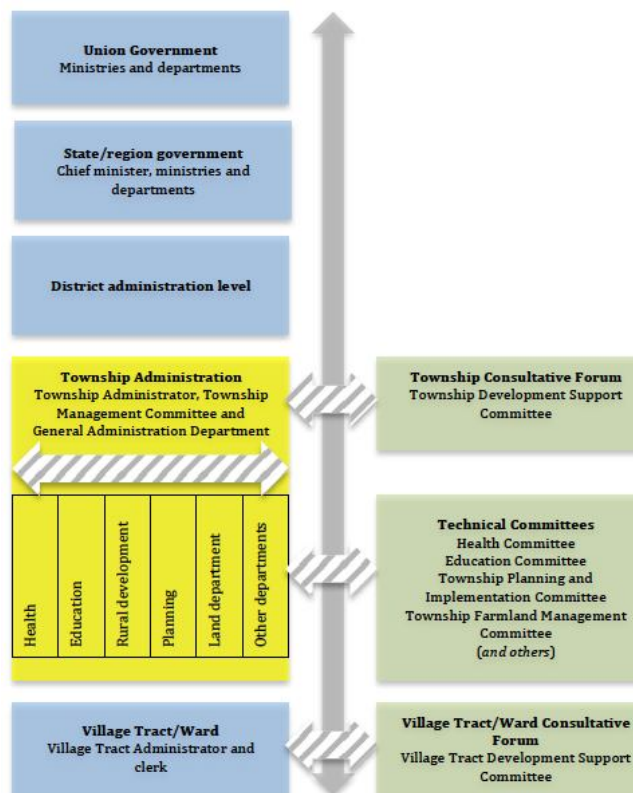
Effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery

- New coordinative and consultative committees have largely been established on the village tract/ward and township level, but the lack of operational guidelines has led to confusion about responsibilities and overlaps in activities.
- “Horizontal” coordination across township departments and consultative committees for planning and implementing development projects is weak. Planning at the township level remains defined by top-down processes particularly in the education and health departments.
- Structural vacancies are high, especially in the newly formed Department of Rural Development (fewer than 20% of the mandated staff has been recruited in the three townships investigated during the background study).



Community Dialogue in Paung Township. Photo: Shipra Narang Suri/UNDP Myanmar.

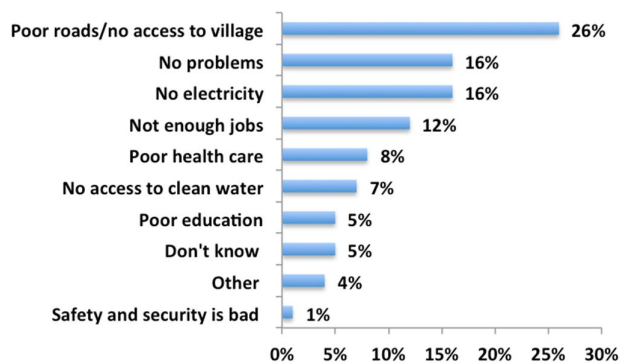
WEAK HORIZONTAL COORDINATION AND CONSULTATION STRUCTURES AT THE TOWNSHIP LEVEL



Source: UNDP Myanmar.

- Citizens mentioned poor roads most frequently when asked about the most important problem in their village tract or ward.

POOR ROADS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM MENTIONED BY CITIZENS



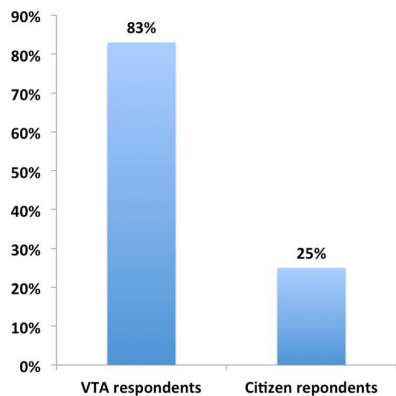
Source: Citizens Report Card.

- 28% of the respondents believed the township administration was not aware of the most important problem in their village tract/ward.
- Of the citizens who believed that the township administration was aware of the most important problem in their village tract/ward, 68% believed that the various government bodies were doing nothing to solve the problem.

Transparency and rule of law

- 88% of the interviewed citizens are not aware of the (newly established) consultative township committees in which citizens can participate.
- Almost all village tract administrators, but very few citizens, feel administration is providing citizens with sufficient information about development projects.

PERCEPTION GAP ON INFORMATION PROVISION



Source: Citizen Report Card/Frontline Service Provider Interviews.

- Complaints take up a large amount of the time and resources of the Township Administrator and the Township Management Committee. There is no separate grievance redressal system.

Accountability

- 51% (of a total of 105 citizen respondents for this question) felt obliged to give payments or gifts to teachers.
- Lack of knowledge about policies (e.g. the 2013 Anti-Corruption Law) and mechanisms for fighting corruption was highlighted by three of the six townships as a priority issue to address.
- There is a focus on catching instances of corruption after they have happened rather than preventing them.



Governance Self-Assessment workshop in Chaungzon Township. Photo: Shipra Narang Suri/UNDP Myanmar.

Participation

- Citizens are rarely invited to meetings about development projects and problems in their village, and overall citizen participation in meetings is low.

LOW LEVEL OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS

	Yes	No	Don't know
Has the government ever invited you to a meeting about projects or problems in your village?	24%	73%	3%
Do you sometimes participate in a village tract/ward meeting?	39%	61%	0%

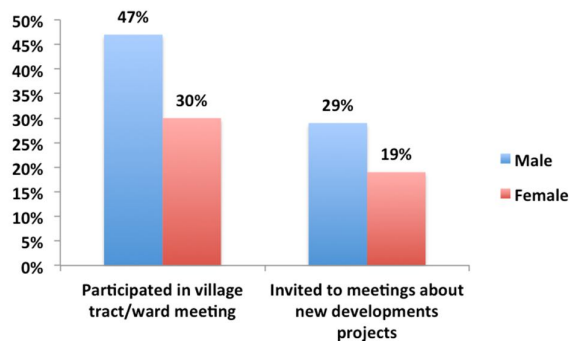
Source: Citizen Report Card.

- Many township officials expressed frustration about low public awareness of laws and procedures of local governance. In addition, government staff share a growing concern with regard to rising citizen expectations.
- There is general and mutual mistrust between CSOs and the government. Fear of repercussions often restrains CSOs from engaging with government more actively.
- CSOs are mostly focused on development activities and less experienced in advocacy and civic education.

Equity

- Equality of treatment in public services is perceived to be fairly high. For example, 92% of health service users thought that they and their family members receive the same treatment at health clinics as others in the village.
- Only 36% of Karen respondents reported they registered land used for farming, in comparison to 50% Mon and 79% of Bamar respondents. This could be indicative of (fear of) discrimination from public officials.
- Dealing with the interests of people with special needs was ranked as one of the weakest areas of competency for township management.
- Participation of women in community meetings is consistently lower than that of men.

LOW LEVELS OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS



Source: Citizen Report Card.



School in Bilin Township. Photo: Manisha Mirchandani/UNDP Myanmar.

Conclusions

The findings from the range of tools used in the mapping exercise make it clear that challenges related to local governance and service delivery vary significantly by township and by community. However, a few general conclusions can be drawn for Mon State:

- The role, mandates and responsibilities of the various committees are not well known and understood by the township administration, committee members and citizens, resulting in low legitimacy.
- First steps towards a more integrated way of planning are being taken, but “bottom up planning” is at present not much more than “bottom up consultation”, as important decisions are made at the state/union level.

- Very few citizens feel that they are being provided with sufficient information about plans for new projects in the village or invited to participate in consultations.
- There is a rise in public complaints, taking up a lot of time and resources of the township administration. There is no separate mechanism for grievance redressal.
- There is insufficient understanding amongst government staff and citizens of accountability and anti-corruption practices.

Potential entry points for action

Possible entry points for improving the quality of governance and service delivery in Mon include:

- *Clarify the roles and mandates of committee members.* Support their systematic formation, to be carried out in consultation with the wider community, and develop operational guidelines.
- *Establish clear and transparent procedures for township planning.* Lower level agencies and officers require more autonomy and responsibility (combined with additional capacity and adequate control mechanisms) to be able to respond to local needs.
- *Develop the capacity of CSOs and community level leaders*

Process Outcomes

The mapping process itself has yielded several important results, including:

- *Enhanced appreciation of different points of view* due to engagement of and dialogues between different stakeholder groups.
- *Improved understanding among local level stakeholders of the government's reform agenda and local governance.*
- *Introduction of new methods of participation* such as Community Dialogues and Governance Self-Assessments that could provide a model for future government-citizen engagement.
- *Exploration of and agreement on collective solutions* to identified problems at the local level.

For more information, please visit:

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