



External Evaluation of the European Union's Cooperation with Myanmar (2012-2017)

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the European Commission*

This report has been prepared by



Consortium of
ADE, PEMconsult and IRAM
Consortium leader: ADE s.a
Contact Person: Edwin Clerckx
Edwin.Clerckx@ade.eu

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The opinions expressed in this document represent the authors' views; these are not necessarily shared by the European Commission nor by the authorities of the countries concerned.

Disclaimer: This document uses the terminology used by the European Union. The Government of Myanmar does not use or agree with the term Rohingya for the concerned ethnic group.

Mr Kris B. Prasada Rao (team leader)
Dr Jörn Dosch
Mr Oren Ipp
Ms Kirsten Ewers
Dr Eric Buhl-Nielsen (peer reviewer)

PEMconsult A/S
Wilders Plads 9 A, 2. Sal
1403 København K (Denmark)
+45 32 95 26 26
pemconsult@pem.dk
www.pem.dk

ADE SA
Rue de Clairvaux 40, Bte 101
1348 Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium)
+32 10 45 45 10
ade@ade.eu
www.ade.eu

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADS	Agriculture Development Strategy
AIF	Asian Investment Facility
ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BoQBEP	Building on QBEP
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CESR	Comprehensive Education Sector Review
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSO/LA	Civil society organisation/local authority
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DG	Directorate-general
DPP	Promoting Durable Peace and Development in Kachin Programme
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organisation
EC	European Commission
ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EEAS	European External Action Service
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EiE	Education in emergencies
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EOM	Election observation mission
EQ	Evaluation question
ERM	Emergency response mechanism
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FDI	Foreign direct investment
FESR	Framework for Economic and Social Reform
FIRST	Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
ICC	International Criminal Court
IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
IDP	Internally displaced person
INFORM	Index for Risk Management
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
JC	Judgement criterion
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JPF	Joint Peace Fund
KIO	Kachin Independence Organisation
LA	Local authority
LDC	Least developed country
LIFT	Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund

MaBaTha	Organisation for Protection of Race and Religion
MCCA	Myanmar Climate Change Alliance
MDEF	Multi-Donor Education Fund
MFI	Microfinance institution
MIP	Multi-annual indicative programme
MoALI	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoECA	Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry
MPC	Myanmar Peace Centre
MPF	Myanmar Police Force
MyPol	Myanmar Police Force Programme
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan
NFPE	Non-formal primary education
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NLD	National League for Democracy Party
NSA/LA	Non-state actor/local authority
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PHASE IN	Poverty and Hunger Alleviation through Support, Empowerment and Increased Networking
QBEP	Quality Basic Education Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHARE	EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region
SIRP	Southeast Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SPACE	Supporting Participation, Accountability and Civil society Empowerment
STEP	Support to Electoral Processes and Democracy in Myanmar
Tatmadaw	Myanmar Army
TCX	Currency Exchange Fund
TLS	Temporary learning space
ToR	Terms of reference
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UEC	Union Election Commission
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
VFV	Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Law

Executive summary

Evaluation purpose and scope

This evaluation covers the European Union's (EU) cooperation with Myanmar in 2012-2017. It aims to:

- provide an overall independent assessment of EU-Myanmar development cooperation; and
- identify lessons and provide recommendations to inform current and future choices for the EU's cooperation strategy, delivery and interventions, including the next joint programming exercise in Myanmar.

The evaluation focuses on the current four focal sectors: education, peacebuilding, governance, and rural development. It covers a) strategic relevance, b) instruments and modalities, c) cross-cutting issues, d) coherence of EU's engagements, and e) coordination with other actors.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation followed a theory-based approach. An inventory of EU support to Myanmar was prepared, and eight evaluation questions, addressing the SDGs with judgement criteria and indicators, were defined to guide data collection and analysis. The following evaluation criteria were applied: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, coherence, added value, 'the 3Cs' (coherence, complementarity, coordination) and visibility.

The Evaluation and Results Unit of DG DEVCO managed the evaluation, with relevant EU services participating in the Reference Group, which oversaw the evaluation process. The evaluation was carried out from May 2018 to September 2019.

Context

Before 2012, Myanmar was an isolated country controlled by the military. Conflict displaced large numbers of people from ethnic minority groups. The EU had imposed trade restrictions on Myanmar due to human rights concerns and the engagement was restricted to humanitarian assistance. In 2012, Myanmar embarked on a democratisation and peace process and EU trade restrictions were lifted in 2013. A Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement was signed in 2015.

Myanmar is a least developed country and remains fragile. In 2015, 23% of the rural population was poor and 14% near poor. Myanmar is prone to natural disasters caused by cyclones, droughts and floods. The country ranks 3rd on the 2019 Global Climate Risk Index and 14th on the Index for Risk Management. Throughout the evaluation period, the context was characterised by restrictions on human rights, limited accountability of institutions, an inaccessible justice system, corruption, institutional capacity constraints, and insufficient delivery of services. Conflict continues in ethnic areas, and the conflict and ethnic tensions in Rakhine escalated in 2017 with mass displacement of Rohingyas and allegations of ethnic cleansing by the UN.

The EU's country programme in Myanmar grew significantly from a committed amount of EUR 125 million in 2007-2013 to EUR 656 million in 2014-2020. In 2012-2017, the EU contracted a total amount of EUR 426.8 million in bilateral, regional and thematic funding. It provided 11% of the total grant-based official development assistance to Myanmar in 2012-2017.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The EU strategy evolved with the changing context and was broadened in response to the democratic transition and peace process. New focal sectors were introduced, and the level of support was significantly increased.

EU support evolved in response to the significant changes that Myanmar underwent and new opportunities to engage in the democratisation and peace processes. Initially, support related to peacebuilding, governance and rural development was provided through thematic and regional instruments, but after the lifting of the sanctions, these sectors were added to the bilateral programme

in Myanmar, enabling a more comprehensive engagement. The EU strategy was well-aligned with national policies.

Conclusion 2: The choice of focal sectors was appropriate and relevant. The four sectors – education, peacebuilding, governance, and rural development – were mutually reinforcing.

Lasting peace is a precondition for long-term development and democratic transition as it creates the stable conditions required for investment in economic activities and job creation, as well as political participation and protection of human rights. At the same time, democratic participation, rule of law, and rural economic opportunities are essential for achieving peace, as this addresses important root causes of conflict. Education reinforces these sectors by increasing capacities to engage in the democratic process and livelihoods opportunities, as well as promoting social and ethnic inclusion. The four sectors are central to Myanmar's socio-economic development and state-building, and for reinforcing the peace-process. Given the primacy of peace to Myanmar's overall development and the Government's prioritisation of the peace process, peace could not have been merely addressed as a sub-set of the governance sector.

Conclusion 3: The EU pursued a comprehensive approach to supporting peace. Peace was addressed across the four sectors, and interventions were in general conflict-sensitive although this was not always approached in a formalised and systematic manner. Flexible procedures facilitated engagement in conflict-affected areas, and efforts were made to address protracted crisis by bridging the gap between the humanitarian response and development assistance, although this is not fully institutionalised yet.

EU support to peacebuilding was comprehensive. The EU recognised the primacy of peace by supporting it as a focal sector. The support for informal peacebuilding was critical at a time when the formal peace process was stalled. Important aspects of peacebuilding were also addressed in the other sectors, including multilingual (mother tongue, Myanmar and English)/mother tongue based primary education, irrigation cooperation between Rakhine and Rohingyas, land policy development, election processes, and the rule of law. Democratic inclusion, the rule of law, equitable and inclusive access to education, livelihoods opportunities and access to land and natural resources are important building blocks for lasting peace. Examples of EU funded interventions that were conflict sensitive and aligned with the 'do no harm' principle were found in all four sectors, though varied in the extent to which approaches were formal, structured or systematic. The EU's support was also consistent with EU and OECD guidelines on engaging in fragile and conflict states, even if not explicitly referenced or implemented in a systematic way.

Concerted efforts to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development assistance helped addressing protracted crises, although more work is required in terms of implementing the new humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach. In response to this challenge, a "Nexus Response Mechanism" contract was recently signed with UNOPS (December 2019).

Conclusion 4: The EU's programmatic support was flexible, adaptable and responded to both emerging opportunities and crises. The mix of instruments and modalities allowed for both a quick and a more comprehensive engagement with national systems as the context matured.

The EU support was characterised by a high degree of flexibility and responsiveness to emerging opportunities in the peace and democratisation process as well as to crises, such as conflict and cyclones. The use of flexible procedures facilitated this, especially in early years and in conflict-affected areas, where normal procurement procedures would have been difficult and time-consuming. The flexibility in geographic focus was conducive for responsiveness vis-à-vis emerging issues.

Thematic and regional instruments enabled the EU to engage quickly and capitalise on the emerging window of opportunity as the country opened up. These instruments also provided a foundation

upon which the later bilateral support was built. An EU Delegation was opened in Myanmar in 2013, which enhanced the presence of the EU and the dialogue with the new civilian government. The engagement broadened as the context matured. Initially, interventions were implemented mainly by international organisations, but the engagement with CSOs and the private sector increased over time. The engagement of the Government in the interventions also increased, mainly in relation to education, and also policy and institutional support at the central level. The Government will have a more leading role with the introduction in 2018-19 of blending and sector budget support. The EU-funded interventions were well-aligned with government policies in the four focal sectors and proactively supporting the development of better policy frameworks.

Conclusion 5: Significant results were achieved. Education access and quality were improved, livelihoods were improved and made more resilient to external shocks, a substantial contribution was made to the peace process, election participation and transparency was enhanced, and access to justice was improved. However, some intended results were not achieved, often due to disruption caused by conflict and the overall deterioration of Human rights situation.

The EU support contributed to tangible impacts. The quality of, and access to, primary education was improved with better governance, new education materials, child-centred teaching methods, safe learning environments, and increased enrolment and completion of primary schools. Primary school enrolment increased in QBEP-supported townships by 3.35 per cent (against the national average increase of 1.52 per cent), and completion rates improved by 1.6 per cent. Income increases and diversification, enhanced resilience to weather hazards, and improved food and nutrition security improved rural livelihoods. This was achieved with the provision of access to finance and inputs, a strengthened private sector, improved agricultural practices, and off-farm income generation. A substantial proportion of the rural population was reached, and the targeting of poor and vulnerable groups and internally displaced people was effective. Through LIFT support in 2010-2017, an estimated 800,000 households increased their incomes, 300,000 households increased their crop productivity, 490,000 were enabled to obtain adequate food supplies throughout the year, and 79,888 persons, including 33,719 women, established enterprises or gained employment across the country. A significant contribution was made to the establishment of a nationwide ceasefire, informal peace processes, and inclusive dialogues on peace. EU support helped improving the election participation, transparency, and accountability. A tangible contribution was made to a strengthened engagement of civil society and citizen advocacy in relation to peacebuilding and the democratic system. Access to justice was improved, including for marginalised groups.

However, some of the intended results were not achieved. While the EU strategy aim at improving education at all levels, support and results were mainly at the primary education level, and the link with labour market needs was weak. Conflict significantly limited the achievement of results especially in Northern Rakhine but also in parts of the Southeast, for example with many Rohingyas in Rakhine losing their land and restrictions on movement of IDPs, which limited their ability to use the skills obtained to obtain incomes. Moreover, the contribution to improving the accountability of the policy was limited.

Conclusion 6: Achieving sustainability of the results achieved with EU support was a challenge in the volatile context and with the generally low level of direct involvement of local authorities. Capacity and financial constraints, as well as limited direct involvement of the Government and limited focus on building the Government's capacity, were impediments for ensuring continuity and longer-term transformational change. The increased role of the Government and other national stakeholders in the delivery of EU support especially since 2018 is promising, as is the introduction in 2018 of support related to enhancing revenue generation. As a result of the crisis in Rakhine, the impacts initially achieved for many Rohingyas evaporated.

Lasting systemic and transformational changes and sustainability of the results achieved were not fully achieved. With the exception of the education sector, the engagement with the Government was mainly at the central and policy levels with limited involvement of the Government in the implementation of interventions and only modest focus on increasing government capacities. There was limited support to enhancing the capacity of local government to deliver services. A major impediment for improving service delivery is the low level of tax collection. Hence, consolidation of the results achieved is largely dependent on continued support from the EU or other donors. The likelihood of sustainability was higher in the education sector than in the other sectors, with the support being firmly embedded in the existing structures.

Since 2017, the EU has increasingly worked with the Government to increase its capacity. Sector budget support has been introduced for the education sector and is planned for the agriculture sector, and EU grants are blended with loans provided to the Government by international financing institutions. Support has been provided to the Internal Revenue Department since 2018.

The impacts achieved for many Rohingyas have evaporated due to the Rakhine crisis and mass displacement, whereas results for communities unaffected by displacement remained. Due to human rights concerns, many longer-term project engagements have been suspended, with some specific activities kept running under due diligence criteria.

Conclusion 7: Mainstreaming of cross-cutting and multi-sectoral issues was uneven. Positive results were achieved on gender and human rights at the intervention level, however, without resulting in substantial nation-wide advances towards greater respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and gender equality. Environment and climate change considerations were insufficiently integrated into programming. Nutrition access was tackled in the rural development sector, but nutrition awareness received little attention in the education sector. Gender concerns and human rights were well integrated in interventions and a number of interventions specifically targeted women and girls, such as income opportunities and access to finance, social protection, and improved participation in education. Less was achieved vis-à-vis mainstreaming gender at policy level and the policy framework for human rights and gender remains weak in Myanmar. The EU's multi-annual indicative programmes for Myanmar did not contain gender targets or budget allocations for gender action.

Environment and climate change interventions were mainly funded with thematic instruments, but some bilateral interventions addressed climate resilience and natural resource management. There was limited mainstreaming of environment and climate change in all sectors, although environmental issues from a rights perspective were addressed in some peacebuilding and governance interventions. There was no linkage between the bilateral Myanmar programme and global programmes that specifically promote mainstreaming with thematic funding.

Nutrition is a multi-sectoral issue cutting across agriculture education, and health. Nutrition is a focus area in the support for the rural development sector and the planned agriculture sector budget support. The EU thus addresses food availability. However, limited attention was given to nutrition awareness in the education sector support.

Conclusion 8: Coordination and the achievement of synergies within the EU support was generally effective. Coordination of development assistance, humanitarian assistance and political action in particular took place in connection with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and education sector budget support. However, the nexus approach has not yet been fully institutionalised, and its programming remains a challenge, as does information sharing at the technical level on policy dialogue.

The coordination of the EU's development and humanitarian assistance was good and further improved with the new humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach. Some challenges remain with institutionalising and programming the nexus and filling the gap between humanitarian action, development, and peacebuilding for protracted crises. The objectives of the EU's development

assistance and political engagement were coherent and there was a good level of cooperation, especially in relation to the nexus and the political dialogue related to the Education Sector Reform Contract. However, challenges remain vis-à-vis sharing information on the policy dialogue at the sector level.

Conclusion 9: The EU made concerted efforts to improve coordination, yet coordination and collaboration with other development partners proved difficult. The EU paid significant attention to improving donor coordination mechanisms including EU and EU Member State coordination with some notable results, but donor coordination remained a challenge.

Coordination with other development partners and the Government was challenging due to the complex and volatile context, uneven performance of sector coordination groups, and the fact that Government and development partners are located in different cities. The EU engaged proactively in strengthening donor coordination through participation and support for sector coordination, and participation in trust fund governance. The trust funds were useful for donor coordination through pooled funding and to some extent through joint positions. New avenues for coordination and dialogue are emerging from the direct cooperation with the Government through budget support, blending, and project funding. The EU joint programming delivered a division of labour and joint analyses, but did not lead to joint action, and was not continued due to modest interest from EU Member States.

For some interventions, the EU brought NGOs together in “arranged marriages” in joint projects, but while this reduced the administrative burden for the EU Delegation, it created coordination challenges for project management and implementation.

The long-term presence, the joint programming, the active contribution to trust funds, sector coordination and the peace-process made the EU one of the most visible donors in Myanmar.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Implement a systematic approach to conflict sensitivity across the EU country programme. Mainstream and standardise conflict sensitivity approaches by the EU and implementing partners.

Mainstream conflict sensitivity into the programme cycle. Implementing partners should be required to: a) carry out conflict analysis and stakeholder mappings during the inception phase; b) integrate sensitivity measures in action documents, log frames and M&E, and c) conduct regular conflict sensitive reporting. Introduce conflict sensitive requirements in grant application procedures and contracts. Include conflict sensitivity in policy dialogue for budget support. Recruit experts and train staff on conflict sensitivity. Establish a helpdesk function, which provides guidance and support on developing and implementing systematic conflict sensitive strategies and approaches. Develop non-discrimination and due diligence criteria to be applied and met prior to, and during, programme implementation in conflict-affected areas. Invest in peacebuilding and conflict awareness raising and education in areas not affected by conflict.

Recommendation 2: Implement a structured approach to ensuring sustainability and continuity. Emphasise ensuring continuity and consolidating processes initiated and results achieved, and improving the technical and financial capacity of the Government to implement policies and provide services to the citizens of Myanmar.

Maintain the four current focal sectors in the next programme period. Increase the focus on building the capacity of the Government to implement policies and engage the Government further in the implementation of EU-funded interventions. Engage in building the capacity of the Government at the local level to deliver rural services and meet citizen’s demands vis-à-vis good governance and peacebuilding. Further engage in interventions that support the Government in enhancing its capacity to collect revenues. Ensure that any major changes in geographic or thematic focus are accompanied by clear transition/sustainability strategies and a gradual transition.

Recommendation 3: Enhance mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues and multi-sectoral themes. Include specific objectives, indicators, baselines and targets for cross-cutting issues, and introduce mainstreaming procedures and approaches across interventions.

Include gender-specific objectives and actions in the post 2020 MIP. Introduce environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction mainstreaming procedures and guidelines in trust funds. Include environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction in sector policy dialogue and in sector budget support. Include climate risk assessments and adaptation measures in interventions. Learn from and apply the tools and approaches developed by EU-funded programmes that specifically promote mainstreaming. Include nutrition awareness in the support for the education sector.

Recommendation 4: Further improve in house coordination and cooperation. Strengthen the joint implementation of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in conflict-affected areas, and the synergies between the programmatic support and the political engagement.

Further institutionalise cooperation between DEVCO, EEAS and ECHO at the EU Delegation in the standard operating procedures with: a) regular joint updates of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus action plan, b) sharing of political information at EU Delegation team meetings, c) peer reviews by the different sections of the design of interventions in conflict-affected areas, d) keeping procedures for humanitarian-development-peace lean and operational. Enhance cooperation between DEVCO and EEAS at the technical level with joint engagement in the policy dialogue at the sectoral and intervention levels. Explore opportunities to operationalise the humanitarian-development-peace nexus through joint interventions with both ECHO and DEVCO components.

1. Introduction

The Evaluation and Results Unit of the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) commissioned PEMconsult/ADE to conduct an independent evaluation of the European Union's cooperation with Myanmar. This report presents the evaluation's findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Objectives and scope

As stated in the Terms of Reference, the purpose of the evaluation is:

- To provide the relevant external cooperation services of the EU and the wider public with an overall independent assessment of the EU-Myanmar cooperation strategy and delivery.
- To identify key lessons and produce recommendations to improve current and inform future choices of the EU's cooperation strategy and delivery.

The specific objectives of the evaluation are:

- To feed the next joint programming exercise in Myanmar
- To nurture strategies and interventions of the next programming period

The scope consists of the following dimensions:

- Geographic scope: Myanmar
- Temporal scope: 2012-2017
- Thematic and programmatic scope: a) EU development assistance managed by DG DEVCO under the Multi-annual Indicative Programmes (MIP) 2011-2013 and 2014-2020; b) European External Action Service (EEAS) political dialogue and activities; c) coordination and synergies with support provided by the Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) and EU Member States

Structure of the report

The report has the following structure:

Volume 1 is the main report comprising the following:

- Chapter 1 provides an introduction presenting the objectives and scope of the evaluation
- Chapter 2 presents the Myanmar context
- Chapter 3 outlines the Methodological approach
- Chapter 4 presents the answers to the evaluation question
- Chapter 5 presents the conclusions of the evaluation
- Chapter 6 presents recommendations of the evaluation

Volume 2 presents the indicator findings, sources of information and evidence strength.

Volume 3 contains annexes to the report:

- Annex 1: full list of acronyms and abbreviations occurring in Volume 2
- Annex 2: overview of the sample interventions used to inform the evaluation

- Annex 3: overview of contracts for EU interventions in Myanmar in 2012-2017
- Annex 4: analysis of the EU portfolio in Myanmar
- Annex 5: list of people met by the evaluation team; Annex 6: list of documents consulted by the evaluation team

2. Myanmar Context

Figure 1: Map of Myanmar



Located in Southeast Asia bordering India, China, Thailand, Bangladesh and Lao PDR, Myanmar has been an isolated country under military since independence from the British in 1948 and until recent years. Its estimated population of around 54 million¹ is characterised by high ethnic diversity with 135 officially recognised ethnic minority groups, in addition to the majority Bamar ethnic group, making up more than 30 per cent of the population living primarily in the uplands with their own states, i.e. the Chin, Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, and Rakhine. The ethnic minorities primarily comprise indigenous peoples.

Since independence, the ethnic groups² have demanded greater rights and been in a civil war against the Myanmar Armed Forces (*Tatmadaw*) over decades, causing a large number of internally displaced persons (IDP) and more than 150,000, mainly Kayin, to flee to Thailand. The use of forced labour and child labour has been, and still remains, a major problem throughout the country, which the international community seeks to address through influencing the government³.

Myanmar gained its independence from the British in 1948 with U Nu as its first prime minister. Prior to independence, general Aung San, the father of the present state counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, had spearheaded the historical Panglong Agreement with ethnic leaders agreeing on full autonomy in internal administration in the ‘frontier areas’ (the British term for the present ethnic states) once independence had been achieved.⁴ The ethnic minorities subsequently pursued federalism, but the military leadership staged a coup d’état in 1962 and since then, the country has been under military leadership under different names.⁵ In May 1990, the military government held elections and the National League for Democracy (NLD) of Aung San Suu Kyi won 80 per cent of seats, but the military junta refused to cede power and Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest.

Ethnic minorities’ issues and their political, social, and economic rights have for decades been in the forefront of the political process. Land issues have been very problematic for the peace process as major tracts of ethnic and Bamar villages’ farmland had been expropriated

¹ <http://www.dop.gov.mm/en>

² Minorities and indigenous peoples

³ All opinions presented in this Chapter 2 are based on a variety of documents and sources, and where relevant citations are given.

⁴ The 2nd Panglong Agreement is the term used for the warranted new 21st century ceasefire agreement.

⁵ The initial military regime was the Burma Socialist Programme Party lasting until 1988. Then came the State Law and Order Restoration Council until 1997, where a new State Peace and Development Council emerged, which subsequently was dissolved 2011, and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) was created by the instated USDP president Thein Sein. By the 2016 general election the USDP lost to the NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi became State Counsellor. In 1989, the military junta officially changed the name of Burma to Myanmar. And in the 1990s it changed the old name of Arakan to Rakhine.

over time by the *Tatmadaw*. Since 1989, the ruling junta has periodically sold off state-owned properties as part of its “open-door” economic policy. By Constitution, the state owns all land and resources in Myanmar, with most villagers having no formal land title on their customary agricultural land. By 2012, the reform process started looking at land grievances and returned some land, a slow process which has been continued by the new government of NLD.

2.1 Situation in 2007-10

2007-2010 was shaped by the citizens’ fear of the *Tatmadaw*, and the associated loss of land to the army and individuals with connections to the army. The impact of internationally-mandated protection and assistance agencies remained marginal for people in conflict areas. There was limited support from development partners, except for humanitarian assistance. The international community, including the EU, had imposed trade restrictions on Myanmar due to human rights concerns. The biggest contribution to people’s protection by that time stemmed from their own actions tackling ‘multiple masters’, where villagers paid both the army and also one or more local armed groups for protection. Access to the country for foreigners was restricted and only allowed with travel authorisation from the government. Thousands fled to Thailand, living in camps on the border or eking out a living as illegal casual labourers.

In 2008, the onslaught of cyclone Nargis in the first days of May took both government and villagers in the Irrawaddy Delta by surprise. It hit Myanmar a few days before the referendum on the Constitution. This led to significant international criticism of conducting a referendum on the Constitution at a time of crisis with more than 130,000 dead in the Delta. Moreover, the cyclone caused major devastation far beyond what the Government could cope with and gradually the Government acknowledged the need for external assistance. Initially, assistance was organised through a Tripartite Group comprising the Government, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the UN. Agricultural fields, livestock and fishing equipment were devastated. Due to its lack of capacity, the Government opened up to assistance from NGOs and the UN. In 2009, the EU co-funded Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) was set up under United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) management.

Moving from a highly centralised structure, the 2008 Constitution introduced 14 sub-national governments and parliaments. However, there was slow progress in rolling-out the decentralisation process due to a lack of policy, planning, and a clearly designated authority, but ethnic states had their own parliaments and line departments and sought more influence in education and land management.

2.2 Situation in 2011-2012

U Thein Sein took office as president in March 2011 after the country's first election in 20 years in November 2010. He swapped his military uniform for civilian garb to form the political party of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). Aung San Suu Kyi had been released from house arrest in November 2010 and NLD was re-instated for the

by-election on 1 April 2012, in which Aung San Suu Kyi was elected to Parliament and appointed as chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee for Rule of Law and Tranquility. In 2012, the Government prioritised attracting foreign direct investments and formulated a Foreign Investment Law. In response to the transition towards reform starting in 2012, trade restrictions imposed by the EU as well as other countries were lifted. The reform process was welcomed by all citizens (although not all trusted the Government) and the international community. In response to the positive developments, EU suspended sanctions in 2012⁶ and subsequently lifted them in 2013, except for the embargo on weapons.

U Thein Sein relaxed press and internet censorship laws, and freed political prisoners. He initiated the promulgation of two laws on farmland, the Farmland Law and the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Law (VFV) in 2012. According to the Farmland Law, farmers were no longer bound tenants of the State, but with titles in hand they could sell their land and to a large extent decide what they wanted to grow.⁷ The VFV law, however, legalised large land concessions by the government to agribusiness. Agribusiness concessions had by 2014 increased up to more than 2 million hectares⁸, which over the years had been handed out as concessions by the military junta government to Thai, Chinese, and Burmese investors.⁹ They mostly logged the areas that had tree cover¹⁰ but were slow to invest.¹¹ Land tenure remains very weak in Burma. Only 18 per cent of agricultural land in Myanmar is titled and customary farmlands, particularly in the uplands, have been at risk of land acquisition by the government.

Since Myanmar's opening in 2011, the country has seen a rise in Burmese-Buddhist nationalism. Monk-led groups such as '969' and the Organisation for Protection of Race and Religion ('MaBa'Tha') and their messages of religious chauvinism enjoy popular support. Islam and its followers are particular targets. The United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry found that "*there is a strong inference of genocidal intent on the part of the State, that there is a serious risk that genocidal actions may recur, and that Myanmar is failing in its obligation to prevent genocide*"¹². Despite protections in the constitution related to religious freedom, in 2014-15, the USDP-led government prepared and adopted four laws known collectively as the *Race and Religion Protection Laws* curtailing Muslims' rights.¹³

2.3 Changes since 2012

A national election process endorsed by the USDP took place in November 2015. Aung San Suu Kyi with the NLD party won landslide victory. NLD formed a new government at the end of March 2016. However, despite a new NLD government the army is still by law in

⁶ EC, <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/node/13868>

⁷ The Farmland Law and the VFV Law are presently under revision

⁸ More than 5 million acres

⁹ <http://www.mekongcommons.org/category/environmental-justice/> and <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southeast-asia-landrights-farming/rural-poor-squeezed-by-land-concessions-in-mekong-region-report-idUSKCN1IU19G>

¹⁰ Conversion timber

¹¹ <https://www.forest-trends.org/publications/agribusiness-and-agro-conversion-timber-in-myanmar-new-drivers-of-deforestation-and-land-grabs/>

¹² September 2019

¹³ <http://loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/burma-four-race-and-religion-protection-laws-adopted/>

charge of three important and highly political ministries: Defence, Home Affairs and Borderlands. The NLD government still has problems in terms of significant capacity constraints, which are further exacerbated by the national and international problems due to the crisis in Rakhine State.

Myanmar is a least developed country (LDC) and ranked 148th out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index in 2018¹⁴. Prior to the take-over by NLD government, the USDP government had prepared a Framework for Economic and Social Reform Policy Priorities (FESR) for 2012-15 towards the Long-Term Goals of the National Comprehensive Development Plan. The FESR was the principal mechanism for national development initiatives and Development Partners' alignment and harmonisation. In early 2013, the Government and the development partners signed the Nay Pyi Taw Accord for Effective Development Cooperation, which set out the principles for donor coordination and led to the establishment of working groups. The FESR was in mid-2018 succeeded by the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan 2018-2030. Moreover, the Development Assistance Policy was launched in the beginning of 2018, which introduced a new donor coordination structure with annual Development Effectiveness Fora sector coordination groups.

Until 2012 schools had few resources – teachers were underpaid and undertrained, curriculum and teaching materials were ineffective and school infrastructure was run down. Development partners including the EU subsequently gathered to support education and a Joint Education Sector Working Group was established to create synergy and align with the government's annual and five-year development plans. The Government has made a significant effort to increase the access to education and quadrupled its budget allocation for education from 2011/12 to 2013/14¹⁵. Enrolment in primary and secondary school increased from 2009/2010 to 2015, from 88 per cent to 93 per cent for primary schools and from 53 per cent to 55 per cent for secondary schools¹⁶. Development partners have strongly supported the education sector. Education is also a sector where Government has shown willingness to implement reforms. Nonetheless, there are still significant challenges to be addressed; enrolment rates are lower for the poor, dropout is a significant problem, repetition rates are high, and so is the number of over-aged entrants in primary schools. The proportion of youth entering higher education or technical and vocational education and training remains low. Moreover, investments in educational facilities and teacher training are insufficient, and education quality remains an issue, with widespread low levels of learning stemming from historical neglect of the sector.¹⁷ The planning and budgeting system lacks connection with educational outcomes, especially those related to reform¹⁸.

A Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) was initiated in 2012 and carried out over two phases with support from several development partners, including the EU and EU Member states, which supported CESR through the Quality Basic Education Programme

¹⁴ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/dat>

¹⁵ World Bank and Ministry of Planning and Finance, An Analysis of Poverty in Myanmar, August 2017

¹⁶ World Bank and Ministry of Planning and Finance, An Analysis of Poverty in Myanmar, August 2017

¹⁷ EC, MIP 2014-2020

¹⁸ EU Support to Education, Internal Sector Fiche, updated 15 December 2017; MIP 2014-2020

(QBEP) managed by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)¹⁹. The CESR Completion Report was published in June 2016.²⁰ The education sector and the Nation Education Law (2014) have been subject of debate and many comments. The National Network for Education Reform – together with NLD – raised concern during its preparation over the centralism in the institutional set up of proposed councils and the lack of the freedom for ethnic languages and curriculum.

An important issue for the ethnic minorities and a cross-cutting issue in the peace process is multilingual (mother tongue, Myanmar and English) and mother-tongue based education, with ethnic states setting up their own school system and education in their own ethnic languages. There has been a call for multilingual (mother tongue, Myanmar and English) education that positions itself with respect to the international human rights convention’s basic principle against discrimination on the grounds of language. This lack of recognition for teaching in non-Bamar languages both as a subject and as a medium has reinforced perceptions of a lowland Burmese cultural, military and economic dominance, and it features strongly as an issue in the Peace process. Nonetheless, the Government is now to some degree supportive of multilingual education (64 languages are now used in primary education) and UNICEF has been supportive. Linguistic experts recommend making multilingual education a priority as it can play a role in the peace process and help heal communal divisions.²¹ The Department of Basic Education printed and distributed textbooks in 18 languages for the 2013/14 school year. Most ethnic states and non-state armed groups have set up schools teaching in their own language.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is strongly needed in Myanmar, but the private sector, with its current organisation, cannot clearly express needs and contribute to the structure of vocational training.²² Training subjects are defined with little or no consultation on the needs of the labour market and the private sector. Moreover, the integration of Myanmar into ASEAN, which allows skilled workers from other ASEAN countries to enter Myanmar, may create competition with the domestic labour force for jobs.

The Myanmar private sector mainly comprises small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). However, some 70 per cent of private investments in 2014 were in the power and oil and gas sectors. Manufacturing, including the garment industry made up 9 per cent of the total investment. Half of the total investment by 2014 came from China and Thailand, with a fair share from South Korea as well. Myanmar Investment Law²³ was passed 2016 to help attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). FDI averaged USD 576 million annually in 2012-2017.²⁴ Myanmar is listed as number 171 out of 190 countries in the World Bank’s *Ease of Doing*

¹⁹ The EU, Australia, Denmark, Norway, United Kingdom supported the CESR through QBEP. Other donors provided support to the CESR outside QBEP, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Japan

²⁰ <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-document/185972/46369-001-tcr.pdf>

²¹ <http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/make-multilingual-education-a-priority-linguistic-experts.html>

²² ISE Enterprise 2014 *Assessment study of technical and vocational education and training in Myanmar*, International Labour Organization Final Report March 2014

https://www.academia.edu/18063540/Assessment_study_of_technical_and_vocational_education_and_training_TVET_in_Myanmar

²³ https://www.dica.gov.mm/sites/dica.gov.mm/files/document-files/myanmar_investment_law_official_translation_3-1-2017.pdf

²⁴ <https://tradingeconomics.com/myanmar/foreign-direct-investment>

Business rankings for 2018.²⁵

Local SME start-ups may be drivers of change in Myanmar, but challenges remain for the establishment of new SMEs, as SME development in Myanmar is mainly concerned with the transformation of traditional SMEs into modern SMEs. SMEs lack access to financing, possess only a low level of technology, and lack skills, and are thus inadequately equipped to compete with foreign investors. However, the foreign direct investment in particular focuses at present on Myanmar's resource-rich border regions, with a risk of exacerbating ethnic conflict and environmental destruction. The issue of natural resources exploitation and revenue from any extraction is a hot issue in the peace process. In May 2014 Myanmar applied to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) for membership and launched a first report in 2016.²⁶

While SMEs absorb rural and urban labour, approximately 70 per cent of Myanmar's population is rural, primarily farmers, and 85 per cent of the poor live in rural areas. Agriculture is central to Myanmar's economy; it provides employment for 50 per cent of the workforce and contributes 29 per cent of the GDP and 30 per cent of the export. Growth in the sector was at an average of 2.5 per cent annually during 2009/10-2006/17, thus low compared to the overall economic growth of 6-8.5 per cent annually in 2014-19.^{27/28}

Agricultural development in Myanmar is multi-faceted with ethnic Bamar lowland population engaged in rice cultivation²⁹ while the middle hills see development of rubber, cassava, corn and fibre bananas, primarily as agribusiness concessions that often have displaced local farmers. A Myanmar Climate-Smart Agriculture Strategy was elaborated for 2015^{30/31}. Later, an Agricultural Development Strategy (ADS) and Investment Plan was published in June 2018 with support from ADB and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). It has three pillars: governance, productivity, market linkages and competitiveness.³²

After the take-off of the reform process, farmers started to demonstrate openly against mining- and agribusiness concessions and against the Special Economic Zones, and in numerous village tracts farmers initiated applications for land titles/deeds to get their land back. As of 2018, only one-fourth of the concessions are in use. The new local NLD government agencies under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI) and the General Administrative Department are attempting to get back the land using the VFV law. Recent amendments to the VFV Law by October 2018 and a MoALI "*Notification to the persons and organizations who are occupying and utilizing the VFV lands without permits*"³³ calling

²⁵ <https://www.mmbiztoday.com/articles/myanmar-ranks-low-business-index-pushes-improve-itself>

²⁶ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/04/28/myanmar-launches-first-report-on-extractive-industries-revenue>

²⁷ This is half the growth rates experience in Thailand and China when they were at the same stage of development – and less than one third of the non-agricultural growth in Myanmar

²⁸ Country Assessment Myanmar, European Union, 23 April 2019

²⁹ Irrigated and rainfed

³⁰ http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/MYANMAR-2015-Climate-smart_agriculture_strategy-en-red.pdf

³¹ The Strategy was facilitated by the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security in Southeast Asia and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in September 2013

³² https://www.lift-fund.org/sites/lift-fund.org/files/publication/MOALI_ADS_June2018_compressed_EN.pdf

³³ Letter No. 12/ MaLaYa-1(370-2018)

for farmers to register their land within six months (or risk fines and jail terms) caused strong resentment and protests from farmers, civil society and international experts. Such land registration within six months would not be possible and secondly, it would be the ethnic upland communities that would be at risk of having their agricultural land termed VFV land by the MoALI.

In the uplands, ethnic communities cultivate terraced rice fields, plant upland rice in shifting cultivation, corn, millet and tea. The land parcels have not been titled and villagers manage on their own and try to protect their customary land, often wanting a communal title for all the land of the village. The World Bank emphasised in March 2018 that rural development in Myanmar is linked to good land administration and tenure security, and supports the ongoing drafting of new land laws which are important for the ethnic peace process, such as the protection of customary users' tenure rights.³⁴ The National Land Use Policy of 2016 is supportive of customary tenure. Myanmar has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and in 2015, the Parliament passed the Ethnic Nationalities Rights Protection Law, which refers to the major ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples. A Union Ministry of Ethnic Affairs was established by NLD in 2016. The idea was it would contribute to national reconciliation, but the role of the ministry in this respect has been limited so far. It focuses on culture, customs, art, literature and language with less focus on protection of ethnic minorities' land rights.

There are many constraints to rural development in addition to the policy-based challenges. There is poor access to roads and electricity, limited access to finance, and environmental degradation. In 2015, 23 per cent of the rural population was poor, with an additional 14 per cent being near poor and at risk of falling into poverty.³⁵ It is estimated that approximately 72 per cent of the population lives in rural areas where 85 per cent of poverty is concentrated, and 24 per cent of rural households are considered vulnerable.³⁶ Myanmar is also a highly disaster-prone country affected by cyclones, droughts and floods, climate change is projected to lead to further increase the frequency and intensity of extreme weather, drought and flood, while resilience and adaptive capacities remain low.³⁷ The country ranks 3rd on the 2019 Global Climate Risk Index and 14th on the Index for Risk Management (INFORM).^{38,39,40, 41}

Myanmar has abundant energy resources, particularly hydropower and natural gas, but has an electrification rate of only 37 per cent, which is a bottleneck for the rural economic development.⁴² Hydropower development is supported by China and Thailand for the sake of supplying these countries, but there are numerous local protests against the dams. In Myanmar household energy needs are mainly met by fuelwood, and to a lesser extent solar

³⁴ World Bank *Towards a Sustainable Land Administration and Management System in Myanmar*, March 2018

³⁵ World Bank and Ministry of Planning and Finance, *An Analysis of Poverty in Myanmar*, August 2017

³⁶ Agriculture Development Strategy, 2018

³⁷ EC, MIP 2014-2020

³⁸ World Bank, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/myanmar/overview>, October 2017

³⁹ EC, MIP 2014-2020

⁴⁰ World Bank, *Increasing the Impact of Public Spending on Agricultural Growth*, Myanmar Agricultural Public Expenditure Review, June 2017

⁴¹ <http://www.inform-index.org/>

⁴² Mission Report Energy Scoping Myanmar April & May 2012 by EU Energy Initiative - Partnership Dialogue Facility (EUEI PDF)

cells and micro-hydropower.

Despite reforms since 2012, civil war with the *Tatmadaw* is still ongoing, mainly in the Kachin and Northern Shan States where alleged threats to national unity have commonly been used as a justification for the military holding on to power. Control over economically valuable natural resources⁴³ is a major cause of conflict in ethnic areas, where the majority of Burma's natural resources are located. In 2018, Myanmar ranked 104th out of 163 on the Global Peace Index⁴⁴.

A Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) with the ethnic groups was signed in 2015, with some, but not all, ethnic minority groups signing. Seven of the fifteen armed groups invited declined to sign due to disagreements over whom the process should include and the call for a new major NCA and for a series of so-called 21st Century Panglong Conferences was implemented by mid-2018. There are still daily clashes between ethnic armies and the *Tatmadaw* causing major groups of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), particularly in Kachin State. Finding ways to provide assistance through sub-national institutions to refugees and internally displaced people is impacted by the political economy of armed conflict in Southeast Myanmar (e.g. Kayin). The military still has a pervasive role in sub-national institutions and local ethnic warlords also demand their shares.

In addition to the ethnic groups in the uplands bordering India, China and Thailand, the Rakhine State on the West coast is home to another minority, the Muslim Rohingya. The Myanmar Rohingya have been denied citizenship in Myanmar since 1982, which has effectively rendered them stateless. The current official position of the government is that the Rohingya are Bengalis and illegal immigrants irrespective that many can date their residence centuries back. In 1977 the junta began screening the population for foreigners and 200,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh. A UN-brokered deal for the repatriation meant most Rohingya returned. A 1982 new immigration law aimed to define persons immigrating during British rule as illegal immigrants and in 1991 more than 250,000 Rohingya refugees fled army persecution. During 1992 to 1997 around 230,000 Rohingya returned to Rakhine, under another repatriation agreement.

Over the last few years anti-Muslim attitudes have been triggered by nationalist monk-led groups such as the MaBaTha movement or the Patriotic Association of Myanmar. After NLD government came into power, the NLD government and the official top Buddhist body (Sangha) rebuked the nationalist actions and sermons and banned MaBaTha, which however remains active under the name Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation.

Anti-Muslim demonstrations in Rakhine turned into a major political and humanitarian crisis in 2017-2018, when the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) or *Harakat al-Yaqeen* (or "Faith Movement") in 2017 attacked Myanmar border guards as well as Hindu villages. The ARSA attacks were by the military considered attacks by Rohingya and a crackdown was carried out with the burning down of Rohingya villages. The ARSA attacks also instigated anti-Muslim mobs. More than 720,000 Rohingya refugees have fled to Bangladesh since 25

⁴³ Timber, minerals, oil, and gemstones

⁴⁴ <http://visionofhumanity.org/indexes/global-peace-index/>

August 2017⁴⁵, in what by the international community is seen as a severe international humanitarian crisis and by international observers considered ethnic cleansing. Another 120,000 Rohingya have since 2012 lived in internally displaced person (IDP) camps within Myanmar⁴⁶. During 2017-2018, various international commissions and boards and panels have been set up to try and solve the huge humanitarian crisis, but little seems to move as the NLD government does not accept the international critique. In June 2018, the International Criminal Court (ICC) asked Myanmar to respond by 27 July 2018 to a request made in April that the ICC exercise jurisdiction over the alleged crimes.⁴⁷

The EU has earlier supported development in Northern Rakhine State and more recently community stabilisation, and provided support to the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. The Kofi Annan Foundation prepared recommendations on the Rohingya crisis and received EU support 2016-17. The Commission recommended, among others, ending segregation of Rakhine and Rohingya ethnic groups and addressing the Rohingya statelessness and changing the 1982 Citizenship Law. The recommendations were adopted by Aung San Suu Kyi, although the military objected to its background section and urged the Commission to avoid any mention of the armed forces' partial control of the Government. A statement from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief accused the report of containing "*some flaws and shortcomings*".⁴⁸ As it stands, the government may consent to selected families (with ID cards) to return to Myanmar, but few Rohingya find it safe to return.

The NCA peace process and the Rohingya process seem not to move. At present, the space for constructive engagement with the government is limited. Media are also not yet free. Journalists scrutinising the army's handling of the Rohingya crisis and harassment of Rohingya risk incarceration.

The near-total impunity for human rights violations means the victims do not try to pursue justice for fear of retribution, absence of funds, or lack of trust in the legal system. Two Reuters journalists reporting on the army's killing of Rohingya were set up by the police and incarcerated. Journalists in Myanmar believe that their freedom has declined over the past year and that legal, physical and psychological violence towards the media is increasing, according to the findings of a survey released by Free Expression Myanmar⁴⁹. The EU demanded in December 2017 the release of the Reuters journalists⁵⁰. At least 11 journalists were arrested in Myanmar in 2017, despite hopes that Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government would usher in a new era of freedom in the former junta-run nation. The past year has seen Members of Parliament move towards tightening the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law (2011).

By most standards, Myanmar remains fragile, ranking 22nd on the Fragile States Index⁵¹, and

⁴⁵ UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.org/rohingya-emergency.html?query=rohingya>

⁴⁶ Country Assessment Myanmar, European Union, 23 April 2019

⁴⁷ <http://elevenmyanmar.com/politics/14195>

⁴⁸ <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/analysis-rohingya-crisis-kofi-annans-legacy.htm>

⁴⁹ <http://freexpressionmyanmar.org/myanmars-media-freedom-at-risk/>

⁵⁰ <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/national/30334371>

⁵¹ <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/>

ranking 100 out of 113 countries in the Rule of Law Index⁵² in 2016. Myanmar is also included in the World Bank's Harmonized List of Fragile Situations, with a Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) score of 3.15 for financial year 2019⁵³. There is insufficient media freedom, restrictions on human rights (Myanmar ranks 110 on fundamental rights), limited accountability of institutions, an inaccessible justice system (ranking 107 on criminal justice), corruption (ranking 61), institutional capacity constraints and insufficient delivery of services. The country is vulnerable to structural inequality based on ethnicity, religion, the human rights situation and a weak rule of law in addition to the many Rohingya refugees, civil war and internal IDPs, natural disasters and, like other countries, climate change. Its government is weak, due to the continued control by the army of key ministries and over the response to the recommendations of the Kofi Annan commission. Established commissions or advisory boards on the Rohingya issues are unable to work.⁵⁴ If not addressed, the above factors threaten to undermine public confidence in reform efforts and progress toward the political transition more broadly.

Textbox 1: Gender in Myanmar

The situation of women in Myanmar is characterised by relative equality at the household level, where women often hold the purse and decisions on expenditures are made jointly. However, at the community and society level women have less voice. Women's organisations so far have had little involvement in budgeting and public-service delivery. In 1997, Myanmar became a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Myanmar is committed to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. A National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women, 2013-2022, was prepared by the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs and the Department of Social Welfare. However, there are still barriers to women's participation in Myanmar, including in subnational governance. Constraints include: lack of experience and certain skills, lack of confidence, low intra-household bargaining power, high time constraints, restrictions on women's travel, traditional norms that ascribe authority and glory to men over women, and lack of acceptance of female leadership.⁵⁵ Women's representation is far better under the NLD Government than under the former USDP Government, but women are still underrepresented. In the peace process discussions, gender considerations have received little attention.⁵⁶ In 2017, Myanmar ranked 148th on gender in the Gender Inequality Index⁵⁷.

2.4 The EU's development cooperation with Myanmar

The EU's country programme in Myanmar grew significantly over the years and became one of the EU's largest (see table 1). There were also some major shifts with an initial focus on

⁵² World Justice Project, <http://data.worldjusticeproject.org/>

⁵³ Countries with a CPIA score below 3.2 are rated as fragile, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/harmonized-list-of-fragile-situations>

⁵⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/article/myanmar-rohingya-panel/myanmars-rohingya-panel-head-refutes-criticism-by-outgoing-secretary-idUSL4N1UI02R>

⁵⁵ Minoletti, Paul *Women's participation in the subnational governance of Myanmar*, *Subnational Governance in Myanmar* Discussion Paper Series of MDRI, 2014, p.1

<https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/WomensParticipationintheSubnationalGovernanceofMyanmar.pdf>

⁵⁶ Minoletti, Paul May 2016. *Gender(in) equality in the Governance of Myanmar: Past, Present and Potential strategies of change*, p.5 Yangon: The Asia Foundation https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Gender-in-Equality-in-the-governance-of-myanmar_Policy-Brief_ENG.pdf

⁵⁷ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

education and health, to the current focus on education, peacebuilding, governance and rural development.

Table 1: EU bilateral support to Myanmar, million EUR (committed)

Focal sector	2007-2013 (CSP)			2014-2020 (MIP)		TOTAL
	2007-10 (MIP)	2011-13 (MIP)	2007-13 total	(2012) MIP	(2018) MTR	
Education	14.0	22.0	36.0	241.0	241.0	277.0
Health	18.0	27.5	45.5			45.5
Peacebuilding		25.0	25.0	103.0	103.0	128.0
Governance		8.5	8.5	96.0	96.0	104.5
Trade, private sector development		10.0	10.0			10.0
Rural development				241.0	209.0	209.0
Support measures				7.0	7.0	7.0
Total	32.0	93.0	125.0	688.0	656.0	781.0

Source: CSP, MIPs and PEM analysis

The EU was a large donor to Myanmar, and provided 11 per cent of the total grant ODA to Myanmar in 2012-2017 (see Annex 4). As shown in table 2 below, the EU was a major donor to the focal sectors for EU support, providing a substantial proportion of the total grant funding for these sectors.

Table 2: ODA to Myanmar 2012-17, EU focal sectors

Sector	Total ODA	Grant ODA	EU grants		
	Mill USD	Mill USD	Mill USD	Mill EUR	EU share
Education	679	578	326	263	45%
Conflict and peace	313	306	159	128	42%
Government + civil society	1200	641	119	96	15%
Agriculture + food security	1357	872	299	241	28%

Source: Mobinga.info

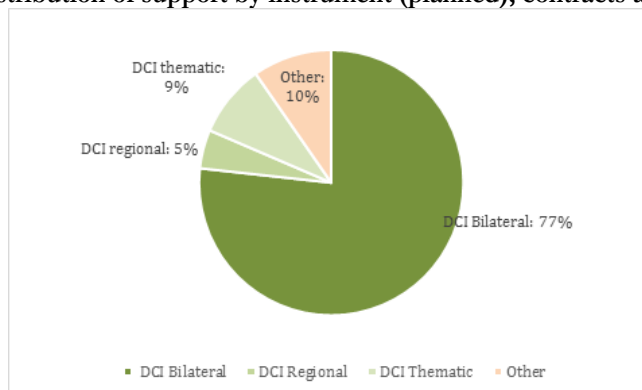
In addition to the funding under the country programme presented, the EU has also provided support to Myanmar through a range of global thematic and regional programmes and instruments (see figure 2), such as:

- The Regional Multi-annual Indicative Programme for Asia
- Environment and Natural Resources Thematic Programme (ENRTP)
- The Global Public Goods and Challenges programme (GPGC)
- The Non-State Actors and Local Authorities programme (NSA-LA)
- The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)
- The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)/Instrument for Stability (IFS)
- Instrument for Cooperation with Industrialised Countries (ICI+)
- Erasmus+ for higher education

In total, EUR 426.8 million were contracted in 2012-17, through DCI bilateral support (EUR 329.3 million), DCI regional support (EUR 19.7 million), DCI thematic support (EUR 37.2 million), and other thematic support (EUR 40.6 million)⁵⁸.

⁵⁸ Excluding ERASMUS+

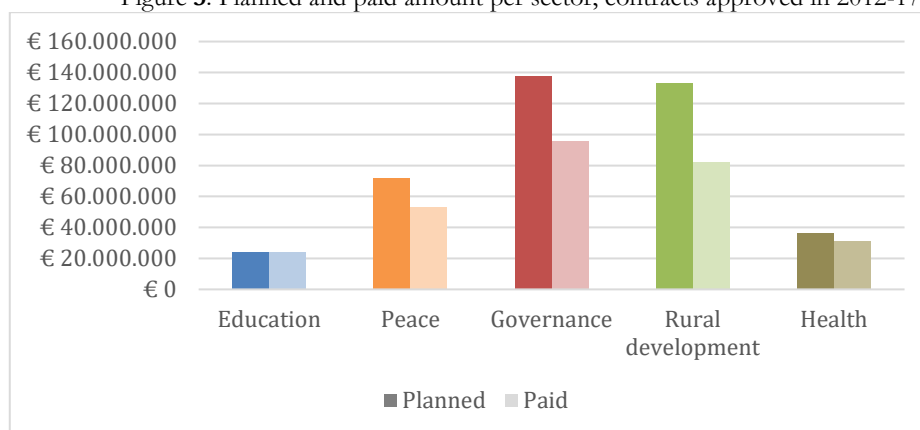
Figure 2: Distribution of support by instrument (planned), contracts approved in 2012-17



Source: CRIS, Datawarehouse and PEM analysis

The extent to which the contracted funding has been disbursed/spent varied among the sectors, with almost full spending in the education sector and only half disbursed in the rural development sector by the end of the period (see figure 3). The low level of contracting in the education sector during the period was due to the large allocation for budget support, which commenced in 2019. Of the total contracted amount, EUR 303.2 million was disbursed in 2012-17.

Figure 3: Planned and paid amount per sector, contracts approved in 2012-17

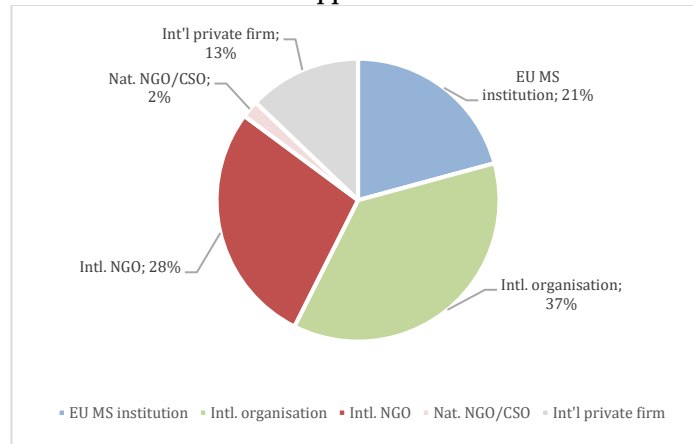


Source: CRIS, Datawarehouse and PEM analysis

During the 2012-17 period, EU funded interventions were mainly implemented by international organisations (mainly UN agencies), international NGOs, and EU Member (see figure 4) State Agencies, with little funding being channelled through national civil society organisations. 33 per cent of the total funding for Myanmar⁵⁹ was channelled through large trust funds managed by UN agencies, while 63 per cent was used for funding individual projects. No funding was provided directly to the Government, but this changed in 2018-19 with sector budget support and blending EU grants with loans from international financing institutions for the Government. Annex 4 provides a detailed overview of the EU support to Myanmar.

⁵⁹ Bilateral, regional and thematic, but excluding ERASMUS+

Figure 4: Distribution of support by partner type, planned funding, contracts approved in 2012-17



Source: CRIS, Datavarehouse and PEM analysis

3. Evaluation methodological approach

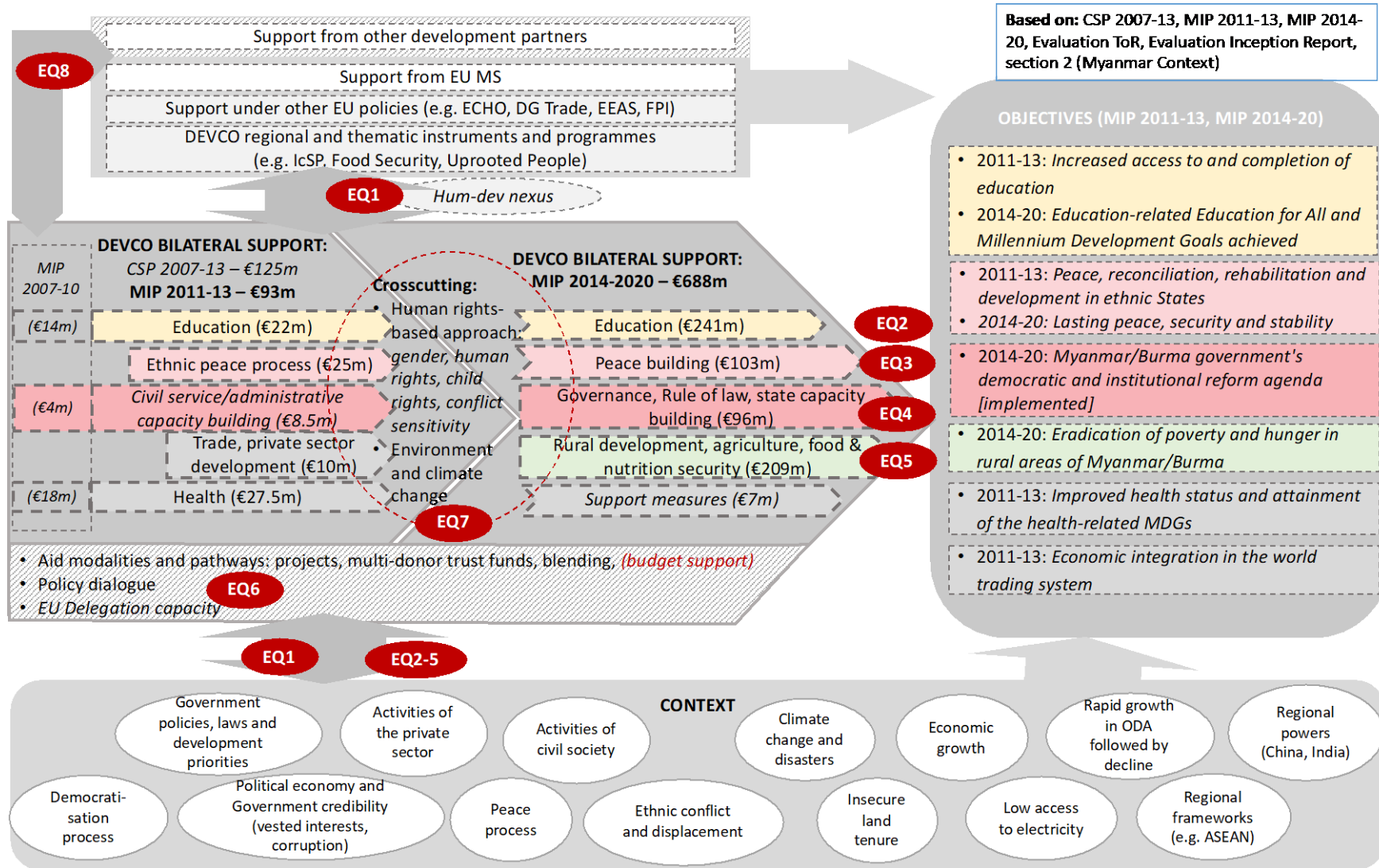
3.1 Overall methodological approach

The methodology for this evaluation follows DEVCO's methodological guidelines for strategic evaluations⁶⁰, which is itself based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) approach. It also takes account of recent developments promoted by DEVCO's Evaluation Unit, and good practices developed by PEMconsult and ADE for strategic evaluations and notably for country-level evaluations. A theory-based non-experimental design was applied⁶¹. Analysis was performed on the basis of the evaluation questions, to assess to what extent and how EU cooperation contributed to attainment of the objectives set. The judgement criteria and indicators structured data collection, verification (indicator level) and analysis (judgement criterion level), and were used to provide a synthesised answer to the evaluation question. The evaluation process followed a well-defined sequential approach from inception, to desk study and document review, to field verification in Myanmar, and culminating analysis and synthesis of the data and findings. Throughout the process, regular meetings were held with a reference group composed of relevant services from the Directorate General (DG) DEVCO, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the EU Delegation in Myanmar to present and discuss progress and findings. A wide range of other stakeholders were consulted during the exercise, including implementing partners, civil society organisations and end beneficiaries. Stakeholder consultations were carried out through stakeholder interviews, a workshop with civil society organisations, community focus group discussions, visits to selected project sites, and two discussion seminars (in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw) for the finalisation of the evaluation report.

⁶⁰ http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/evaluation_guidelines/

⁶¹ [Theory-based evaluation is an approach in which attention is paid to theories of policy makers, programme managers or other stakeholders, i.e. collections of assumptions, and hypotheses – empirically testable – that are logically linked together.](#)

Figure 5: Country programme map



Based on: CSP 2007-13, MIP 2011-13, MIP 2014-20, Evaluation ToR, Evaluation Inception Report, section 2 (Myanmar Context)

3.1.1 Evaluation Questions

Based on a mapping of the country programme and an intervention logic⁶² analysis for each focal sector, eight evaluation questions (EQ) were agreed upon based on discussion with the reference group (see table 3).

Table 3: Evaluation questions

EQ1 Strategic relevance	To what extent was the EU's assistance to Myanmar coherent and corresponding to the priorities and needs in Myanmar?
EQ2 Education	To what extent has EU support increased quality and equitable education for students at all levels of the national education system?
EQ3 Peacebuilding	To what extent has EU support contributed to peacebuilding in Myanmar?
EQ4 Governance	To what extent has EU support contributed to Myanmar's democratic transition?
EQ5 Rural development	To what extent has EU support contributed to reducing rural poverty, including for displaced people and returnees?
EQ6 Instruments and modalities	To what extent have the various instruments and modalities employed by the EU been appropriate for efficient aid delivery in Myanmar?
EQ7 Cross-cutting issues	To what extent has the EU's cooperation with Myanmar adequately integrated and addressed cross-cutting concerns?
EQ8 Synergies, coordination and complementarity	To what extent did EU bilateral development cooperation achieve synergies with the support provided by EU Member States and other development partners?

Each evaluation question links directly to one or more of the standard evaluation criteria, which are relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, coherence, added value, the 3Cs (coordination, coherence and complementarity), and cross-cutting issues. These linkages are illustrated in the table below, and further detailed in the individual EQs.














Table 4: Evaluation questions and evaluation criteria

Evaluation Question	OECD/DAC criterion					EU criterion				
	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability	Coherence	Added value	3Cs	Cross-cutting	Visibility
EQ1: Strategic relevance	√√		√			√√		√		
EQ2: Education	√√	√√		√√	√		√	√		
EQ3: Peacebuilding	√√	√√		√√	√		√	√		
EQ4: Governance	√√	√√		√√	√		√	√		
EQ5: Rural development	√√	√√		√√	√		√√	√		
EQ6: Modalities			√√			√		√		√√
EQ7: Cross-cutting issues	√	√		√	√			√	√√	
EQ8: Synerg., coord. and compl.	√	√	√		√		√	√√		√
	√√ = the criterion/aspect is covered by the EQ √ = the criterion/aspect is partly covered by the EQ									

⁶² Intervention logic analysis is EU terminology for a theory of change analysis

The evaluation questions in particular relate to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as depicted in the table below. For evaluation questions 2-5, these correspond to the focal sectors of the EU’s cooperation with Myanmar.

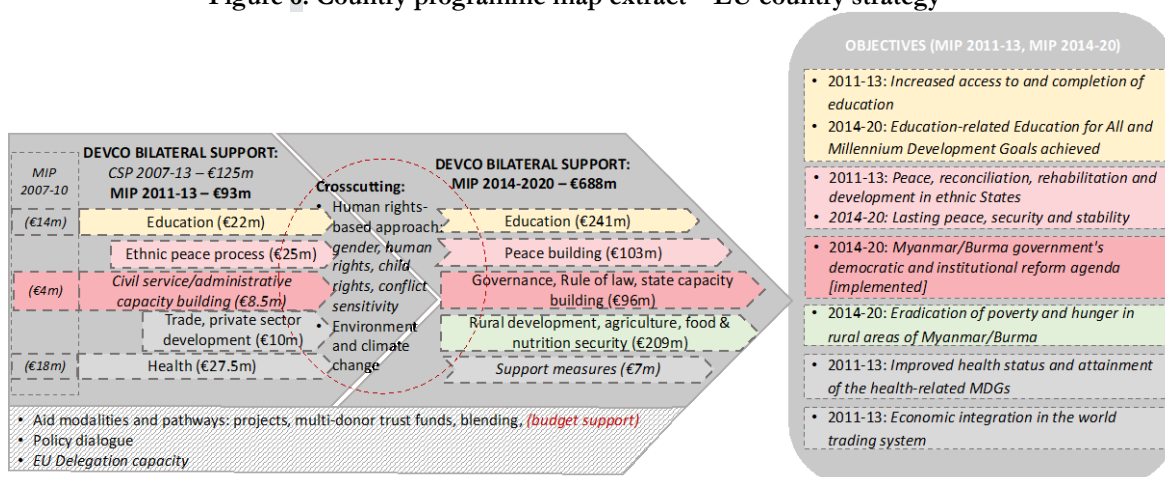
Table 5: Evaluation questions and SDGs

EQ1 Strategic relevance	EQ2 Education	EQ3 Peace- building	EQ4 Govern- ance	EQ5 Rural dev- elopment	EQ6: Instru- ments and modalities	EQ7 Cross- cutting	EQ8 3Cs
 				  		  	

The country programme map depicts the main features of the EU country programme for Myanmar in 2007-2020 and how it is placed in the larger Myanmar context, see figure 8 below. The evaluation questions provide a broad coverage of key features of the EU’s cooperation with Myanmar, as presented in the country programme map.

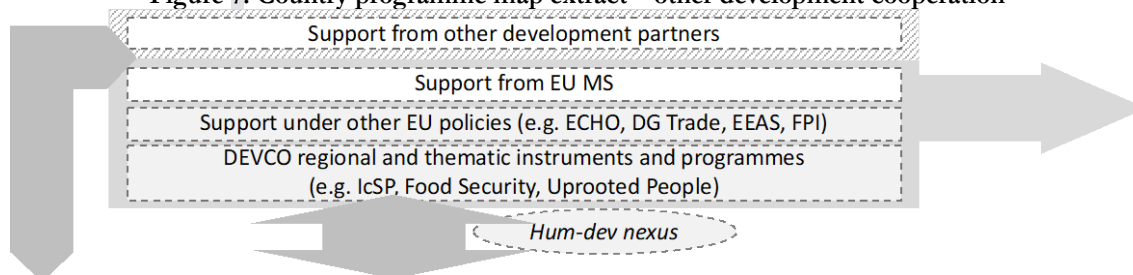
The horizontal centre section of the country programme map in figure 6 represents the EU’s country strategy as described in the 2007-13 Country Strategy Paper (CSP) and its two Multi-annual Indicative Programmes (MIP) for 2007-10 and 2010-13, and also the MIP for 2014-20. The left side, the large “country programme arrow” illustrates the evolution in focal sectors and amounts allocated during 2007-12. As shown in the lower part of the country programme arrow development cooperation is delivered through different modalities and pathways, support is given to multi-donor trust funds and stand-alone projects; and recent developments include the blending of grants and loans and upcoming education sector budget support. Moreover, policy dialogue with the Government of Myanmar also takes place in the country programme context. The box in the right side shows the overall objectives for each focal sector in the period under evaluation, i.e. the MIPs for 2011-13 and 2014-20.

Figure 6: Country programme map extract – EU country strategy



As depicted in the country programme map⁶³, the bilateral support does not work in isolation to achieve the intended objectives. The top box shows that EU, EU Member States and other development partners are also engaged in Myanmar. Firstly, the EU programmatic support is complemented by political dialogue by EEAS and at the political level with the Government of Myanmar, an example is the dialogue on human rights. Moreover, the EU supports development in Myanmar through other channels. This includes regional programmes, in particular support for ASEAN. It also includes other instruments, such as IcSP, and thematic programmes, notably the Food Security Thematic Programme, and Aid to Uprooted People. Finally, humanitarian assistance provided through ECHO is also included. It should be noted that Myanmar is a pilot country for the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, which aims at ensuring synergies and coordination between EU's humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. Furthermore, EU Member States provide significant amounts of bilateral assistance to Myanmar, along with other development partners, such as multilateral institutions and non-EU countries.

Figure 7: Country programme map extract – other development cooperation



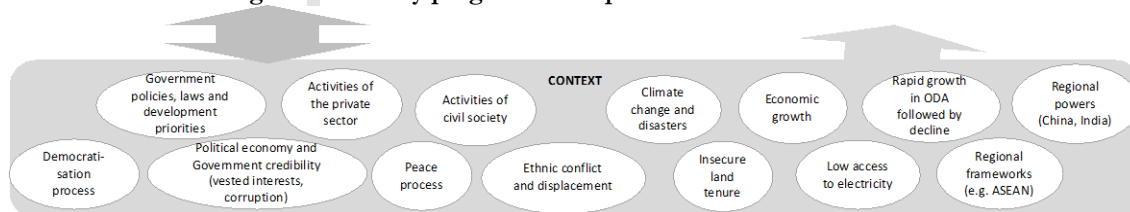
The bottom section of the map depicts major factors in the wider Myanmar context in which the EU country programme operates; factors that have influence on the EU's objectives and the results the EU seeks to achieve. As in any country, the actions of international and domestic non-government actors contribute significantly to development, including the private sector, civil society, and academia. Hence, progress in the sectors supported by the EU is not only a result of EU support, but a combination of several international and

⁶³ Based on: CSP 2007-13, MIP 2011-13, MIP 2014-20, Evaluation ToR, Section 2 (Myanmar Context)

domestic actors who in different ways and to different extents contribute to the developments and also the results achieved.

The development support to the country is also influenced by the democratisation process, ethnic and interfaith conflict, the peace process, climate change, significant economic growth, rapid growth in international development assistance followed by decline, and the influence of regional powers, in particular China and India. These broader contextual issues influence the implementation of support and the achievement of the intended development results. In addition, the implementation of the country programme should, ideally, influence the wider context in order to ensure the achievement of sustained development results in Myanmar. As can be seen in the diagram, several contextual factors and challenges shape the environment in which the EU's support operates, with the democratisation process, the peace process, ethnic conflict and displacement, vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, and insecure land tenure being of particular importance.

Figure 8: Country programme map extract – contextual issues



The eight evaluation questions are designed to both capture the direct results of the EU support in the current focal sectors of support as well as the inter-linkages with a) policy and political dialogue; b) the actions of other EU channels and instruments as well as other donors; and c) the evolving context in Myanmar. As depicted in the country programme map, the evaluation questions are thus placed and spaced with a view towards ensuring a broad but also focused evaluation of the country programme and its delivery.

Figure 9-12 present the intervention logics elaborated for each sector.

Figure 9: Education sector intervention logic

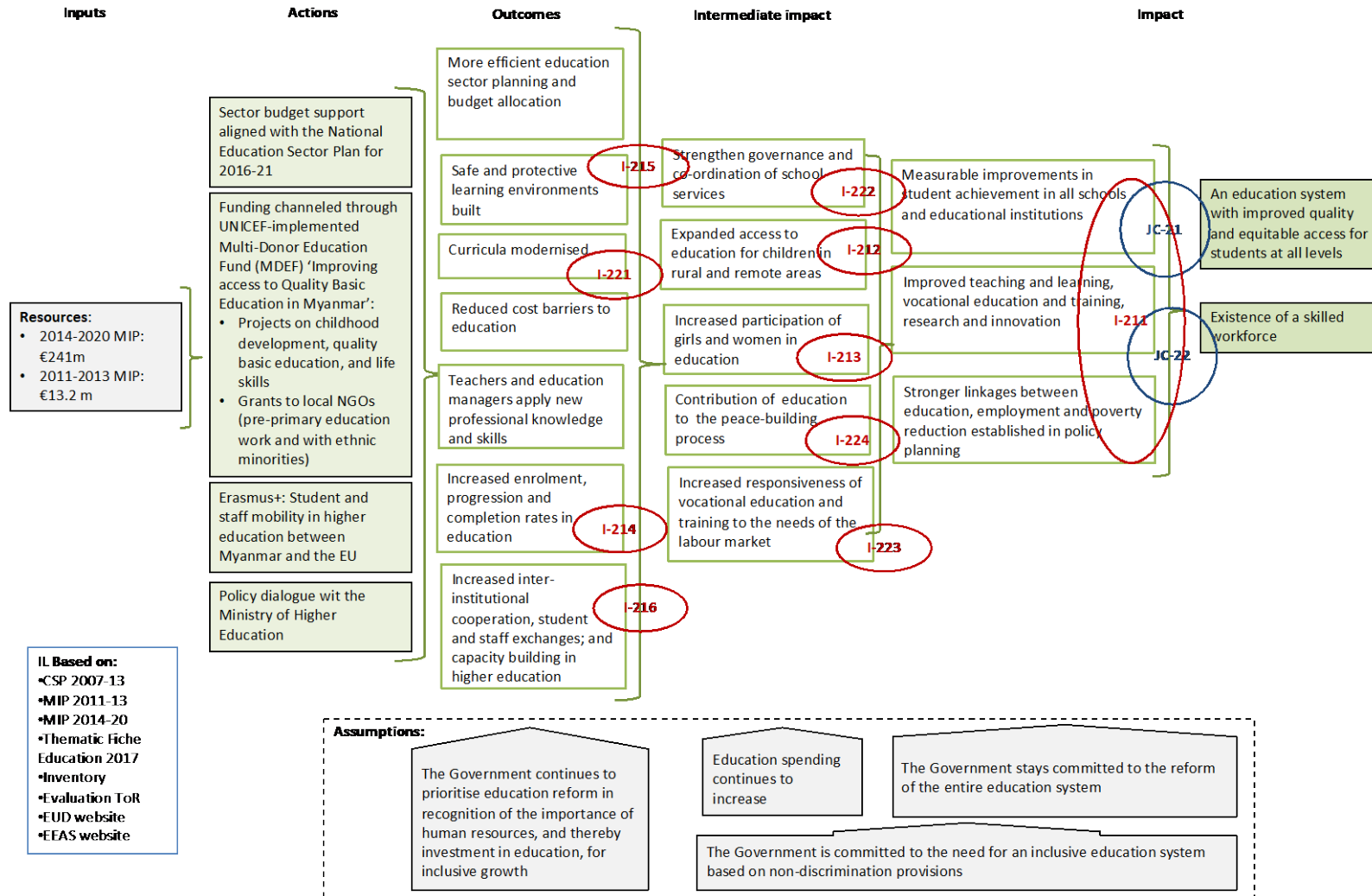


Figure 10: Peace-building sector intervention logic

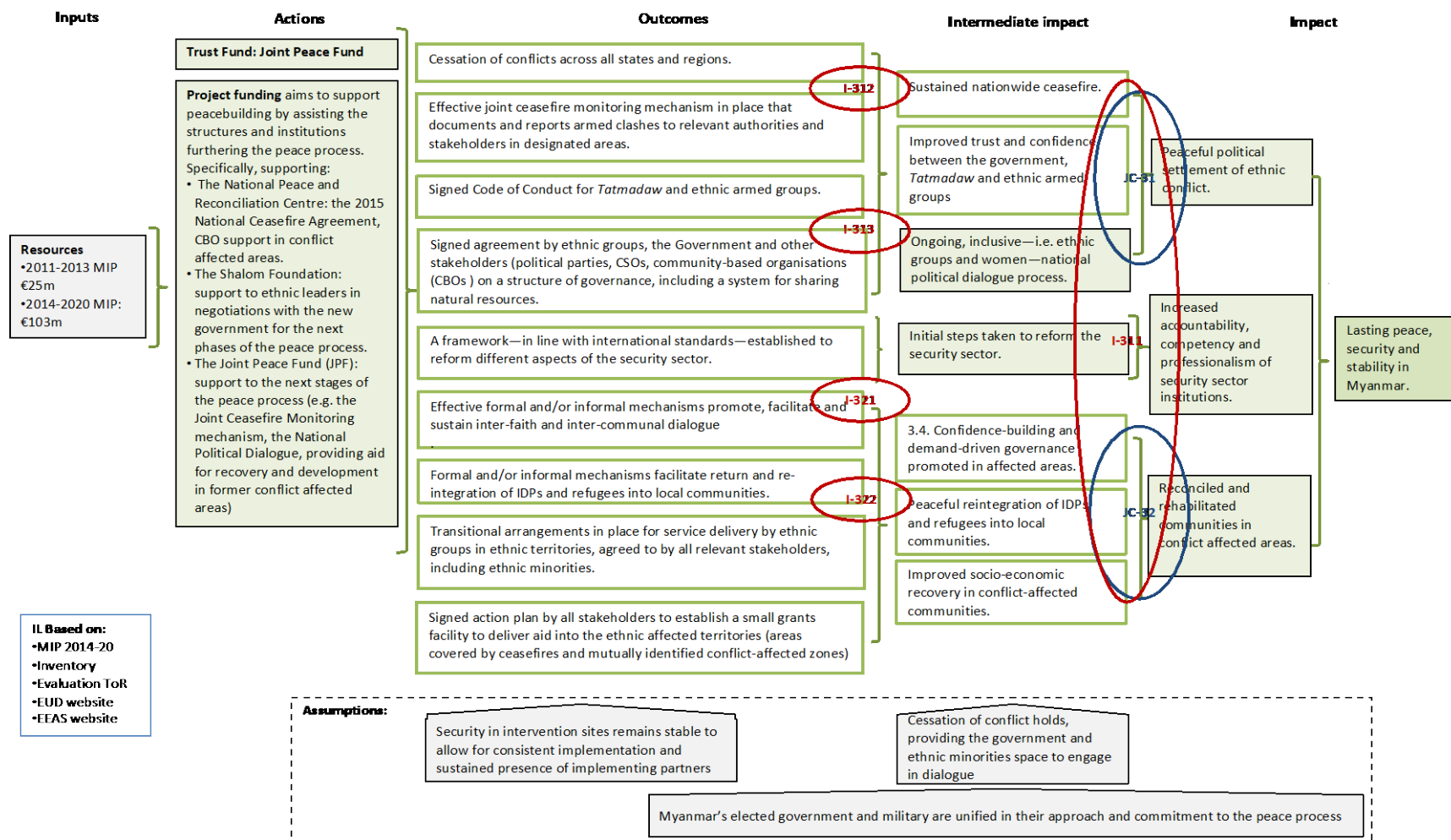


Figure 11: Governance sector intervention logic

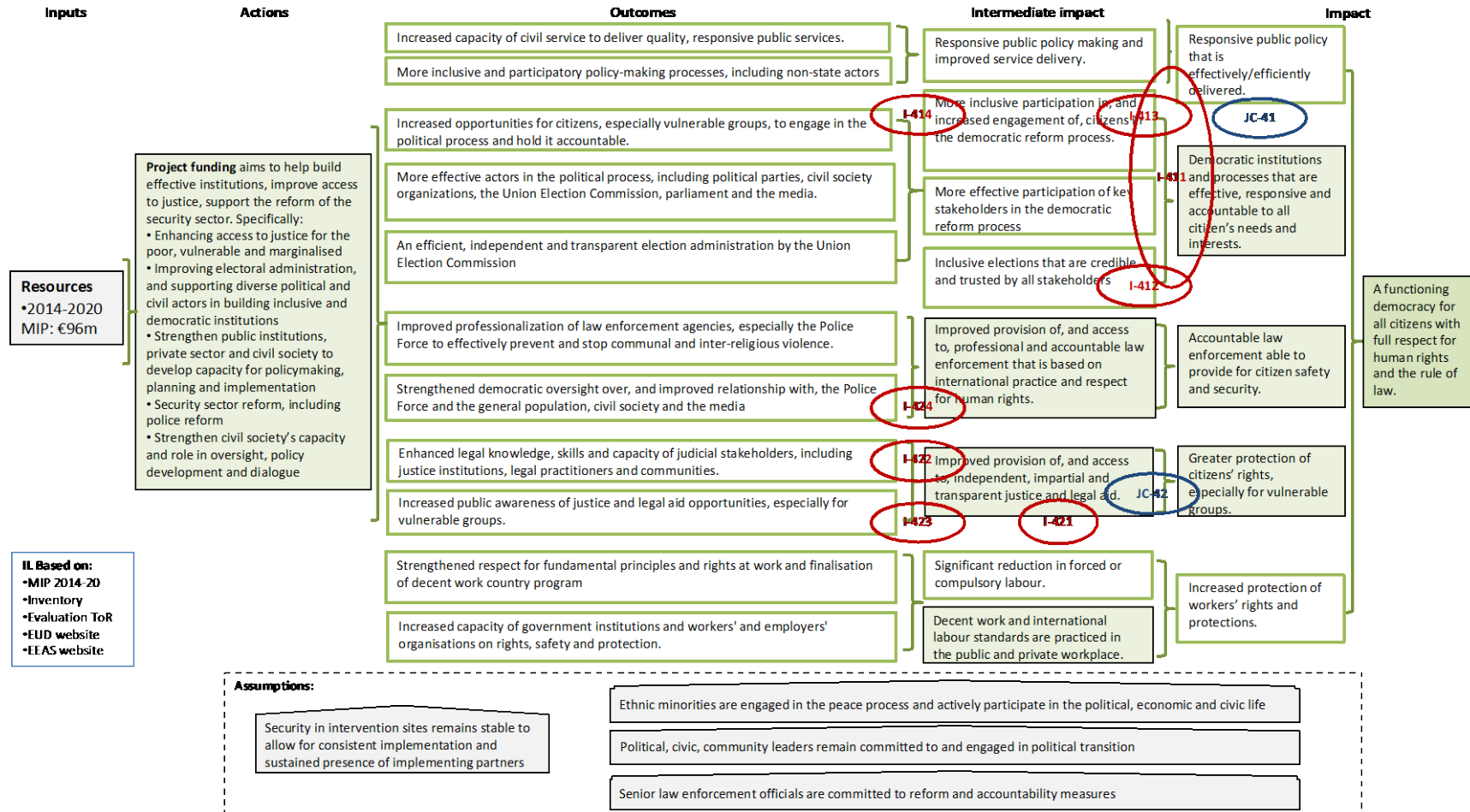
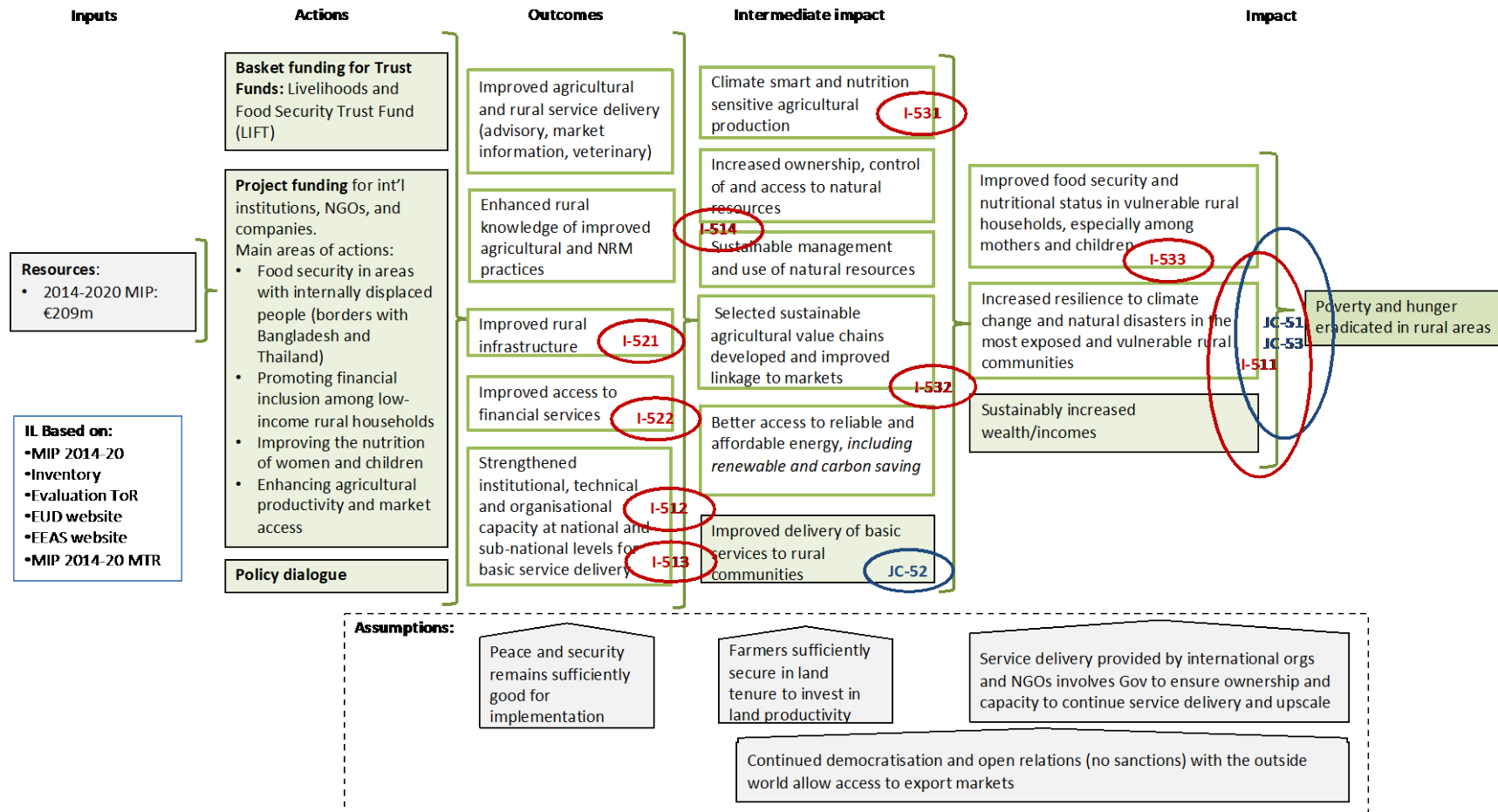


Figure 12: Rural development sector intervention logic



3.2 Challenges and Limitations

The evaluation team faced a number of challenges and limitations. These are presented in the table below together with the measures taken by the evaluation team to mitigate the limitations.

Table 6: Limitations and mitigation measures

Challenge/limitation	Mitigation measure
Limited availability of documentation for some interventions and for transversal evaluation questions	Interviews with multiple stakeholders
Large size of the EU Myanmar country programme and large number and diversity of interventions	Sampling of key interventions within each focal sector
Inability to obtain travel authorisation to visit project sites outside Sittwe Town in Rakhine State	Document review and interviews multiple stakeholders, including implementing partners
Unavailability of some staff and stakeholders	Meeting a broad range of stakeholders and when necessary follow-up interviews on Skype/phone
Staff turnover and limited remaining institutional memory of earlier years	Document review, including of international documentation

4. Findings

4.1 EQ 1 Strategic Relevance

EQ 1 – To what extent was the EU’s assistance to Myanmar coherent and corresponding to the priorities and needs in Myanmar?

Overall findings:

- The EU’s cooperation strategy aligned well with national priorities, needs and policies in the sectors supported.
- The EU support evolved over time and thereby maintained a strong relevance – the overall engagement significantly increased as the country opened up and embarked on democratisation.
- EU interventions showed flexibility and adaptability in a challenging and fluid context, and responded well to developments, opportunities and crises.
- Examples of EU funded interventions that were conflict sensitive and aligned with the ‘do no harm’ principle were found in all four sectors, though varied in the extent to which approaches were formal, structured or systematic.
- The EU Delegation and interventions supported by the EU were able to engage with the Government, non-state actors and civil society, often applying the ‘do no harm’ principle; this enabled the EU to engage in areas affected by conflict and high levels of poverty.
- Revenue generation, which is important for state building and government services, was not explicitly covered in the country strategy or the interventions. Nonetheless, a contribution was made to enhancing the potential base for revenue collection.
- The EU was in general, and increasingly, able to coordinate its development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, thereby addressing the need to move from emergency response towards enhanced resilience – although the humanitarian-development-peace nexus has not yet been fully institutionalised.
- Coordination between the EEAS political section and the DEVCO development cooperation was generally good, in particular in relation to education sector budget support – albeit with some coordination challenges at the technical level.

The EU’s cooperation with Myanmar remained highly relevant to the country’s priorities and needs.

The EU support rapidly responded to the positive political changes and democratisation and peace processes, by lifting the sanctions on Myanmar in 2013 and **substantially increasing the funding** from EUR 125 mill in 2007-2013 to EUR 688 mill in 2014-2020. The EU also responded by including new **critical sectors to its bilateral engagement**: peacebuilding, governance and rural development. Trade-related assistance was also provided in response to the lifting of the sanctions.

The EU’s strategy for support, the 2014-20 Multiannual Indicative Plan was developed in consultation with national stakeholders in Myanmar from both Government and civil society, as were the individual interventions under the strategy. The Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for 2014-2020 is closely aligned with the Government’s Framework for Economic and Social Reforms for 2012-2015 with a focus on the key government priorities

of democratisation, peacebuilding and economic development. The MIP is also in line with the new Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan 2018-2030⁶⁴.

In the education sector, the EU focused on supporting the Government's reform process and supported the policy-making process around the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2016-2021. This ensured close alignment of the EU assistance with national policy priorities, although the 2014-20 Multiannual Indicative Plan pre-dated the NESP.

In relation to the peacebuilding sector, the focus was on the supporting ceasefire agreements, the formal peace process and socio-economic development in conflict-affected areas; priorities articulated in the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan and the 2013 Nay Pyi Taw Accord for Effective Development Cooperation.

In the governance sector, the MIP set out to support the priorities of democratic institutional reform, elections, public participation, human rights, and access to justice. These areas are priorities outlined in the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan, the Myanmar Union Election Commission Strategic Plan 2014-2018, the Nay Pyi Taw Accord, and the Judiciary strategic plans of 2015-2017 and 2018-2022.

In the rural development sector, the MIP contributed to all rural development related policy reform areas⁶⁵ in the Framework for Economic and Social Reforms. Moreover, the MIP contributed to the delivery of the impacts and outcomes of the Agricultural Development Strategy 2018⁶⁶. The MIP also feeds into the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan's strategies in relation to socio-economic development in conflict affected areas, agricultural productivity and diversification, job creation, access to finance, rural infrastructure, food security, and climate resilience.

(I-111, I-211, I-311, I-411, I-511)

The sectoral and geographic focus was appropriate; the focal sectors were central to economic development, democratisation and the peace process and the geographical flexibility enabled the EU to respond changes in a rapidly evolving context.

The EU support focused on four sectors which are **central to the socio-economic development and state-building of Myanmar** and mutually reinforcing, namely education, peacebuilding, governance and rural development. Lasting peace is a precondition for long term economic development, poverty alleviation, and the democratic transition. At the same time, democratic participation, rule of law, and economic opportunities are essential for achieving peace. Education reinforces the other sectors by increasing knowledge and capacities to engage in the democratic process and new livelihoods opportunities.

The choice to focus on four sectors, rather than the general maximum of three focal sectors for EU country programmes⁶⁷, was **justified by the large investment made by the EU** in Myanmar. When considering the absorption capacity constraints within the sectors, it was

⁶⁴ Launched in mid-2018

⁶⁵ 1) Increase farmers' access to credit and expand microfinance services; 2) increase extension services; 3) remove barriers throughout supply chain and promote demand-oriented market support mechanisms; 4) improve agricultural performance through improving rice productivity, seasonal and crop diversification, water management, protect farmers' rights and choices; 5) prepare reform strategy for agriculture, livestock, fisheries and implement recommendations; 6) support community-driven development projects ; 7) ensure sustainable development of forestry incl. Community forestry.

⁶⁶ Food and nutrition security, poverty reduction, increased agricultural productivity, increased farmer incomes, and enhanced market linkages, and to a somewhat lesser extent increasing government institutional capacity

⁶⁷ The EU's 2011 Agenda for Change calls for no more than three focal sectors in a country programme. However, the joint Commission-EEAS programming instructions for the DCI for 2014-2020 allow for an additional focal sector in specific circumstances, e.g. transition from humanitarian to development assistance and emerging conflict risks, to support key priorities for peace- and state building.

also appropriate not to have fewer sectors with larger volumes of funding per sector. Geographic targeting was not explicit in the strategy but mainly decided at the intervention level and on annual basis. This was appropriate as it **allowed for flexibility and responsiveness in a rapidly evolving context** where some areas became accessible as the peace process progressed, such as in the Southeast (Kayin, Mon, Tanintharyi), or became inaccessible as conflict became severe, in particular in Northern Rakhine. Nonetheless, the focus on peacebuilding implied that significant resources were focused on conflict-affected ethnic minority areas. The focus on conflict-affected areas was further enhanced recently as the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) will increase its engagement in conflict-affected areas and spend at least 50 per cent of its budget in these.

Revenue generation, which is important for state building as it enables the government to provide services to its citizens, was not explicitly covered in the country strategy or the interventions. Nonetheless, a contribution was made to enhancing the potential base for revenue collection through support for rural income generation. Support was also provided for improving the transparency and governance of mining and timber operations, which in turn will improve the scope for collecting revenues from these. Moreover, the EU has since 2018 supported the Internal Revenue Department through MyGovernance⁶⁸.

(I-111, I-522)

The EU support was flexible and continuously adapted to changes and emerging opportunities.

The period under evaluation was dynamic with major political changes. Furthermore, the situation in ethnic states was volatile and affected by conflict, and the situation in Rakhine deteriorated over the period, culminating in the displacement of more than 720,000 Rohingyas in 2017. The EU and its implementing partners maintained flexibility and were **able to respond to emerging crises**, including cyclones and conflict⁶⁹, as well as to new opportunities, such as engaging in emerging policy development processes⁷⁰. EU-funded interventions proactively supported the key policy and strategy processes at the sector level, such as the Comprehensive Education Sector Review and the development of the Agricultural Development Strategy (2018). However, operating in **a fluid context was**

⁶⁸ Provided as part of the engagement in Public Financial Management (PFM) in the framework of the education sector budget support

⁶⁹ There are several examples of flexibility and responsiveness to emerging challenges in EU funded interventions (see I-112), including:

- Projects were subject to amendments and extension requests due to disruptions to implementation and delays caused by conflict or cyclones, especially in Rakhine and ethnic states
- LIFT and PHASE IN responded rapidly to damage caused by cyclones, providing support for post-cyclone recovery and rehabilitation of damaged assets. The LIFT strategy was revised in 2014 with an increased focus on building resilience to shocks
- QBEP rehabilitated schools damaged by floods and landslides and provided education for IDP children in 2015

⁷⁰ There are several examples of flexibility and responsiveness to emerging challenges and opportunities in EU funded interventions (see I-112), including:

- LIFT gradually increased its cooperation with local NGOs, the private sector and Government, as sanctions were lifted and their capacities increased. The LIFT strategy was revised in 2014 to focus more in the private sector in response to rapid changes in the rural economy with increased use of farm machinery and increased migration to urban centres
- QBEP engaged in supporting the new Government's Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) process
- EU was the first donor to support local authorities with two projects under the LA (local authorities) programme, in response to their strengthened role in the new political environment (2013)
- The Myanmar Peace Centre and JPF were found by evaluations to have responded flexibly to emerging needs of the peace process

challenging and interventions were often subject to amendments and extension requests due to disruptions to implementation and delays caused by conflict or cyclones, especially in Rakhine and ethnic states.

An EU Delegation was established in Myanmar in 2012/13, responding to the increased political and development engagement; and the new Delegation managed to quickly establish a proactive dialogue with the Government and plan the interventions under the 2014-20 MIP. However, the EU Delegation was also challenged by significant staff constraints, which especially in the early years negatively affected the ability to monitor a large and complex portfolio. This challenge was partly mitigated with a large proportion of the funding being provided through UN managed multi-donor trust funds.

(I-112, I-113)

The EU built a constructive relationship with both the civilian Government and civil society and became a trusted partner.

The EU also maintained a diplomatic approach with a focus on building trust and the new EU Delegation managed to establish a good relationship with the Government, as evidenced by the **EU being invited to co-sign the ceasefire agreement** as the only Western development partner. The EU supported the Government with the provision of technical and policy advisors based at ministries in Nay Pyi Taw and financed support measures to assist the Government in donor coordination and aid effectiveness⁷¹. The EU engaged in dialogue with the Government through the EU-Myanmar Human Rights dialogue, trust fund boards and sector coordination groups, as well as informally. Moreover, the EU support gradually shifted toward increased involvement with the Government, as evidenced by the introduction of sector budget support in the education sector as well as the introduction of blending grants from the EU with loans provided by International Financing Institutions to the Government. Sector budget support is also under development for the rural development sector.

A positive working relationship with the Government can also be seen in senior government officials' support for governance programming, including the MyJustice "Let'sTalk" campaign. At the same time, the EU engaged with civil society through financing for NGO projects⁷². Indeed, NGOs have been responsible for the implementation of a large proportion of the EU funded interventions. Moreover, the EU has maintained a regular dialogue with civil society organisations, which has informed the dialogue with the Government. To further strengthen this relationship, the EU in 2019 formulated a new approach for a more robust engagement with civil society organisations (CSOs): the European Strategy for a Strengthened Partnership with Civil Society in Myanmar. While the strategy has only been in place for a limited period of time and the results are yet to emerge, many CSOs have welcomed this new approach. The EU has also been able to engage with non-state actors under the JPF and SIRP (Southeast Infrastructure Project).

(I-112, I-113, I-413, I-514, I-615, I-812, I-813)

The EU recognised the challenges and complexity of working in Myanmar and paid specific attention to these aspects in relation to peace and stability.

⁷¹ The EU participated in overall and sector level working groups (and multi-donor trust fund boards ; co-chairing on a rotational basis trust fund boards and some working groups. The EU Delegation also led the EU joint programming. See EQ8

⁷² Under direct calls for proposals and through multi-donor trust funds

The Delegation demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of conflict dynamics and actors, particularly in relation to conflict-affected ethnic states. Though not systematic, conflict sensitivity was apparent in strategic and programmatic decisions and actions. Examples of this include the conflict analysis conducted by LIFT and the Promoting Durable Peace and Development in Kachin Programme (DPP) II in Northern Shan State. Similarly, as a demand-driven fund, the JPF is open to supporting not only to NCA signatories, but also non-signatories in any state or region of the country.

Recognising the need to remain responsive to rapidly changing conflict dynamics, the EU eschewed predetermined geographic targeting in favour of a more agile and customised approach. Conflict sensitive analysis, the ‘do no harm’ approach and risk management processes, as well as a range of informal mechanisms, were incorporated in both setting the strategic framework and designing programmes⁷³. The EU’s support was **broadly consistent with OECD’s principles for international engagement in fragile states**, even if not explicitly referenced. This included adhering to the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Nay Pyi Taw Accord for Effective Development Cooperation; applying tools and approaches in all focal sectors, not just peacebuilding and governance; recognising the links between political, security and development objectives⁷⁴; and applying a mix of financial instruments suitable for fragile states⁷⁵. The support was also in line with the EC Staff Handbook on Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility.

(I-121, I-122, I-141)

The EU and its partners effectively employed conflict sensitive tools and approaches to programming.

In practice, both **formal and informal** conflict sensitive tools and approaches were applied. This comprised a range of measures, from stakeholder mappings and conflict assessments/analysis to verbal communication (i.e. meetings and consultations) with staff and CSO partners. Since 2012, there has been a trend toward a more formal and rigorous application of conflict sensitive tools and approaches. This has been particularly notable for peace sector interventions, including DPP in Kachin as well as the JPF. As part of the design process of the second phase of DPP, a conflict analysis of Northern Shan State was conducted, and given the complexity of conflict dynamics in the state, community level research will be commissioned to inform future programming. The JPF has put in place extensive conflict sensitive measures to review and appraise prospective grant applicants and to manage partners. Measures include information sharing, staff training, partner reporting, and communication protocols, all of which were specific to conflict sensitivity. Governance programmes in the sample referenced conflict sensitivity or analysis to a lesser degree, and in practice relied more on informal conflict analysis.

For rural development programming, conflict analysis and ‘do no harm’ featured in a number of interventions. LIFT in particular has become more rigorous and systematic on conflict sensitivity, including developing conflict sensitive principles, hiring an advisor on conflict sensitivity, and developing a Conflict Strategy for 2019-2023 for work in conflict affected areas. However, it is unclear to what extent these practices were widespread or systematic outside of LIFT, but the scarce evidence available suggests this was not the case.

⁷³ See EU Myanmar Evaluation Volume 2, pp 33-43, including for example, the expansion of the DPP programme

⁷⁴ Though only recently introduced, an example of the link between the political, security and development objectives can be seen in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach

⁷⁵ Including IcSP, DCI, and EIDHR

Although neither the EU nor its partners conducted a formal conflict sensitivity analysis for the education sector, programming nevertheless demonstrated relatively significant rigour in terms of applying conflict sensitive approaches. This included the training of voluntary teachers in Rakhine on conflict sensitive approaches in psychosocial support, gender awareness and story-telling; increasing access to, and provision of education services by ethnic providers of education, in conflict and post-conflict areas of ethnic states and regions. Moreover, both temporary learning spaces (TLS) and government schools were engaged to prevent the upgrade of TLS into permanent schools that would contribute to de facto segregation.

The multi-donor trust funds – specifically LIFT and the JPF – were particularly effective in applying conflict sensitive measures, including hiring conflict advisors and training staff, promoting conflict sensitive methodologies with grantees, conducting conflict assessments for new programming, and sharing information on conflict dynamics and programming. The JPF also provided guidance to other multi-donor trust funds on their conflict sensitive practices. Conflict sensitivity was also recognised as an imperfect process that needed constant and ongoing attention and focus.

(I-121, I-122)

Thematic and regional interventions reinforced bilateral support by enabling quick and timely response, allowing engagement in themes and areas that could not be covered under the bilateral support, and by establishing structures and lessons the bilateral support could build upon.

Synergy between thematic, regional and bilateral interventions was capitalised on in different ways. Support for rural development was initiated under thematic or regional programmes, thereby allowing the EU to engage in a sector that were not covered in the 2011-2013 multiannual indicative programme (MIP) for Myanmar. When the democratic transition allowed a broader and more substantial and considerably larger bilateral country engagement, the support for rural development was expanded and articulated with a Myanmar-specific strategic framework under the MIP 2014-2020. A good example is the establishment of LIFT as a mechanism for recovery response to cyclone Nargis under the thematic programme for Food Security and later with significantly increased funding under the MIP 2014-2020. The transition between instruments was usually, but not always, smooth.

The Aid to Uprooted People and NSA/LA (non-state actor/local authority) thematic programmes enabled the EU to engage in service delivery in areas controlled by ethnic non-state actors. In the Education sector the bilaterally funded QBEP (Quality Basic Education Programme) focused on the public sector, while NSA/LA projects supported the monastic education system to ensure access to basic education in hard to reach ethnic areas.

Thematic interventions also informed the design of bilateral interventions. An example of this is the integration of recommendations from the external evaluation of the IcSP (Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace) police project in MyPol (Myanmar Police Force Programme). Moreover, the thematically funded EU/FAO FIRST (Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability) provided technical support on policy and programmatic issues, including inputs for the planned nutrition budget support.

(I-131, I-132, I-133, I-134, I-512)

There were clear coherence and synergies between the EU's development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

Coordination between the DEVCO managed development cooperation and the ECHO (Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) managed humanitarian assistance improved over time with regular meetings between the two, initially informally, but formalised in 2016. Moreover, ECHO was consulted when relevant development interventions were programmed. With the introduction in 2018 of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach the coordination was further enhanced, with joint DEVCO-ECHO situational analysis for Kachin State, monitoring and field missions. Myanmar is one of eight countries, where the humanitarian-development nexus approach is piloted by the EU. In Myanmar, the peace dimension was added to the nexus approach. However, the nexus approach has still not been fully institutionalised, and it is not yet clear how it will be implemented in programming. A joint nexus action plan has been elaborated, a nexus programme for Kachin State has been developed, and four joint pilot interventions have been developed and are jointly monitored by DEVCO and ECHO. In response to the implementation challenge, a "Nexus Response Mechanism" contract was recently signed with UNOPS (December 2019), which will aim at ensuring and monitoring that due diligence criteria are applied in all interventions in conflict-affected areas, applying an adaptive approach to implementation.

A number of interventions in the four focal sectors **aimed at bridging the gap between development assistance and humanitarian aid**, with an emphasis on enhancing resilience to shocks and hazards related to weather or conflict. This contributed to reducing the risk of disaster, thus reducing the need for humanitarian aid. Interventions in the rural development sector aimed at enhancing resilience to shocks and emergencies through improved natural resource management, livelihoods diversification, social protection measures and to a smaller extent flood protection infrastructure⁷⁶. Moreover, LIFT and PHASE IN (Poverty and Hunger Alleviation through Support, Empowerment and Increased Networking) reacted rapidly to emergencies caused by cyclones and provided recovery support. Peacebuilding interventions specifically aimed at reducing conflict and the risk of displacement⁷⁷. Interventions in all focal sectors supported IDPs (internally displaced persons) to reduce their vulnerability and their resilience by promoting empowerment⁷⁸, livelihoods opportunities and access to education. The DEVCO funded DPP's (Promoting Durable Peace and Development in Kachin Programme) approach to supporting persons affected by protracted conflict was complemented by the ECHO Emergency Response Mechanism's (ERM) immediate support to vulnerable persons during humanitarian crisis. Some development interventions in Rakhine and in ethnic states built on earlier ECHO humanitarian interventions. An example of this is the Education Assistance to Children in Rakhine State project, which built upon a previous ECHO-funded education in emergencies project focusing on IDPs, while bringing on a recovery/development aspect.

(I-141)

Coordination and cooperation between DEVCO and EEAS were generally good, especially at the political level, although there were some coordination challenges at the technical level.

The only formalised EU-Myanmar political dialogue mechanism is the EU-Myanmar Human Rights Dialogue. The EU provided programmatic support related to human rights, and

⁷⁶ More detail is provided in EQ5

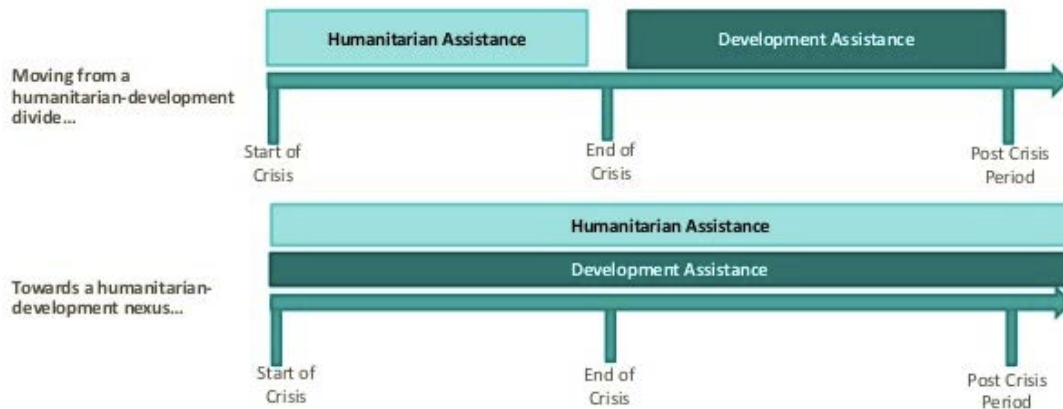
⁷⁷ More detail is provided in EQ3

⁷⁸ Through peace education and dialogue, see EQ3

EIDHR-funded interventions informed the human rights dialogue. STEP (Support to Electoral Processes and Democracy in Myanmar) informed and advised the EEAS-European Commission Election Observation Mission (EOM) and facilitated contacts with national stakeholders, but STEP only implemented a small number of the EOM recommendations. Other areas of interaction between DEVCO and EEAS included the development of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus action plan, the joint situational analysis for Kachin State, and discussions with EU Member States on joint positions. At the political level, the EU Head of Delegation participated in the JPF Fund Board meetings and led the first policy dialogue on the Education Sector Reform Contract. The Head of Delegation also used the experiences from development interventions in political dialogue and messaging. However, some coordination challenges remained at the technical level; for example, there was only limited involvement of EEAS in the development of the 2018 CSO Strategy and it was challenging for EEAS to follow the sector policy dialogue undertaken by DEVCO.

(I-142)

Figure 13: Humanitarian-development nexus concept



Source: Nexus Action Plan (2018), EU Delegation in Myanmar

4.2 EQ 2 Education

EQ 2 – To what extent has EU support increased quality and equitable education for students at all levels of the national education system?

Overall findings:

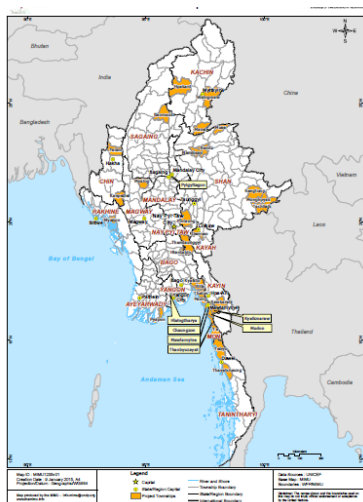
- EU support had visible effects on the entire education system: from substantial policy reforms and the governance of education at the national and local levels to the modernisation of learning and teaching methods and the individual performance of teachers and students.
- EU's support to education was highly aligned with Myanmar's needs, mainly as a result of extensive consultations with the Government as well as QBEP's (Quality Basic Education Programme)⁷⁹ role in advising policy making. QBEP substantially contributed to the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) and National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2016-2021.
- QBEP and "Education Assistance to Children in Rakhine State" achieved an increase in enrolment and completion in supported formal and non-formal primary schools. In intervention areas, access to education for children expanded to a greater extent than the national average.
- Enrolment increased in the QBEP-supported townships by 3.35 per cent against a national average rise of 1.52 per cent, while "Education Assistance to Children in Rakhine State" accomplished an 18 per cent increase in IDP children aged 3-10 years attending Temporary Learning Spaces in Rakhine.
- EU-funded interventions built safe and protective learning environments in supported townships and achieved cross-fertilisation between education and peacebuilding through the promotion of education provision in ethnic languages, mixed classroom-approaches, joint teacher training and a focus on ethnic and non-formal education.
- While interventions were gender-sensitive and had some success in improving the access of girls and women to education, gender equality remains constrained by political and cultural factors. At the policy level, the EU did not succeed in contributing to the development of a national gender strategy. EU support mainly focused on primary education and has not yet achieved its objective of contributing to all levels of education. Linkages between education and labour market needs as foreseen in the MIP 2014-2020 have been weak so far. However, the focus has been broadened under the Education Sector Reform Contract (sector budget support), which addresses secondary education as well as TVET. EU continues to support primary education through the forthcoming Global Partnership for Education grant.
- While the EU made some contribution to the strengthening of higher education through global and regional programmes, there were no mutually reinforcing linkages between the bilateral and global/regional levels of support.

The EU's strategic approach to supporting the education sector was characterised by a high level of alignment with Myanmar's needs.

⁷⁹ QBEP (2012-2016) was a joint partnership between the EU, Australia, the UK, Denmark and Norway, collectively known as the Multi donor Education Fund (MDEF) with UNICEF as the implementing agency. It succeeded a first phase of support to basic education, financed by the same donor partnership and UNICEF from 2007-2011. Two no-cost extensions, named Building on QBEP (BoQBEP) and Building on QBEP in Rakhine (until June 2019), were supported by the EU, Denmark, and UNICEF.

Since 2012, a good alignment of the EU support with the needs of Myanmar was mainly achieved through close consultations and policy dialogue with the government. Prior to 2012, policy dialogue was highly constrained as the EU was only able to work through UNICEF. Today, education is considered the best coordinated policy area in government-donor relations, thus providing a fertile ground for alignment, particular after the new government took office after the 2015 elections. Of particular importance for alignment were the mutually reinforcing linkages between the Quality Based Education Programme (QBEP) and the policy making process, which formed the basis for the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR), launched by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2012. The CESR led to the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2016-2021. All EU actions are closely aligned with, and directly support the goals of the NESP. Under the current dialogue architecture, interactions between the Ministry of Education and development partners take place within the Education and TVET Sector Coordination Group and its seven sub-sector working groups, which are aligned with the NESP chapters. A shift in the modality of EU assistance, which channels the main part of EU resources through the national budget using country systems under the Education Sector Reform Contract, is expected to further strengthen alignment with the NESP. The Education Sector Reform Contract is specifically designed to enable the effective implementation of NESP core reforms for secondary education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET). At the same time, the EU has used policy dialogues in general and the Joint Education Sector Working Group to advocate for a stronger emphasis on gender and equality in the Government’s education policy. This was in line with the EU Gender Action Plan II 2016-2020, which stipulates that “*equal access for girls and women to all levels of quality education and vocational education and training (VET) free from discrimination*”⁸⁰. However, EU support did not succeed at contributing to the development of a national gender strategy. (I-211)

Figure 14: District coverage of QBEP



Source: QBEP Final Report (2016)

Picture 1: Primary school class, Kyaik Hto Township, Mon State



Access to education for children expanded to a greater extent in EU supported areas

⁸⁰ SWD(2017) 288 final, p. 3.

than the national average. However, the approach to gender equality in education was more successful at the intervention than the policy level, where its integration remained a challenge.

Enrolment increased in the 34 QBEP-supported townships⁸¹ by 3.35 per cent against a national average increase per township of 1.52 per cent. The programme's last extension "Building on QBEP in Rakhine" (BoQBEP) focused on one of the most deprived areas of the country. During this period, UNICEF in collaboration with Save the Children provided extensive Education in Emergencies (EiE) support to school children in Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps **who would otherwise not have had access to education**. Likewise, "Education Assistance to Children in Rakhine State" considerably increased the number of children aged three to ten at intervention sites who now can access their right to education, both in terms of improved facilities and improved learning. EU support was gender sensitive and resulted in a **growing participation of girls and women in education**. At the same time access to education, particularly for Muslim girls, is still constrained by a number of factors, which cannot be solved through programme/project support alone. Furthermore, although QBEP's work generally raised gender awareness, the programme was only partly successful in contributing to a stronger policy approach to gender equality. QBEP facilitated some inclusion of cross-cutting issues into consultations on the NESP, including gender, but mainstreaming of **gender in the NESP remained a challenge** and the final version of NESP lacks strong provisions on gender equality.

(I-212, I-213)

Both QBEP and "Education Assistance to Children in Rakhine State" contributed to an increase in progression and completion at primary level (up to Grade 5).

Of the roughly 1.1 million new primary school entrants each year, only 10 per cent complete upper secondary education 11 years later. Each year about one million young people drop out of school. The baseline in 2011-12 for children reaching Grade 5 ("survival rate") was 71.5 per cent (70 per cent male; 73.1 per cent female); QBEP attained a survival rate of 74 per cent (72.3 per cent male; 75.8 per cent female) during the lifetime of the programme. The exclusive regional focus of Building on QBEP (BoQBEP) for Rakhine was meant to address the particularly low completion rate in the state. In the 2017-2018 school year, "Education Assistance to Children in Rakhine State" reached the target goal of 80 per cent (85 per cent male, 75 per cent female) of IDP children aged 3-10 years attending Temporary Learning Spaces and child-friendly spaces, up from 62 per cent (62 per cent male; 61 per cent female) in 2015-2016. The programme also surpassed the target goal of 80 per cent of IDP children aged 6-10 years completing their school years in Temporary Learning Spaces, with a 93 per cent completion rate. The latter result, however, was partly due to a change in government policy on examinations regarding pass/fail thresholds.

(I-214)

Both QBEP and "Education Assistance to Children in Rakhine State" contributed to the modernisation of education provision – QBEP in particular strengthened the governance of education at the national and especially at the local level.

⁸¹ Due to the design of QBEP and BoQBEP, which supported a broad range of interventions from direct service delivery to policy planning it is not possible to calculate the territorial coverage of EU support or the proportion of the national population benefitting from it.

QBEP's ambitious approach to the modernisation of teaching and learning encompassed all levels from the Government to the individual teacher. The programme supported the development of new textbooks and introduced **changes to teaching and learning practices**, which should enable students to develop thinking and problem-solving skills and achieve deeper understanding than traditional methods. QBEP successfully delivered important inputs for the benefit in teachers and students in schools, early childhood development (ECD) centres and non-formal settings⁸². These inputs and processes have had a positive impact on the attitudes of teachers, head teachers, education officers and parents, while also contributing to **more effective teaching and learning processes**. Compared to QBEP, the ability of "Education Assistance to Children in Rakhine State" – as a small project operating in the periphery and against the backdrop of a heavily centralised education system – to influence teaching and learning environments was limited.

(I-221, I-222)

The project's main influence on the quality of education was mainly in terms of enhancing the capacity of teachers and volunteer teachers, especially with the introduction of new techniques such as a child-centred approach and psychosocial perspectives.

However, a hurdle in the process of modernisation is the student assessment system, which is still based on an examination that tests memorisation and recall. The pursuit of "21st century education" is a long and winding road which not only requires substantial political commitment and extensive funding but also a shift in societal norms and values and the expectations of parents who still tend to favour chalk-and-talk teaching rather than collaborative and inter-active teaching and learning as the best approach for their children.

(I-221, I-222)

EU-funded interventions built safe and protective learning environments in supported townships – mainly in terms of physical infrastructure and equipment – which would otherwise not exist.

QBEP supported the construction of Temporary Learning Spaces in IDP camps and renovations to school buildings in host and surrounding communities. The programme also supported non-formal education, including monastic schools, which do not only provide access to education for children from disadvantaged backgrounds who would otherwise not be able to attend school but gain importance as a shelter for these students, especially girls. "Education Assistance to Children in Rakhine State" renovated, constructed and furnished formal government school buildings, and established and equipped Temporary Learning Spaces and child-friendly spaces in IDP camps. Since 2013, interventions under the EU's Non-State Actors Programme have addressed gaps not covered by the bilateral programmes, included support for the monastic education system in hard to reach ethnic areas. Furthermore, an ECHO-funded project "Conflict Areas Support for Education" enabled more than 12,000 ethnic minority children to attend school in safe and protective environments in some of the most remote and conflict affected areas.

(I-215)

EU support has not yet achieved its objective of contributing to inclusive and

⁸² Shown in surveys, stakeholder interviews and classroom observations

equitable quality education at all levels of the national education system. Furthermore, linkages between education and labour market needs as foreseen in the MIP 2014-2020 have been weak so far.

The EU's approach of focusing its bilateral support mainly on primary education was rational and relevant given the tremendous needs in this sector. Any substantial reform of the national education system has to start at the primary level. However, assessed against its own ambitions, the EU has **not yet achieved its strategic objective of addressing the entire value chain of education.** This is mainly due to the delay of sector budget support which is foreseen in the MIP 2014-2020 but was only officially launched in March 2019. While the EU made some contribution to the strengthening of higher education through the global Erasmus+ programme and the regional SHARE project (EU Support to Higher Education in ASEAN Region), there were no mutually reinforcing linkages between the bilateral and global/regional level of support. Since 2015, 16 universities in Myanmar have participated in Erasmus+ capacity building projects and a small number of students (23) have completed Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees with European universities. SHARE aspires to the standardisation and harmonisation of higher education in ASEAN and specifically the creation of a regional credit transfer system similar to the intra-European Erasmus+, but no tangible results have been achieved yet. As the EU's main emphasis has been on primary education, a strong focus on the needs of the labour market was naturally lacking. Participants of Erasmus+ actions were able to improve their employment opportunities, but the effects are on a very small scale. The main reason why the EU was unable to achieve some of the objectives of the MIP 2014-2020 was the delay in launching the Education Sector Reform Contract. This budget support for education will address secondary education as well as TVET.

(I-212, I-213, I-214, I-216, I-223)

EU support emphasised and achieved cross-fertilisation between education and peacebuilding.

The support for education contributed to peacebuilding through the promotion of education provision in ethnic languages, mixed classroom-approaches with students from different ethnic and religious groups, joint teacher training and a focus on ethnic and non-formal education. UNICEF established education in emergencies (EiE) and peacebuilding as major pillars of its country strategy. Consequently, QBEP was implemented in ways that were **sensitive to the political and social context in conflict-affected areas.** This was particularly the case with regards to the conflict sensitive issue of language. The QBEP supported Learning Enhancement Programme has been specifically designed for the teaching of children for whom the Myanmar language is not their mother tongue. In addition, QBEP supported the development of reading and training materials in local languages. "Education Assistance to Children in Rakhine State" has united humanitarian aid and rehabilitation components. The programme's conflict sensitive and inclusive approach has won recognition from the local authorities, and the resulting strong relationship is a significant added-value.

(I-224)

Textbox 2: Case 1 – education

Case 1: Non-formal education as a second chance for out-of-school children

The challenge: According to Myanmar’s 2014 census, 20 percent of the country’s school age children are out of school. Many of these children and teenagers choose to work. Others are driven by poverty to help their families make ends meet. Child labour is widespread across Myanmar with some 1.2 million youth aged 5-17 currently working. The formal school system governed by the Ministry of Education does not provide access to education for young people who never attended school or left premature. Non-formal education is the only “second chance” for most working children and teenagers to complete primary school.

The significant change: In 2008-2009, the Government launched the Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) programme as a free continuing education programme to provide an education for children who do not have access to schools. However, the majority of support for NFPE historically came through Development Partners who funded non-state actors such as NGOs to provide NFPE in townships across Myanmar. The Government has had very little resources of its own to support this sub-sector. Important changes took place in 2016 when The Ministry of Education established the Department of Alternative Education and dedicated an increased budget allocation and more resources and teachers to non-formal education programmes. Furthermore, a new Non-formal Primary Education Equivalency Programme was included in the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2016-21. Tens of thousands of students have benefitted from non-formal education over the past decade.

EU’s role and added value: The Multi Donor Education Fund’s (MDEF) support to education, to which the EU contributed 37 per cent of the total funds through QBEP, pioneered donor investment in non-formal education through NGO partners. Overall, the Quality Basic Education Programme (QBEP), the second phase of the MDEF (2012-2016), increased access to education for more than 100,000 students through non-formal settings giving them a chance to re-enter the formal system. The provision of NFPE was supported in more than 80 townships, including at monastic schools. Approximately six NFPE centres are now opened in each township with support from QBEP. Furthermore, with QBEP support, the Ministry of Education offered intensive training courses exclusively for NFPE teachers. On smaller scale, the EU-funded project “Education Assistance to Children in Rakhine State” provided access to non-formal education for children in IDP camps and facilitated training to community teachers, so that they could run non-formal education classes. Both interventions facilitated the gradual increase of local and Ministry of Education partner involvement in NFPE resulting in a gradual shift in ownership from donors to national and local government stakeholders. Overall, the EU’s contribution went beyond its substantial financial share in QBEP and gained importance as one of the government’s closest partners on education. This mutually reinforcing combination of being a major donor and a trusted dialogue partner added particular value to the EU’s role.

Other contributions: At the time when the NFPE programme was launched and generally prior to 2012 external assistance to the education sector was limited and only the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and UNICEF had formal memoranda of understanding with the Ministry of Education. This explains the leading role the MDEF, implemented by UNICEF, in this field. Since 2012, other donors and several international NGOs, such as Save the Children, implementer of the multi-donor Myanmar Education

Consortium and several international NGOs and faith-based organisations have supported monastic and non-formal primary education, but the significant change outlined above is mainly attributable to QBEP as by far the largest programme in this sector. Apart from the EU, QBEP was funded by Australia, Denmark, Norway, the United Kingdom, and UNICEF's own funds.

4.3 EQ 3 Peacebuilding

EQ 3 – To what extent has EU support contributed to peacebuilding in Myanmar?

Overall findings:

- The EU's contribution to establishing and sustaining a nationwide ceasefire and an inclusive political dialogue was significant. Supporting behind-the-scenes “talks about talks” was particularly effective in preparing for negotiating the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in 2015.
- EU support through the multi-donor Joint Peace Fund (JPF) was particularly effective in contributing to an inclusive political dialogue. Inclusion comprised support to both government and ethnic armed organisations at the national and subnational levels, including both NCA signatories and non-signatories. Support also extended to civil society, political parties and the public more broadly; women and youth were also specifically targeted for further engagement and inclusion. Despite a growing awareness among beneficiaries of the peace process, finding ways for civil society and the broader public to participate in the peace process remains a challenge.
- EU support to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to prepare for return to their home communities has been effective, though actual rehabilitation and reintegration remain untested. Through informal mechanisms such as dialogue, peace education, and livelihoods support, many of the IDPs immediate needs have been met.
- EU-supported CSOs have been effective in strengthening citizen advocacy towards local authorities. There was not a commensurate level of support for duty bearing local authorities to respond to citizen advocacy. As such, EU support for CSOs may have resulted in expectations for change that cannot currently be met.

EU country strategy was aligned with Myanmar's priorities for advancing peace.

Both the Government of Myanmar and the EU sought to establish a nationwide ceasefire and maintain bilateral ceasefires, while also promoting an inclusive political dialogue to end ethnic conflict peacefully. More specifically, both made explicit commitments to strengthen state capacity and promote the rule of law, equitable distribution of resources, and reconciliation and national harmony. These priorities were evident from EU documents as early as the Country Strategy Paper in 2007 and remain clear in the current MIP 2014-2020. Myanmar's priorities for peace are similarly articulated in Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2030) and the Nay Pyi Taw Accord for Effective Development Cooperation (2013), among other strategy documents, senior government speeches, and press releases. The EU and the government are similarly aligned in promoting both the formal peace process, and also socio-economic development in conflict areas. For the Government, sustainable and equitable development were critical to promote peace and cement stability; for the EU, peace was a precondition for promoting development.

(I-311)

EU support effectively contributed to establishing and sustaining a nationwide ceasefire and an inclusive political dialogue. However, civil society and broader public participation in the peace process remains challenging.

EU support to establishing structures and processes to advance the peace process was significant. The EU-funded Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) – in the meantime renamed

National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) – **helped usher in the National Ceasefire Agreement, sustain bilateral ceasefire agreements**, and develop the Framework for Political Dialogue. Supporting hundreds of “*talks about talks*”, the MPC was effective in preparing the parties for formal negotiations. Technical and financial support from JPF enabled the holding of three rounds of the Union Peace Conference, further helping to advance political dialogue. JPF financial support helped establish the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Mechanism (established under the NCA) and 38 Liaison Offices of the Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs).

EU support was also significant in securing engagement of a broad range of key stakeholders in the national political dialogue; in this way, EU support contributed to the key national priority of making the political dialogue inclusive. The JPF, in particular, addressed the perceived imbalance of the MPC in favour of the government by providing financial and technical support to both NCA signatory and non-signatory EAOs to participate more effectively in these processes. As a result, EAOs report being better prepared and able to engage in negotiations with the government.

Through the JPF, the EU expanded its support to informal peacebuilding actors, particularly at the subnational level. This included support to civil society, political parties and the public more broadly; women and youth were also specifically targeted for further engagement and inclusion. Despite a growing awareness among beneficiaries of the peace process, **finding ways for civil society and the broader public to participate in the peace process remains a challenge**. Progress toward making the Joint Monitoring Committee more functional may provide such an opportunity for participation.

(I-312, I-313, I-321)

Picture 2: Injadone IDP Camp, Myitkyina



Picture 3: Garment Factory, Injadone IDP Camp, Myitkyina



EU support to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to prepare for return to their home communities has been effective and met immediate needs, but the longer term impact remains unknown.

Since IDPs have not yet relocated to their home communities, EU support focused on *preparation for return* and rehabilitation. As such, actual rehabilitation and reintegration remains untested. Nevertheless, EU support, which primarily targeted informal mechanisms to facilitate the return of IDPs, met many immediate IDP needs. These informal mechanisms included dialogue, peace education, and livelihoods support. While immediate needs were met, the longer-term impact of support efforts remains unknown. Peace education was effective, yet **finding entry points for citizen participation in the peace process was**

challenging. Despite initial success in livelihoods initiatives, some reported difficulties in bringing products to market and questioned the transferability of acquired skills. Challenges included competing against higher-quality goods, lack of opportunity outside IDP communities, and limited relevance of skills to target audiences. Women’s capacity building efforts were positive, though women’s engagement in follow-on activities was more limited. Although advocacy with local authorities was limited early in the programme, significant improvements were made in engaging local authorities after the mid-term review. Given ongoing conflict and hostilities, there was little focus on formal mechanisms to facilitate return/reintegration for either IDPs or refugees. The one area of exception was support to IDPs in acquiring National Registration Cards in both Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and government-controlled areas. (I-321, I-322)

EU support for CSOs was effective in promoting citizen advocacy with local authorities.

CSOs successfully conducted a wide range of awareness raising activities on the peace process, human rights, and social cohesion. This was particularly evident in CSO support for IDPs. CSOs were also effective in organising advocacy initiatives for citizens to seek redress for individual and community grievances. Such initiatives included letter writing campaigns, community group collaboration, and dialogues/meetings with local authorities, members of parliament and military officials. CSOs also supported social cohesion and interfaith/intercommunal dialogues, which included participation of key stakeholders. Though government officials, elected representatives and military personnel responded to citizens’ inquiries, few examples of action taken on their behalf could be identified. Recent efforts have also included support to peace awareness in non-affected areas, including by the JPF and the 2019 call for proposals of the European Strategy for a Strengthened Partnership with Civil Society in Myanmar. (I-313, I-321, I-322, I-413)

EU support for CSOs may have resulted in expectations for change that cannot currently be met.

While much of the EU’s programming promoted citizens claiming their rights, little attention was paid to supporting a commensurate response to the increased demand. Despite support for duty bearers being included in EU calls for proposals⁸³, only one award was provided to support local authorities in 2016. Since support to local authorities may not be included in future calls for proposals, **there is a danger that a primary focus on rights holders may create a demand for peace that cannot be met.** The risk is that the demands on local authorities to redress grievances will (if it has not already) outpace their capacity to act. There are also few mechanisms for individuals or communities to actively participate in the peace process and have their voices heard by decision makers outside local authorities. (I-313, I-321, I-322)

Textbox 3: Case 2 – peacebuilding

Case 2: Promoting a more inclusive peace process in Myanmar

The challenge: Given the complexity of issues and actors involved in the various conflicts across the country, advancing an inclusive peace process has been very challenging. While

⁸³ Call made under CSO/LA

the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) of 2015 was a historic and momentous step in the peace process, it only included some of the key parties to the conflicts. Many of the Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) did not benefit from support of the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) and felt unprepared to negotiate with the government. This made the task of establishing an inclusive national dialogue all the more difficult, particularly one that sought to provide opportunities for a diverse range of voices to be heard and counted.

The significant change: Since 2016, non-state actors have more effectively contributed to bringing peace to Myanmar, making the peace process more inclusive. EAOs who perceived support from the Myanmar Peace Centre as biased against them, now report being better able to engage in negotiations with the government. This progress is taking place both at the national and subnational levels. CSOs have also played an increasingly more prominent role in informal, community-level peacebuilding initiatives. CSOs have effectively raised awareness of, and represented diverse voices in, the peace process. Such voices and interests include those of women, youth, IDPs, and a range of minority groups.

EU's role and added value: The Joint Peace Fund (JPF), a multi-donor trust fund, was established in 2016 to “*respond to the needs of the Myanmar/Burmese peace process...with the broad participation of organisations in Myanmar/Burmese society*”, in order to “*achieve a final and lasting settlement of ethnic armed conflict in Myanmar/Burma*”. The JPF has been successful in supporting the peace process, both formal and informally. The JPF provided technical and financial support to the Union Peace Conferences, the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Mechanism and state/region peace dialogues. The JPF also supports CSO activities at the community level, with over 40 active grants as of March 2019. The EU played a critical role in establishing the JPF, remains its largest financial contributor, and is considered the “*leading force*” in the Fund. The EU remains the Fund's largest financial contributor, and has played a significant role in encouraging new members to join the Fund. The JPF, and in particular the EU, is also perceived as a trustworthy partner, particularly among ethnic minorities, due in part to its inclusive approach to promoting peace. The EU's contribution through the JPF is consistent with the 2014-2020 MIP, as well as the government's explicit goal of promoting an inclusive political dialogue to end ethnic conflict peacefully.

Other contributions: Other donors have also contributed to the JPF. With 11 donors acting together, the JPF enjoys widespread credibility and political gravitas, is able to take risks and innovate in ways that bilateral donors are unable to, and allows for information sharing, exchange and advocacy. The international community at large has welcomed Myanmar's transition from military to civilian rule and supported efforts to find peaceful resolution to the country's ongoing conflicts. As such, numerous external stakeholders have specifically contributed to peace initiatives in Myanmar. For example, the Australian government has focused support on “*the locally designed peace architecture; supporting social cohesion in ethnically and religiously divided communities; and flexible, track two peace dialogues between all parties to the conflict*”. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) focuses on dialogue, awareness and peacebuilding initiatives, including strengthening economic relationships between ethnic and religious groups and increasing women's engagement in local peacebuilding efforts. Others focus on IDPs, humanitarian aid in conflict-affected areas, and intercommunal dialogue. Together, these efforts complement and contribute to the formal peace process in Myanmar.

4.4 EQ 4 Governance

EQ 4 – To what extent has EU support contributed to Myanmar’s democratic transition?

Overall findings:

- EU support effectively contributed to Myanmar’s democratic transition at a time of great uncertainty and risk. This was particularly significant for the 2015 national elections, which many regarded as a bellwether for the larger transitions taking place in the country. EU support was effective in increasing participation, transparency, and accountability of the electoral process.
- EU support also bolstered a key pillar of democratic systems: civil society. With EU support, CSOs were better able to engage with national and local authorities in dialogue, oversight and policy making; evidence of the outcomes of advocacy efforts, however, was limited. EU support also increased civic engagement of marginalised groups, particularly women. There is also some evidence that civic engagement brought about greater participation of marginalised groups in political processes.
- The EU effectively contributed to strengthening the rule of law, primarily through access to justice programming. Critical elements of support included provision of legal aid, including to marginalised groups through the 12 Justice Centres and strengthening CSOs’ capacities to promote legal awareness and empowerment. A more modest focus on informal providers of justice⁸⁴ was also effective.
- Collectively, EU support has generated a significant demand for services and accountability. This is creating demands on duty bearers that cannot presently be met. Duty bearers have not benefited from EU support to any significant extent and in many cases are unable to respond and act on behalf of individuals or communities.
- The EU’s contribution to improving the accountability of the Myanmar Police Force (MPF) has been limited. Recent developments, however, suggests a slow but notable increase in interest by the MPF, parliament and CSOs in oversight matters.

The EU country strategy was aligned with Myanmar’s priorities for strengthening democratic processes and the rule of law.

Alignment with national priorities on democratic processes is evident in EU strategy documents, all of which support human rights, the electoral process, reform of democratic institutions and participation by the public, including the most vulnerable. Alignment with national priorities for the rule of law is also evident; these support formal and informal justice institutions, access to justice including for the most vulnerable, and increasing public confidence in the justice sector. The Government of Myanmar has made these national priorities explicit in a number of strategic documents, including the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan 2018-30, Myanmar Union Election Commission Strategic Plan 2014-2018, Nay Pyi Taw Accord for Effective Development Cooperation, and Judiciary strategic plans of 2015-2017 and 2018-2022, among others. The alignment of priorities is also reflected in the EU’s strategic focus on strengthening democratic processes and the rule of law as articulated in the MIP of 2014-2020. Specifically, the support was designed to increase participation, transparency and accountability of democratic processes, promote more

⁸⁴ Ward/Village Tract Administrators

credible, transparent and inclusive elections, and strengthen policy-making and the responsiveness of the public administration.

(I-411, I-421)

EU support was effective in increasing participation, transparency and accountability of the electoral process.

The EU's contribution to a credible, transparent and inclusive electoral process was positive. Support through STEP to Democracy, in particular, was highly relevant. As one of the few providers to continue electoral support beyond 2015, EU assistance to the 2017 by-elections allowed the Union Election Commission (UEC) to build on its successes of the national elections. The EU's **contribution to the transparency** of the electoral process through effective support to civil society and political party election observation was **particularly noteworthy**. CSO engagement with the UEC helped inform the decision of the UEC to invite election observers in 2015; political party engagement with the UEC resulted in an approved Code of Conduct of the 2015 elections. Support to hard-to-access areas and outreach to marginalised groups was also notable and encouraged greater inclusion in the electoral process. With support from the STEP II programme, the UEC is working to address those recommendations from the 2015 EU-EOM that fall within its remit. This includes, for example, those recommendations related to internal UEC procedures and by-laws, but not those related to constitutional reform.

(I-412, I-413, I-414)

The EU contributed to increasing civil society's engagement in dialogue, oversight and policy making.

Capacity building for CSOs, as well as networking amongst them, was effective. More specifically, CSOs demonstrated improved organisational structures, internal policies and financial management; opportunities for collaboration amongst CSOs was also notable. The contribution to reaching policy makers and government officials was strong, and included targeted research initiatives, organizing collaborative actions and voicing of demands. Stakeholders often recognised or responded to these advocacy efforts, though evidence of the outcomes of advocacy efforts is limited. A notable exception was advocacy on electoral reform in 2015, which resulted in the drafting of **regulations on election observation**. To build on this foundation, the EU formulated a new approach for a more robust engagement with CSOs in 2018: the European Strategy for a Strengthened Partnership with Civil Society in Myanmar. This Strategy aims to promote an enabling environment for civil society's participation in policy dialogue, policy-making and policy implementation processes. Support for parliamentary oversight of the budget process is promising; once long-term financing is secured, further planning and more robust outcomes can be expected.

(I-412, I-413, I-623)

EU support increased civic engagement of marginalised groups and to some extent political participation.

Programmes effectively reached marginalised groups in targeted areas and promoted increased civic engagement. This was particularly evident in support for political parties and on voter education, which reached remote areas in ethnic states. The extent to which women were reached was modest, though recent programming in preparation for the 2020 elections has improved efforts in this regard. Programming often used geographic targeting as a proxy

for reaching marginalised groups, which appeared to be an effective strategy. The SPACE (Supporting Participation, Accountability and Civil Society Empowerment) programme was successful in promoting civic engagement and accountability of local authorities, including in conflict-affected areas with minority groups. Anecdotal evidence suggests that awareness raising activities, including voter education, brought about greater participation of marginalised groups in political processes and voting.
(I-412, I-413, I-414)

The EU effectively contributed to strengthening the rule of law, primarily through access to justice programming.

The Justice Centres, as “facilitators” to the justice system, successfully **provided legal aid services to thousands who would otherwise be left outside** the legal system. The Centres, which in 2018 had already expanded to 12, most directly serve the “poorest of the poor,” and beneficiaries of the Centres services include ethnic and religious minorities. Improving access to justice has also been effective through the EU’s support to CSOs: with over 47 partners in the CSO network, more than 48,000 people in six regions and states have been reached on legal awareness and empowerment programmes. Innovative capacity building initiatives for CSOs has also been effective, and included CSOs representing marginalised groups and interests. EU support has also been strong in raising public awareness more broadly, through televised dramas and more recently through “Let’s Talk”, a high-profile awareness campaign to promote civic engagement in claiming rights and accessing the justice system.

Based on extensive research, institutional reform of the judiciary was de-emphasised in favour of a focus on rights holders at the community level. Further, the research surfaced that overwhelmingly, people identify the Ward/Village Tract Administrator as the primary actor for justice functions. Support for these community-based dispute resolution mechanisms, primarily with Ward/Village Tract Administrators, was effective.

(I-422, I-432)

Both democratic engagement and rule of law efforts have successfully strengthened the capacity of citizens to claim their rights and demand greater accountability.

Collectively, EU support has according to stakeholders generated a “*massive demand for services*”. CSOs have been very active in helping individuals and communities bring forth their demands to local officials, members of parliament, the formal and informal justice sector, and other relevant stakeholders, including the military. Legal aid services through the Justice Centres, dialogue sessions, stakeholder meetings, letter writing efforts and other similar initiatives have effectively given voice to rights holder demands. Such demands include improved services related to a wide range of issues, such land disputes, electoral reform, and local infrastructure projects, among many others.

(I-413, I-422, I-423)

The support for empowering civil society contributed to increased demands for greater accountability, which local authorities currently do not have the capacity to meet. There was only limited attention strengthening local authority capacities.

In many cases, duty bearers are unable to respond to the demands being made by an empowered civil society. Compared to support to CSOs, **duty bearers in the governance sector have not benefited from EU support to any significant extent.** Little attention

and funding have been targeted to support local authorities to “*bridge the gap*” with civil society. Though the civil society calls for proposals includes support for local authorities⁸⁵, past calls have only tangentially touched on local authorities; in the 2017 call for proposals, only one international NGO (VNG International) was funded to support local authorities. Support to initiatives such as the Justice Sector Coordination bodies, designed to help coordinate delivery of justice services, seem promising and may alleviate some of the demand on the system. More specifically, the Coordinating Body aims to improve justice services by ensuring more effective coordination among government agencies, international organisations and civil society groups. Convened for the first time in February 2019, it is too early to assess its impact.

(I-413, I-422, I-423)

Despite the limited contribution of the EU’s support to improving the accountability of the Myanmar Police Force (MPF), recent developments suggest a slow but notable increase in interest by the MPF, parliament and CSOs in oversight matters.

The EU’s contribution to improving accountability of the police force was been limited up to 2017. Early programming (2014-15) set the stage for the MPF, parliamentary and civil society/media engagement, but progress was difficult to sustain. After 2017, however, as relationships have been strengthened and trust built, there have been small but significant signals that the MPF, parliament and CSOs have a greater understanding of, and are more open to, oversight matters. As an example, both the MPF and parliament have participated in trainings on security sector governance, the fundamentals of external oversight and modernisation of the police force; yet, they have participated separately, unwilling to engage the other directly on these issues. CSOs have also demonstrated a keen interest in police accountability. While these may appear to be relatively insignificant, they do reflect progress toward greater engagement by all stakeholders.

(I-424)

Textbox 4: Case 3 – governance

Case 3: Increasing participation, transparency, and accountability in the electoral process through election monitoring.

The challenge: The 2015 elections were a critical step in Myanmar’s transition from military to civilian rule. These national and subnational elections were to be the first in which all the major parties were allowed to compete, including the previously banned National League of Democracy Party (NLD). With a total of 91 parties and over 300 independent candidates contesting over 1,100 seats, the task of administering credible and legitimate elections was daunting. Civil society organisations and political parties had little experience in, or exposure to, ensuring accountability in the electoral process; similarly, the Union Election Commission (UEC) had little trust or confidence in external oversight of the electoral process. Against such a backdrop, there was great risk that the 2015 elections would be perceived as illegitimate by the citizens of Myanmar, and undermine, rather than advance, the democratic process. With such a nascent and fragile peace process in place, a setback in the democratic transition could have set the country on a dangerous path toward even further conflict.

The significant change: Despite a weak relationship between CSOs and the UEC prior to the 2015 elections, exposure to best practice and exchange visits was helpful in

⁸⁵ Calls made under CSO/LA

facilitating dialogue between these stakeholders, which reportedly resulted in the UEC inviting a “*staggering*” 11,455 domestic election observers to the 2015 elections. UEC relations with political parties also improved with the help of EU support; as a result, parties succeeded in drafting and receiving UEC’s approval for a Code of Conduct for the 2015 elections. In the post-election period, the UEC adopted recommendations to improve the election observation framework that emerged from a dialogue with CSOs. Furthermore, support and technical assistance in the lead up to the 2017 by-elections resulted in three CSOs joining forces to successfully observe the elections and present their findings to the parliament. The UEC not only allowed civil society and political parties to provide much needed oversight of the electoral process, but also incorporated their input into improving the execution and framework for future elections.

EU’s role and added value: The EU’s contribution to the electoral process is reflected both in the breadth and depth of its support. Opening a fully-fledged delegation to Myanmar in 2013 reflected the EU’s overarching support for the democratic transition. Fielding election expert missions in 2012 and 2015 further demonstrated its interest in helping advance the democratisation process in the country. The EU also provided technical support to the electoral process by embedding an expert in the UEC in early 2013. Subsequently, for the 2015, elections, the EU contributed to the credibility and transparency of the electoral process through its support to the UEC, CSO and political party engagement on election observation and framework regulations. The EU provided logistical support, as well as assistance drafting accreditation procedures, which helped the UEC register so many election observers. EU technical assistance to political parties also provided key inputs in the drafting of the Code of Conduct prior to the 2015 elections.

Other contributions: A number of important contextual factors also contributed to the holding of credible and legitimate elections. The optimism in the lead up to the 2015 elections was palpable: Aung San Suu Kyi and her NLD party was to contest in the polls for the first time, the NCA was being finalised and the appetite for electoral reform was evident. The leadership of the UEC was reform-oriented and open to civic engagement in the electoral process. Civil society organisations were keen to play their role in supporting the process, and enjoyed the freedom to do so. These factors, among others, contributed to creating an environment in which credible and legitimate elections could be held.

4.5 EQ 5 Rural Development

EQ 5 – To what extent has EU support contributed to reducing rural poverty, including for displaced people and returnees?

Overall findings:

- EU support was well aligned with national priorities and policies, and contributed to improving the policy framework, but the engagement in increasing the Government's capacity to implement the policies and provide services was modest. Recent developments indicate the EU support will significantly increase its attention to enhancing Government's capacity, through blending and potentially, and more significantly, through sector budget support.
- EU support was well targeted at the poor and vulnerable groups, including people in conflict-affected areas. But in Northern Rakhine, the crisis significantly limited the impact and sustainability of the support provided.
- EU support enabled the provision of a number of services to a large number of rural people, such as access to finance for agriculture and livelihoods investments, inputs and capacity development for improving agricultural productivity and increasing agricultural diversity, social protection measures, and to a lesser extent rural infrastructure.
- Overall, a significant contribution was made to improving rural livelihoods with income increases and diversification, enhanced resilience to shocks and improved food/nutrition security.

EU support was well aligned to the national priorities for the rural development sector and reached people in the poor and hard to reach areas of Myanmar, and sensitive issues were also addressed.

The EU's rural development strategy outlined in the 2014-2020 MIP is well aligned with the priorities in the national development policy framework. The MIP contributes to all seven rural development related policy reform areas⁸⁶ in the Framework for Economic and Social Reforms for 2012-2015. Moreover, the MIP and the EU funded interventions contribute to the delivery of the impacts and outcomes of the Agricultural Development Strategy (ADS, 2018), namely: food and nutrition security, poverty reduction for the landless, increased agricultural productivity, increased farmer incomes, and enhanced market linkages, and to a somewhat lesser extent increasing government institutional capacity. Moreover, while the MIP predates the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan for 2018-30, the MIP and the supported interventions feed into 12 of the Plan's strategies⁸⁷, especially in relation to socio-

⁸⁶ 1) Increase farmers' access to credit and expand microfinance services; 2) increase extension services; 3) remove barriers throughout supply chain and promote demand-oriented market support mechanisms; 4) improve agricultural performance through improving rice productivity, seasonal and crop diversification, water management, protect farmers' rights and choices; 5) prepare reform strategy for agriculture, livestock, fisheries and implement recommendations; 6) support community-driven development projects ; 7) ensure sustainable development of forestry incl. Community forestry.

⁸⁷ 1.2: Promote equitable & conflict sensitive socio-economic development; 3.1: Create an enabling environment for diverse & productive economy through inclusive agriculture, aquaculture, polyculture; 3.2: Support job creation in industry & services, especially through developing SMEs; 3.5: Increase broad-based access to financial services & strengthen the financial system; 3.6: Build an infrastructure base that facilitates sustainable growth & economic diversification; 4.3: Expand an adaptive & systems based social safety net and extend social protection services; 4.4: Increase secure access to food that is safe & well-balanced; 4.5: Protect the rights & harness the productivity of all, incl. migrant workers; 5.1: Ensure a clean

economic development in conflict affected areas, agricultural productivity and diversification, job creation, access to finance, rural infrastructure, food security, and climate resilience.

Poverty rates are higher in conflict-affected areas and these areas are harder to reach for the Government and the private sector is less developed in these areas. **EU support deliberately targeted and reached people, including IDPs, in areas affected by conflict, thus contributing to filling a service-provision gap;** this was the case for PHASE IN in Rakhine, SIRP in Southeast Myanmar (Kayin and Mon), and LIFT in conflict affected uplands and Rakhine. LIFT's focus on conflict-affected areas will further increase in 2019-2023, with at least 50 per cent of its funding going to ethnic and conflict-affected areas. The presence of LIFT in the Dry Zone and Ayeyarwaddy Delta will gradually be reduced. However, there is a certain risk that this reduced presence in some cases will come at the expense of full impact and sustainability. EU support often contributed to improving dialogue and inter-community relations, and the sensitive land access issue was also addressed. LIFT and PHASE IN helped rural poor to secure their access forest resources through formal registration of community forest groups, LIFT trained communities on their land rights, and EU/FAO Policy Assistance Facility (FIRST) provided land policy advice to the Government.

(I-511, I-512, I-514)

EU support contributed to improving the policy framework, but did not contribute significantly to strengthening the Government's capacity to implement the policies and deliver services to the rural population.

Several policies were influenced and improved with EU support. LIFT's implementing partners actively engaged in policy support work, some of them substantially. The LIFT Fund Management Office also engaged in policy work when opportunities arose, but was neither designed nor resourced to do so in a systematic manner. LIFT and its implementing partners were able to influence and contribute to the development a number of policies, including the National Land Use Policy and LIFT supported development of a national rice fortification policy aimed at improving the general nutritional status. The policy-work of LIFT also resulted in changes in public budget allocations. EO/FAO FIRST provided significant process support to the formulation of the Multisector Nutrition Action Plan and the Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS), including the linking of ADS with the Nutrition Action Plan.

However, there was **little support to enhance the Government's capacity to implement the new policies or to provide services** to the rural population. Support for on-the-ground service delivery was mainly implemented by NGOs and international organisations. This was to a large extent due to the fact that donors prior to 2012 were unable to fund the Government due to the sanctions imposed, so development assistance was not designed to work directly with the Government. Hence, there was usually limited direct involvement of the Government in the implementation, although Government technical departments were involved in training communities on selected, usually technical, aspects, such as agronomy. Nonetheless, care was taken to ensure that the Government was informed and supportive

environment together with healthy, functioning ecosystems; 5.2: Increase climate change resilience, reduce exposure to disasters & shocks while protecting livelihoods, facilitate shift to low-carbon growth; 5.4: Provide affordable & reliable energy to populations and industries via an appropriate energy generation mix; 5.5: Improve land governance & sustainable management of resource-based industries ensuring natural resources dividend benefits all.

and that interventions aligned with government policies and priorities; and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI) is represented on the LIFT fund Management Board. Post-intervention sustainability is a challenge, given the generally modest involvement of Government in implementation.

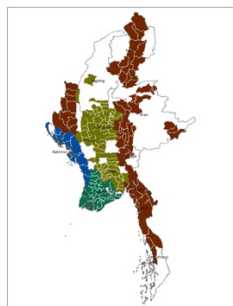
Nonetheless, **there has in recent years been a move towards increased direct support for Government**, with the blending of grants with loans provided to the Government for irrigation infrastructure and with LIFT providing direct funding for the Government for the implementation of maternal and child cash transfers in Chin State. The EU Delegation is currently planning sector budget support for MoALI with a nutrition focus, which would significantly enhance the direct involvement of the Government.
(I-512, I-513, I-521, I-531, I-533)

The EU made a substantial contribution to the provision of agricultural and rural services.

EU was one of the initiators behind LIFT and remains the second largest donor to LIFT, and as such, EU's contribution to LIFT was both instrumental and substantial. Improved access to finance with the aim to improve livelihoods was a particularly prominent area of service provision with LIFT reporting that 2.1 million people were served in 2017 alone; and other interventions also provided access to financing, albeit at a much lower scale (see case 4). Another central area of service delivery for LIFT and other projects, including PHASE IN, was support to improve agricultural productivity⁸⁸, through promoting improved agricultural practices and diversification⁸⁹, providing access to agricultural inputs, and to a lesser extent through investments in irrigation infrastructure. LIFT reported it thereby enabled 292,401 households to increase crop productivity in 2010-17. Private sector engagement was stimulated to increase access to quality inputs and services and develop viable agricultural value chains. Sustainable natural resources management, in particular community forestry and fisheries, was promoted as income opportunities for the poorest and the landless, mainly in Rakhine and the Uplands; and 80,435 households benefited from this as a result of LIFT support in 2010-2017. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation accompanied by hygiene education was also provided by different projects⁹⁰. LIFT reported that by end 2017, it had provided 165,844 households with access to safe drinking water services and 223,453 households to safe sanitation services.

(I-521, I-522, I-531, I-532, I-533)

Figure 15: District coverage of LIFT



Picture 4: Loan and saving group monthly meeting, Tin Gut Village



⁸⁸ In relation to paddy rice, winter crops, vegetables, livestock, aquaculture

⁸⁹ Training and extension services

⁹⁰ Including LIFT, PHASE IN, SIRP

Source: LIFT Annual Report (2017)

A significant contribution was made by EU to improving livelihoods of rural households and vulnerable people, with improved incomes, food/nutrition security and resilience. However, in Rakhine, the conflict and volatile situation were major impediments to achieving the intended results.

EU support enabled households to increase their incomes. LIFT reported it **enabled 806,241 households to increase their incomes** and 342,109 households to increase their income diversity in 2010-2017. This was achieved through the above-mentioned improvements in, and diversification of, agricultural productivity and natural resource management and enhanced access to finance. The provision off-farm alternative livelihoods also contributed to increased and diversified incomes. LIFT and PHASE IN supported households in better storage, post-harvest management and processing/value addition, and marketing. New income opportunities were created, such as service delivery along the value chain, an example is farmers engaging in production and selling of seeds. Sustainable natural resources management, such as community forestry and fisheries provided income opportunities for the poorest and the landless. Beneficiaries were supported in non-agricultural skills development for a range of vocations. Women, IDP youth, victims of human trafficking, and migrants were among the beneficiaries. LIFT reported that 79,888 people, including 33,719 women, trained by LIFT in 2010-2017 established enterprises or gained employment. Moreover, food security and nutrition was improved for many households. In 2010-17, LIFT reported it **enabled 492,435 households to obtain adequate food supplies** throughout the entire year, and 431,965 households to improve their diets. PHASE IN Phase 1 reported that 90% of the supported households were food-sufficient the entire year and 74% of children with acute malnutrition were cured. The more productive and diversified agriculture and homestead gardens and nutrition-specific activities contributed to enhancing the availability and diversity of food for domestic consumption and increasing the ability to purchase food items. From 2015 and onwards, LIFT increased its focus on nutrition and 12 grants were nutrition-specific or -sensitive. Specific attention was given to awareness creation and promotion of good feeding practices in relation to maternal and infant nutrition. Fortified rice was also distributed, and commercialisation of fortified rice was promoted with technical support for producers. Finally, social protection measures were promoted, such as piloting a pension scheme to inform the Government's universal pension scheme, grants for people with disabilities, and maternal and child cash transfers.

The resilience to weather and climate related shocks was also enhanced, as a result of the improved farming and natural resource management and income diversification. By end 2017, LIFT reported an estimated 3.7 mill people had improved their resilience as a result of LIFT.

However, while livelihoods impacts were achieved even in conflict-affected areas such as Northern Rakhine and Southeast Myanmar (Kayin and Mon), the volatile situation in Northern Rakhine meant that fewer households than intended could be reached. Moreover, **the mass displacement of Rohingyas meant that the livelihoods results achieved were to a large extent not sustained**, since many lost their agricultural lands, and restrictions on the movement of IDPs limited their ability to translate skills obtained into jobs or income generating activities.

(I-531, I-532, I-533)

Textbox 5: Case 4 – rural development

Case 4: Increasing access to rural finance for livelihoods improvements.

The challenge: Access to finance is essential to economic development and poverty alleviation; as it enables rural poor to invest in productive assets, such as agricultural inputs and implements. This is essential for increasing productivity and improving product quality, which in turn can enable farmers to increase their incomes. Access to finance can also help poor households to cope with shocks. While microfinance institutions (MFI) and commercial banks are present in Myanmar, access to finance remains a challenge for rural poor. Factors limiting the willingness and ability of MFIs to provide financing for rural poor include risks related to exchange rate fluctuations for the volatile Myanmar Kyat and Government caps on MFI interest rates. As a result, commercial banks have been reluctant towards introducing microfinance products for the rural poor, who often could only access expensive loans from middlemen.

The significant change: While challenges and limitations remain, the access to rural finance in Myanmar has improved with new MFIs and new loan products enabling rural households to obtain loans and invest in productive assets, such as purchasing farm inputs, materials for handicrafts, goods for trading, and purchasing or renting machinery. This has provided households opportunities to increase and improve their production, pursue new livelihoods opportunities and thereby increase their incomes.

EU's role and added value: Interventions funded by the EU, such as LIFT and PHASE IN, have provided access to finance including in remote and conflict-affected areas, through support for MFIs as well as through the establishment of village saving and loan associations. LIFT estimates it reached 2.1 million people in 16,211 villages through 65 MFIs funded by LIFT in 2017 alone. 89.5 per cent of these people were women and migrants. IDPs and people with disabilities were also provided with access to loans. LIFT partnered with the Currency Exchange Fund (TCX) and provided hedging for loans to 12 MFIs to remove risk from exchange rate fluctuations and Government caps on MFI interest rates; this enabled the MFIs to serve 340,000 additional clients in 2017. Twenty of the supported MFIs were financially self-sustaining by end 2017. USD 75m provided by LIFT under its Financial Inclusion programme leveraged an additional USD 173m of private sector co-financing. Moreover, an agricultural hire purchase programme partnership with Yoma Bank and agro-equipment dealers enabled an estimated 100,000 smallholders to rent machinery and reduce production costs and increase their gross margin. Overall, the increased access to finance has reportedly enabled people to pursue economic opportunities, build assets, generate employment, send their children to school, and improved the ability to manage risk and absorb shocks. As a founder of LIFT and the second-largest donor to LIFT, the EU contribution to the results of LIFT is significant.

Other contributions: Other donors have also financed LIFT, DFID is the largest donor to LIFT, as well as other microfinance interventions. Commercial banks and MFIs are also providing financial services without donor support, although the terms are at times less favourable. The challenges with the Government caps on interest rates and exchange rate fluctuations remain.

4.6 EQ 6 Instruments and Modalities

EQ 6 – To what extent have the various instruments and modalities employed by the EU been appropriate for efficient aid delivery in Myanmar?

Overall findings:

- The choice of aid modalities was appropriate. The selection of specific aid channels was mainly driven by the country context, according to what was feasible at a specific point in time. At the same time, all interventions were subject to comprehensive, rigorous and continuous risk assessments.
- The use of flexible procedures for crisis enabled the EU to respond effectively to crisis and conflict situations and facilitated procurement where there are few qualified services providers and normal procurement thus would have been difficult.
- The management of EU support was generally satisfactory, but with differences between individual interventions. Interventions across all sectors faced implementation delays, in some cases severe. Implementation was often negatively affected and delayed by challenges outside the control of the EU, but in some cases also the result of weak project management structures.
- The monitoring of projects was often insufficient, with LIFT being a notable exception. The establishment of the EU Delegation resulted in improvements in the monitoring and evaluation of interventions from the EU's side, but there were still weaknesses in the monitoring carried out by implementing partners.
- EU visibility in education, governance, peacebuilding and rural development increased during the evaluation period. Overall, the EU is perceived as one of the most visible external actors in Myanmar.

The choice of aid modalities was reasonable, reflecting what was feasible at a given time. At the same time all interventions, including projects, trust funds and sector budget support were subject to comprehensive, rigorous and continuous risk assessments.

The selection of specific aid channels and modalities was often driven by circumstances rather than being based on a thorough application of clear criteria. The political context, and its evolution, were key elements in guiding – and limiting – the choice of aid modalities. The sanctions on the military regime initially limited the choice of aid channels and modalities. The beginning of far-reaching reforms in 2011-2012 and, particularly the elections in 2015, opened a window of opportunity for multi-level and multi-sector assistance that the EU immediately seized in a flexible way. This flexibility was characterised by an **appropriate combination of support** channelled through bilateral, regional and global programmes. However, ongoing human rights abuses, particularly since August 2017, have again restricted the choice of modalities, which prevented the introduction of general budget support in the form of a state building contract. The alternative choice of sector budget support, the Education Sector Reform Contract, was developed in a process of thorough and comprehensive deliberation involving EU stakeholders, EU Member States and the Government, which built on lessons learnt of previous support to education. The 2011-2013 and 2014-2020 MIPs and interventions across all sectors contained detailed risk assessments focusing mainly on the uncertainty of the political situation and the peace process, the risk of natural disasters occurring, and risks related to human resources and capacity constraints.

At the level of programmes and projects comprehensive risk mitigation strategies or contingency plans were developed and applied.

(I-611, I-612, I-613)

The use of crisis declaration provisions enabled the EU to respond effectively to crisis and conflict situations – and facilitated procurement where there are few qualified services providers and normal procurement thus would have been difficult.

Since 2012, the EU has applied the flexible procedures under the crisis declaration for interventions to contract directly with implementing partners without any need for calls for proposals. In 2014, the European Commission extended the crisis declaration to all contracts supporting peace and state-building and renewed it each year⁹¹. In 2018, the European Court of Auditors⁹² found that the removal of the requirement for calls for proposals reduced the transparency of the selection procedure and risked having an adverse effect on the cost-effectiveness of projects goals in Myanmar. However, according to evidence gathered by this evaluation, the Commission resorted to the use of the crisis declaration provisions on a limited and justified number of occasions. There is also no conclusive evidence that grants awarded through calls for proposals were more cost-effective than grants awarded under flexible procedures.

(I-614)

The introduction of blending has been challenging in Myanmar due to a small number of potential partners as well as delays and cancellations.

Blending was introduced in the EU's cooperation with Myanmar in mid-2016 with four infrastructure projects under the Asian Investment Facility (AIF). Implementation has started for some, but not all of these projects. Some blending operations have faced major delays, others have been cancelled due to lack of approval from the Government or the Parliament. Major challenges for the use of blending in Myanmar include low Government capacity and only few European financing institutions present in Myanmar; in response to the latter, the EU is now also undertaking blending with the Asian Development Bank. The EU **grant component of blending operations adds significant value**, since the Government upholds the principle that no more than five per cent of a loan can be used for programme management and technical assistance, which is a challenge with the significant capacity constraints and support needs in Myanmar. The grant component from the EU thus enables more substantial technical assistance, which is conducive for successful implementation and sustainability of loan projects. Thus, blending could potentially provide an important value added to the EU support in the near future.

(I-615)

While the management of EU support was generally satisfactory, there were significant differences between individual interventions.

The "Support to Reform of the Myanmar Police Force" project was an efficiently run intervention, as it allowed for flexibility in addressing emerging needs. Similarly, the horizontal management arrangement of SPACE worked effectively and efficiently. UNICEF's standing as a trusted stakeholder in Myanmar was a decisive factor for QBEP's effective responses to national needs. Generally, the trust fund was sufficiently flexible to

⁹¹ The current crisis declaration only covers specific states and regions

⁹² European Court of Auditors (2018). *EU assistance to Myanmar/Burma*, special report no 4

respond effectively to the multiple agendas and emerging issues in the sector. LIFT has proven a well-functioning and predictable grant-making mechanism, but LIFT has to a large extent functioned as a cluster of projects rather than as a programme, and as a result LIFT has thus been less effective as a knowledge broker and in influencing policy. The JPF faced serious challenges in its early years, including working procedures that limited accountability, inadequate coordination internally and externally, grant making processes that did not maximise efficiency, as well as insufficient staffing. Many of these initial challenges have since been effectively addressed. Donor coordination related to Support to the Myanmar Peace Centre was described as “*chaotic*” and “*insufficient*” and producing few results. PHASE IN and SIRP were implemented by consortia of NGO partners, both could be characterised as an “*arranged marriage*” by the EU and both faced coordination challenges between the partners. (I-623)

Implementation was delayed in all sectors, mainly due to challenges and deficiencies outside the control of the EU and the implementing partners. However, in several cases weak project management structures and inappropriate approaches to monitoring negatively affected implementation.

Interventions across all sectors faced delays in the implementation process, which were severe in some cases. Budget spending was usually behind target. The unpredictability of the political context, the security situation in parts of the country⁹³ and logistical challenges due to difficulties in accessing projects sites due to severe weather conditions, conflict and poor road access, were the most important reasons for the delays. In the case of the JPF, long delays in decision-making processes regarding grant applications also affected the timeliness of implementation. Delays experienced by trust funds were largely beyond the control of the EU, which committed and disbursed funds quickly to the trust funds, but implementation was affected by delays and slow budget absorption for programme activities. Intervention **monitoring was often insufficient**, especially at the outcome and impact levels. Nonetheless, LIFT has made concerted efforts to establish a comprehensive monitoring system for assessing its outcomes and impacts. The establishment of the EU Delegation resulted in improvements in the monitoring and evaluation of interventions from the EU’s side, but there were still weaknesses in the monitoring carried out by implementing partners. (I-621, I-622, I-623)

EU visibility was in general good, with the exception of the early phase of QBEP and STEP to Democracy.

Visibility was in general achieved through the regular and abundant use of logos, banners and other visual references to the EU. However, visibility should be seen and assessed in a broader context of voice, advocacy and leverage. According to Government and other non-EU stakeholder interviewees, the EU scores highly in this dimension of visibility. Overall, EU visibility increased during the evaluation period and today the EU is considered as **one of the most visible external actors** in education, governance, peace building and rural development.

(I-624)

⁹³ Including Rakhine and Southeast Myanmar

4.7 EQ 7 Cross-cutting issues

EQ 7 – To what extent has the EU’s cooperation with Myanmar adequately integrated and addressed cross-cutting concerns?

Overall findings:

- Interventions throughout the bilateral cooperation programme were strongly committed to human rights and gender equality. However, the MIPs did not contain explicit gender targets and a budget for gender actions, and the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP II)⁹⁴ was of limited utility for measuring the quality and impact of women’s empowerment.
- Overall, tangible results towards greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the empowerment of women and increased gender equality were achieved only to a limited extent.
- EU supported interventions made substantial contributions to policy and legislative reforms, which improved the governance approaches to human rights and gender to some extent. However, final policy reforms and frameworks did not always live up to EU expectations as the “enabling architecture” for human rights and gender is still weak in Myanmar.
- EU support engaged in environment and climate change mainly through thematic instruments, but rural development bilateral programmes also contributed to enhancing climate resilience. Environmental issues from a rights and conflict/peace perspective were addressed in the peacebuilding and governance sectors, but environmental education was not addressed in the education sector. Overall, the mainstreaming of environment and climate was not pursued systematically, and opportunities were not fully capitalised upon.

There was a strong declaratory commitment to human rights and gender equality throughout the bilateral cooperation programme. Most interventions included the promotion of human rights and gender as key objectives.

Gender was mainstreamed into the design of interventions and was a focus of work plans throughout the bilateral cooperation programme. However, **gender approaches have not systematically and rigorously been implemented** in practice which is at least partly related to the fact that there have neither been specific targets nor a budget for gender actions under the MIPs. In the case of LIFT, the initial absence of a gender implementation plan led to the drafting of a new LIFT Gender Strategy in 2016 to upscale women’s empowerment and gender equality. The LIFT Gender Strategy is aligned with the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2013-2022). Such explicit alignment was not found in other interventions. As elsewhere, in Myanmar the EU’s second Gender Action Plan (GAP II) has gained importance as the overarching framework for promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment in the EU’s external relations. However, its utility as a tool was constrained by the fact that GAP II is not yet suitable for assessing the quality, effectiveness and impact of gender-related actions. While monitoring plays an essential role in ensuring implementation, the schematic “tick-box nature” of the reporting assigns more

⁹⁴ European Commission; High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2015), Joint Staff Working Document. Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020. SWD(2015) 182 Final

importance to the output level, such as the number of activities or references to gender equality and women's empowerment, than to the quality of the outputs and their impact. Reporting the number of “*number of actions formulated using gender analysis*”, as EU Delegations are required to do, does not provide information on whether there has been a change in attitudes and gender improvements.⁹⁵

There are no references to the rights-based approach methodology in programming documents, but **interventions have been consistent with rights-based approach principles**. Particularly with regards to human rights, STEP to Democracy contributed to a basic understanding of human rights and participatory reform debates; and LIFT reduced the vulnerability of migrants to trafficking and exploitation. Overall, achievement beyond the output level and **concrete advances** towards greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the empowerment of women and increased gender equality **appear limited**.

(I-711, I-712)

Tangible policy reform results were achieved. Major interventions such as QBEP and LIFT contributed to government strategies and reform processes, which improved the policy frameworks for human rights protection and gender equality.

QBEP and LIFT supported the drafting of national legislation addressing key equality and rights issues, such as the Basic Education Law, the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP), the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women, and the Prevention and Protection of Violence Against Women Law respectively. LIFT also lobbied for a gender lens in the National Land Use Policy. Political and sector policy dialogue kept equality issues high on the agenda, in particular related to human rights, gender and ethnic diversity. The EU advocated mixed ethnic schools and equal access to education, i.e. no discrimination in ensuring education to all communities, irrespective of religion, ethnicity, race, gender or citizenship status. However, finalised policy frameworks sometimes lag behind initial EU expectations. An example of this is the final version of NESP, which unlike earlier drafts lacks strong provisions on gender equality.

(I-711, I-722, I-713)

Environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation were in particular considered in the rural development sector but did seemingly not receive attention in the education sector – opportunities to mainstream environment and climate change for enhanced impact and sustainability were not fully capitalised upon.

Environmental concerns and climate change adaptation and resilience were mainly addressed in the rural development sector, but also in the peacebuilding and governance sector interventions. There is no indication of these issues figuring in the education interventions; **environmental education was not significantly or systematically pursued**. JPF included land and natural resource issues in its peace dialogues, and environmental rights were addressed under the “Interreligious Respect and Reconciliation through Civil Society Action in Myanmar” intervention. In the governance sector, natural resource management and revenue sharing were addressed under STEP to Democracy, and SPACE promoted through CSO grants advocacy on natural resource management, environmental protection, and

⁹⁵ GAP II Annual Implementation Report 2017 only 47 (18.4%) out of 255 EU-supported actions in Myanmar were confirmed to have used a gender analysis. See European Commission (2018). Joint staff working document. EU Gender Action Plan II, SWD(2018) 451 final, p. 58, annex 2, figure 14

environmental and land rights. At the project level, LIFT and PHASE IN engaged in a) enhancing **resilience to the impacts of climate change and environmental hazards** through climate smart agriculture and flood protection; b) sustainable natural resource management⁹⁶; and c) to a lesser extent through promotion of environmental sanitation and solid waste management. LIFT also supported the development of village disaster preparedness, and diversification into non-agricultural incomes. By end 2017, an estimated 3.7 mill people had improved their resilience as a result of LIFT. However, LIFT has no procedures or tools in place for mainstreaming environment and climate change in LIFT funded projects, despite the importance for rural development and agriculture. SIRP's infrastructure was not fully adapted to climate change and the village books did not address climate change vulnerability, but improved sanitation was promoted. Forest governance (FLEGT), biodiversity conservation, and climate change adaptation (MCCA) were specifically addressed by EU through thematic funding. Overall, **environment and climate change were mainly addressed through thematic programmes and less so through bilateral funding** for Myanmar, and there appears not to have been any links or cross-fertilisation between thematic support for mainstreaming-specific programmes and the bilateral support for Myanmar.
(I-721, I-722, I-132, I-531)

⁹⁶ Including community forestry, watershed management, and sustainable agricultural practices

4.8 EQ 8 Synergies, Coordination and Complementarity

EQ 8 – To what extent did EU bilateral development cooperation achieve synergies with the support provided by EU Member States and other development partners?

Overall findings:

- The EU made considerable efforts to improve donor coordination and cooperation and did contribute to some improvements, but overall sector coordination remained challenging. While the 2014-2016 joint programming led to improved division of labour and information sharing, it did not lead to joint actions and was abandoned after 2016 due to limited interest from EU Member States. Overall, the EU played a significant role vis-à-vis the improvements made in terms of donor- and sector coordination.
- The multi-donor trust funds MDEF/QBEP, JPF and LIFT were important mechanisms for donor coordination and created synergy between the support of donors in a context where it was otherwise difficult to achieve synergies between interventions. The EU played a central role in the establishment and further development of the trust funds.
- Outside the trust funds, the coordination and cooperation between interventions funded by the EU and other donors was challenging due to a volatile and sensitive context, which made project implementation fluid and caused implementing partners to be cautious about sharing information.

The EU Delegation engaged proactively and contributed significantly to the improvements achieved in sector coordination, but coordination remained challenging.

Donor coordination was a major challenge at the beginning of the period under evaluation, due to a dramatic and rapid increase in official development assistance (ODA) and the number of development partners, a government that had limited ODA experience and coordination capacity, and insufficient coordination structures. Coordination improved over time with the establishment of formal coordination structures in response to the 2013 Nay Pyi Taw Accord. However, while some sector working groups, such as the education sector working group, works well, others do not, such as the agriculture and rural development working group, and **aid fragmentation remains an issue**. The fact that the Government is in Nay Pyi Taw, whereas most development partners are based in Yangon, is a major impediment for Government-donor coordination. In this context, the multi-donor trust funds played an important role in relation to donor coordination and dialogue with line ministries. The EU contributed to this by **financing measures to support the Government and donors in improving coordination**, such as the mohinga.info aid management information systems, technical advisors on aid effectiveness, capacity development for the Government⁹⁷, and the Development Partners Working Committee secretariat. The EU assisted new donors coming into the country after 2012 by informing them about the context. The EU participated proactively in donor coordination, through the participation in overall and sector level working groups, through participating proactively in multi-donor

⁹⁷ Including support for the Development Assistance Coordination Unit

trust fund boards⁹⁸, and through leading the EU joint programming and regular meetings with EU Member States. The EU co-chaired on a rotational basis trust fund boards and some working groups.
(I-811, I-812, I-813)

The joint programming resulted in information sharing and joint analysis and to a lesser extent a division of labour – but not in joint implementation or enhanced use of EU Member State capacities.

The 2014-2016 joint programme for EU and EU Member States promoted better coordination of EU and EU Member States in line with the donor commitments under the Nay Pyi Taw Accord. The joint programming produced some tangible benefits: improved information sharing and joint analysis by EU and EU Member States; shared prioritisation and to some extent a sectoral division of labour; and joint messages on gender, civil society and human rights. The joint programming thus promoted collective influence and EU being more visible as a coherent actor, improved coordination and reduced duplication. However, joint interventions other than support to multi-donor trust funds were rare. Furthermore, the **joint programming did not contribute significantly to reducing aid fragmentation**, with EU Member States not fully adhering to the agreed division of labour and an average of nine EU development partners engaged in each sector. Most EU development partners had their own bilateral strategy for Myanmar and did not use the joint programme as a central reference in their policy dialogue with the Government. It was decided **not to develop a joint programme for 2017-2020** since some EU Member States preferred having their own bilateral programming. Similarly, the EU Member States did not show significant interest in engaging in a joint approach to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Nonetheless, the EU and EU Member States continue to cooperate on joint analysis and messaging vis-à-vis peacebuilding, gender, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and the role of civil society⁹⁹.

(I-811)

Synergies between the EU and other development partners were mainly achieved through cooperation in the multi-donor trust funds, whereas the volatile context was not conducive for effective coordination and cooperation at the interventions level – where support was fragmented and sometimes overlapping or parallel.

The multi-donor trust funds enabled donors to join forces, achieve economy of scale, and coordinate their support and engage in joint messaging and dialogue with line ministries, such as the successful EU-UK cooperation to enhance the political profile of nutrition. The existence of these largely one-stop mechanisms at sector level also contributed to ensuring that donors did not duplicate efforts or promote contradictory approaches. The trust funds also provided support to the sector working groups. Overall, the donors to the trust funds were well coordinated and collaborated well. **The trust funds contributed to streamlined interventions and policy coherence**, although donor coordination in the relatively young JPF was insufficient, and MDEF/QBEP donors were not sufficiently involved in discussions of strategic and sensitive issues for MDEF. The EU played a proactive central role in the

⁹⁸ MDEF, JPF, LIFT

⁹⁹ Country Assessment Myanmar, European Union, 23 April 2019

establishment of the trust funds as well as in their governance/steering and further development, as well as being a major donor providing a significant proportion of their funding. However, outside the trust funds the **coordination and cooperation between interventions funded by the EU and other donors was challenging due to a volatile and sensitive context**, which made project implementation fluid and caused implementing partners to be cautious about sharing information. Overall, there are only few examples of cooperation and synergies between interventions. Nonetheless, implementing partners benefited from synergies between their projects funded by the EU and by other donors by streamlining and pooling staffing, procurement and approaches to community development. (I-813, I-814)

5. Conclusions

The conclusions cut across the evaluation questions. The address four key areas: strategy and approach, results, cross-cutting issues, and partnership. Table 7 below provides an overview of the conclusions and the evaluation questions upon which they are based, whereas table 8 shows how the conclusions respond to the standard evaluation criteria applied for EU strategic evaluations.

Table 7: Links between conclusions and EQs

Cluster	Conclusion		Evaluation question								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Strategy and approach	C1	The EU strategy evolved with the changing context and was broadened in response to the democratic transition and peace process	√								
	C2	The choice of focal sectors was appropriate and relevant		√	√	√	√				
	C3	The EU pursued a comprehensive approach to supporting peace in Myanmar	√	√	√	√	√	√			
	C4	The EU's programmatic support was flexible, adaptable and responded to both emerging opportunities and crises	√	√	√	√	√	√			
Results	C5	Significant outcomes and impacts were achieved		√	√	√	√				
	C6	Achieving sustainability was a challenge across the four focal sectors in the volatile context and with the generally low level of direct involvement of local authorities	√	√	√	√	√	√			
Cross-cutting and multi-sectoral issues	C7	Mainstreaming of cross-cutting and multi-sectoral issues was uneven					√	√	√		
Partnership	C8	Coordination and the achievement of synergies within the EU support was generally effective	√								
	C9	The EU made concerted efforts to improve coordination, yet coordination and collaboration with other development partners proved difficult							√		√

Table 8: Links between conclusions and EQs

Cluster	Conclusion		Evaluation criterion									
			OECD/DAC criterion					EU criterion				
			Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Impact	Sustainability	Coherence	Added value	3Cs	Cross-cutting	Visibility
Strategy and approach	C1	The EU strategy evolved with the changing context and was broadened in response to the democratic transition and peace process	√									
	C2	The choice of focal sectors was appropriate and relevant	√					√	√			

	C3	The EU pursued a comprehensive approach to supporting peace in Myanmar			√			√	√			
	C4	The EU's programmatic support was flexible, adaptable and responded to both emerging opportunities and crises	√		√			√	√			
Results	C5	Significant outcomes and impacts were achieved		√		√			√			
	C6	Achieving sustainability was a challenge across the four focal sectors in the volatile context and with the generally low level of direct involvement of local authorities		√			√					
Cross-cutting and multi-sectoral issues	C7	Mainstreaming of cross-cutting and multi-sectoral issues was uneven			√						√	
Partner-ship	C8	Coordination and the achievement of synergies within the EU support was generally effective						√		√		
	C9	The EU made concerted efforts to improve coordination, yet coordination and collaboration with other development partners proved difficult			√				√	√		√

5.1 Conclusions – strategy and approach

Conclusion 1: The EU strategy evolved with the changing context and was broadened in response to the democratic transition and peace process. New focal sectors were introduced, and the level of support was significantly increased.

Myanmar has undergone significant change in the last decade. EU support has evolved in response to these changes and capitalised on new opportunities to engage in the democratisation and peace processes and the lifting of the sanctions on the country. Before the sanctions were lifted, the EU country programme focused on the education and health sectors, while support related to peacebuilding, governance and rural development was provided through thematic and regional instruments. After the lifting of the sanctions, the bilateral programme was increased five-fold and support to peacebuilding, governance and rural development was added to the bilateral country programme¹⁰⁰. This **enabled a more comprehensive engagement** in these sectors. Trade-related assistance was also introduced. The EU strategy was well-aligned with government development policies and sector policies for the focal sectors.

Based on: EQ1

¹⁰⁰ At the same time, the EU left the health sector as a result of labour division under the joint programming with EU Member States

Conclusion 2: The choice of focal sectors was appropriate and relevant. The four sectors - education, peacebuilding, governance, and rural development – were mutually reinforcing.

Peace was a priority for the Government and an overarching theme for the EU's engagement. Lasting peace is a precondition for long-term economic development, poverty alleviation, and the democratic transition, as it creates the stable conditions required for investment in economic activities and job creation, as well as political participation and protection of human rights. At the same time, democratic participation, rule of law, and rural economic opportunities are essential for achieving peace, as this addresses important root causes of conflict. Education reinforces these sectors by increasing knowledge and capacities to engage in the democratic process and new livelihoods opportunities, as well as promoting social and ethnic inclusion. The decision to engage in four sectors was strategic in that **these sectors were central to Myanmar's socio-economic development and state-building, and for reinforcing the peace-process**. Given the primacy of peace to Myanmar's overall development, the link between peace and other sectors, and the Government's prioritisation of the peace process, **peace could not have been merely addressed as a sub-set of the governance sector**. While it is EU standard policy to engage in no more than three sectors, the choice to engage in four sectors in Myanmar was further justified by the large size of the investment¹⁰¹. The limited capacity of actors within the sectors to absorb the sudden influx of large volumes of development assistance that came with the opening up of the country was also important in this regard.

Based on: EQ2, EQ3, EQ4, EQ5

Conclusion 3: The EU pursued a comprehensive approach to supporting peace in Myanmar. Peace was addressed across the four sectors, and interventions were in general conflict-sensitive although this was not always approached in a formalised and systematic manner. Flexible procedures facilitated engagement in conflict-affected areas, and efforts were made to address protracted crisis by bridging the gap between the humanitarian response and development assistance, although this is not fully institutionalised yet.

EU support to peacebuilding in Myanmar was comprehensive. The EU recognised the primacy of peace by supporting it as a specific focal sector, with support for both **formal processes and informal peace initiatives**. The latter strategy of strengthening support for informal peacebuilding, particularly through the Joint Peace Fund (JPF), was critical at a time when the formal peace process was stalled. At the same time, **important aspects of peacebuilding were also addressed in the other sectors**. Examples of this include support for multilingual (mother tongue, Myanmar and English) and mother tongue-based education for ethnic groups, the promotion of irrigation cooperation involving both Rakhine and Rohingyas, the support for land policy development, and the support for the election processes and the rule of law. There were also strong links between peacebuilding and rural development in interventions funded under the Aid to Uprooted People thematic programme. Democratic inclusion, the rule of law, equitable and inclusive access

¹⁰¹ Myanmar has one of the EU's largest country programmes

to education, livelihoods opportunities and access to land and natural resources are important building blocks for lasting peace. At the same time, lasting peace is fundamental for the democratic transition in Myanmar. Examples of EU funded interventions that were conflict sensitive and aligned with the ‘do no harm’ principle were found in all four sectors, though varied in the extent to which approaches were formal, structured or systematic. The EU’s support was also consistent with EU and OECD guidelines on engaging in fragile and conflict states, even if not explicitly referenced¹⁰².

Concerted efforts to bridge the gap between humanitarian assistance and longer-term development assistance **helped addressing protracted crises**, although more work is required in terms of implementing the new humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach in programming. In response to this challenge, a “Nexus Response Mechanism” contract was recently signed with UNOPS (December 2019). As mentioned in conclusion 1, the use of flexible procedures and an adaptable approach to the geographic focus of programming was conducive to being responsive to dynamic conflicts and developments in the peace process. The flexible instruments were also useful for engaging in conflict-affected areas where normal contracting and procurement procedures were difficult to apply due to a lack of service-providers or due to a need for swift action. Furthermore, while there was an overall focus on engaging in conflict-affected areas¹⁰³, there was also a substantial engagement in non-affected areas¹⁰⁴. Peacebuilding initiatives, such as awareness raising on the issues of peace, national reconciliation and social cohesion, focused largely on conflict areas; but raising awareness of the peace process in non-affected areas is also important for the peace process.

Based on: EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4, EQ5, EQ6

Conclusion 4: The EU’s programmatic support was flexible, adaptable and responded to both emerging opportunities and crises. The mix of instruments and modalities allowed for both a quick and a more comprehensive engagement with national systems as the context matured.

The support provided by the EU was generally characterised by a high degree of flexibility and responsiveness both to emerging opportunities in the peace and democratisation processes as well as to crises, such as conflict and cyclones. The use of **flexible procedures facilitated this responsiveness**, especially in early years and in conflict-affected areas, where normal procurement procedures would have been difficult and time-consuming. Similarly, the flexibility in geographic focus was conducive for responsiveness vis-à-vis emerging issues.

The initial use of **thematic and regional instruments enabled the EU to engage quickly** and capitalise on the emerging window of opportunity as the country opened up. These instruments also yielded important lessons and financed the establishment of

¹⁰² Based on the EU Staff Handbook on Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility and the OECD’s principles for international engagement in fragile states, including: adhering to the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness; applying tools and approaches to all programme sectors; recognising the links between political, security and development objectives as done with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus; and applying a mix of financial instruments suitable for fragile states.

¹⁰³ For example in Kachin, Rakhine, and Southeast Myanmar

¹⁰⁴ For example the Ayeyarwaddy Delta, and the Dry Zone

structures, such as LIFT, thereby providing a foundation upon which the later bilateral support was built. An EU Delegation was opened in Myanmar in 2013, which enhanced the presence of the EU and the dialogue with the new civilian government.

Engagement in the four focal sectors gradually broadened as the context matured.

Initially, interventions were implemented primarily by international organisations¹⁰⁵, but engagement with local CSOs increased over time, and LIFT engaged significantly with Myanmar's private sector, especially within rural finance. The engagement of the Government in the interventions also increased, mainly in relation to the education sector, and policy and institutional support at the central level. With the recent introduction of blending and education sector budget support and the planned agriculture and nutrition budget support, Government will have a more direct and leading role in the implementation of EU funded support. The EU funded interventions were well-aligned with government policies in the four focal sectors and the EU was proactively supporting the development of better overall and sector policy frameworks.

Based on: EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4, EQ5, EQ6

5.2 Conclusions – results

Conclusion 5: Significant results were achieved. Education access and quality were improved, livelihoods were improved and made more resilient to external shocks, a substantial contribution was made to the peace process, election participation and transparency was enhanced, and access to justice was improved. However, some intended results were not achieved, often due to disruption caused by conflict and the overall deterioration of Human rights situation.

The EU support contributed to **tangible impacts and improvements**. The quality of, and access to, primary education was improved with better governance, new education materials, child-centred teaching methods, safe learning environments, and increased enrolment and completion of primary schools¹⁰⁶ for both girls and boys. Primary school enrolment increased in QBEP-supported townships by 3.35 per cent (against the national average increase of 1.52 per cent), and completion rates improved by 1.6 per cent.

Rural livelihoods were improved with income increases and diversification, enhanced resilience to weather-related hazards, and improved food and nutrition security. This was achieved with the provision of access to finance and inputs including through a strengthened private sector, improved agricultural practices, and off-farm income generation. A substantial proportion of the rural population in Myanmar was reached, and there was a good targeting of poor and vulnerable groups, including people in conflict-affected areas and IDPs. In 2010-2017, an estimated 800,000 households increased their incomes, 300,000 households increased their crop productivity, 490,000 were enabled to obtain adequate food supplies throughout the year, and 79,888 persons, including 33,719 women, established enterprises or gained employment.

A significant contribution was also made to the establishment of a nationwide ceasefire as well as informal peace processes and inclusive dialogues on peace involving both the

¹⁰⁵ UN agencies and international NGOs

¹⁰⁶ Formal and non-formal

Government and ethnic armed organisations. Moreover, EU support helped increasing the election participation as well as improving transparency and accountability of the electoral process. A tangible contribution was also made to a strengthened engagement of civil society and citizen advocacy in relation to both peacebuilding and the democratic system. Access to justice, including for marginalised groups, was also improved with EU support.

However, **some of the intended results were not achieved**. While the EU strategy aim at improving education at all levels, support and results were mainly at the primary education level, and the link with labour market needs was weak, although this is envisaged to change with the education sector budget support, which includes TVET. Conflict caused major disruption which significantly limited the achievement of results especially in Northern Rakhine, with many Rohingyas losing their land and restrictions on movement of IDPs, which limited their ability to use the skills obtained to obtain incomes. Moreover, due to the limited support for local authorities vis-à-vis governance and peacebuilding, capacities remain insufficient to respond to increasing demands from an empowered civil society. Moreover, the contribution to improving the accountability of the police was limited.

Based on: EQ2, EQ3, EQ4, EQ5

Conclusion 6: Achieving sustainability of the results achieved with EU support was a challenge in the volatile context and with the generally low level of direct involvement of local authorities. Capacity and financial constraints, as well as limited direct involvement of the Government and limited focus on building the Government's capacity, were impediments for ensuring continuity and longer-term transformational change. The increased role of the Government and other national stakeholders in the delivery of EU support especially since 2018 is promising, as is the introduction in 2018 of support related to enhancing revenue generation. As a result of the crisis in Rakhine, the impacts initially achieved for many Rohingyas evaporated.

While important impacts and outcomes were achieved (see conclusion 5), lasting **systemic and transformational changes and thereby sustainability were not achieved to the same degree**. With the exception of the education sector, where the support also engaged local government actors, the engagement with the Government was mainly at the central and policy levels with little direct involvement of the Government in the implementation of interventions on the ground and with overall modest focus on increasing government capacities at all levels. In particular, there was only **limited support to enhancing the capacity of local government to implement policy changes and provide services** and maintain service delivery to the population; this could be seen in the imbalance of EU support in favour of rights holders (i.e. amplifying the demands of civil society on peacebuilding and governance issues) rather than duty bearer (i.e. local government officials). A major impediment for improving government service delivery is the low level of tax collection in Myanmar, which in 2016 only corresponded to 6.4 per cent of the

GDP¹⁰⁷, which half that of other ASEAN countries¹⁰⁸, and ten per cent of the Government budget is derived from ODA¹⁰⁹. Increased capacity and increased tax/revenue generation are essential prerequisites for ensuring that the Government can improve service delivery and implement its policies. Hence, follow-up on, and **consolidation** of, the results achieved with EU support is **largely dependent on continued support from the EU or other donors** across all four sectors. Moreover, insufficient delivery of government services is a threat to the democratisation process; if the population do not see that service delivery is improving, they could lose faith in the Government and the democratisation process. However, the likelihood of sustainability was higher in the education sector than the other sectors, with the support being firmly embedded in the existing primary education structures and with a strong Government commitment to reform.

Nonetheless, the nature of EU support has evolved over time. Initially, the EU mainly worked with international organisations and NGOs, but as local capacities increased and the democratisation and peacebuilding processes matured, the EU gradually increased engagement with local civil society and the private sector. The EU also engaged with ethnic organisations in relation to education and peacebuilding. Further, since 2017, the EU has increasingly worked with the Government with a view towards increasing its capacity, including some support related to improving revenue generation. Sector budget support has been introduced for the education sector, and EU grants are blended with loans provided by international financing institutions for the Government. Moreover, since 2018, MyGovernance has provided support to the Internal Revenue Department, as well as to the Joint Public Accounts Committee of the Hluttaw. The STEP to Democracy programme also provided extensive support to the Union Election Commission. Furthermore, sector budget support for nutrition with the Ministry of Agriculture is planned. These developments are **expected to lead to a more comprehensive engagement with capacity development for local authorities**.

Due to the Rakhine crisis, many Rohingyas that had been assisted by EU funded interventions lost their land and productive assets. Moreover, due to restrictions on movement, many Rohingyas still remaining in Rakhine, including people in IDP camps, have little access to livelihoods opportunities, so the impacts initially achieved with EU support have evaporated for many. Nonetheless, the impacts achieved with communities unaffected by displacement remained.

Moreover, the decision to shift the attention of LIFT from the central parts of Myanmar to conflict-affected areas could jeopardise some of the results achieved in central Myanmar, depending on how the transition is implemented¹¹⁰.

Based on: EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4, EQ5, EQ6

5.3 Conclusions – cross-cutting and multi-sectoral issues

Conclusion 7: Mainstreaming of cross-cutting and multi-sectoral issues was

¹⁰⁷ <https://tradingeconomics.com/myanmar/tax-revenue-percent-of-gdp-wb-data.html>

¹⁰⁸ 15.7% in Thailand, 15.3% in Cambodia, 12.9% in Laos, 19.1% in Vietnam, 2016

¹⁰⁹ Country Assessment Myanmar, European Union, 23 April 2019

¹¹⁰ The evaluation came across one project, which was discontinued before the full potential impacts were achieved and results were fully consolidated

uneven. Positive results were achieved on gender and human rights at the intervention level, however, without resulting in substantial nation-wide advances towards greater respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and gender equality. Environment and climate change considerations, however, were insufficiently integrated into programming. Nutrition access was tackled in the rural development sector, but nutrition awareness received little attention in the education sector.

Gender concerns and human rights were well integrated in the design and implementation of interventions. Moreover, a number of interventions specifically targeted women and girls, such as income-generating opportunities and access to finance for women, social protection and nutrition for mothers and infants, and improving the participation of girls in education. However, **less was achieved vis-à-vis mainstreaming gender at policy level** and the policy framework for human rights and gender remains weak in Myanmar. Furthermore, the MIPs did not contain gender targets or budget allocations for gender action. **Similarly, while the EU funded interventions were implemented in accordance with human rights-based principles, the overall human rights situation did not improve, but rather deteriorate, during the period under evaluation.**

Environment and climate change issues were mainly addressed with interventions funded with thematic instruments, but some bilateral rural development interventions also addressed climate resilience and natural resource management. However, there was **limited mainstreaming of environmental and climate change** concerns in all sectors, although environmental issues from a rights perspective were addressed in some peacebuilding and governance interventions. There were few, if any, linkages or instances of cross-fertilisation between the bilateral programme and global mainstreaming programmes that specifically promote mainstreaming with thematic funding.

Nutrition is a multi-sectoral issue cutting across health, education and awareness raising, and agriculture and food production. Malnutrition is still an important concern Myanmar. Nutrition is a focus area in the support for the rural development sector, and nutrition is also an intended area of focus for the planned sector budget support for the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation. The EU thus addresses the agricultural production and food availability and diversity side of this important issue. However, in the support for the education sector nutrition has so far not given the same level of prominence to nutrition awareness. Other development partners cover the health side of nutrition.

Based on: EQ5, EQ6, EQ7

5.3 Conclusions – partnership

Conclusion 8: Coordination and the achievement of synergies within the EU support was generally effective. Coordination of development assistance, humanitarian assistance and political action in particular took place in connection with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and education sector budget support. However, the nexus approach has not yet been fully institutionalised, and its programming remains a challenge, as does information sharing at the technical level on policy dialogue.

Overall, the coordination of the EU's development assistance (DEVCO) and humanitarian assistance (ECHO) was good, and significant progress has been made since

the European Council in late 2017 decided to pilot the new humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach in Myanmar. A joint nexus action plan has been developed and joint pilot interventions are under implementation. The nexus approach is still new, and some challenges remain with institutionalising and programming the and filling the gap between humanitarian action and long-term development and peacebuilding for protracted crises, but the new “Nexus Response Mechanism” aims at addressing this gap. At the strategic level, there is clear coherence between the objectives of the EU’s development assistance (DEVCO) and political engagement (EEAS) in Myanmar. There is overall a good level of cooperation between the two, **especially in relation to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and the political dialogue in connection with the Education Sector Reform Contract**. However, some challenges remain at the technical level vis-à-vis sharing information on the policy dialogue at the sector and intervention levels.

Based on: EQ1

Conclusion 9: The EU made concerted efforts to improve coordination, yet coordination and collaboration with other development partners proved difficult. The EU paid significant attention to improving donor coordination mechanisms including EU and EU Member State coordination with some notable results, but donor coordination remained a challenge in the Myanmar context.

Coordination with other development partners was challenging in the complex Myanmar context. The Government-led sector coordination groups work in some, but not all, sectors. The fact that the Government is based in Nay Pyi Taw, whereas most development partners are based in Yangon, was a major impediment for Government-donor coordination and thus also an impediment for a strong involvement of the Government in implementation. At the intervention-level, the volatile context proved a challenge for cooperation and synergy, and the donor support was generally fragmented. Nonetheless, the **EU engaged proactively in strengthening donor coordination**, through active participation in, and technical support for, sector coordination, participation in trust fund governance, and the promotion of the EU joint programming with Member States. The **trust funds proved useful for donor coordination and synergy** through pooled funding and to some extent joint positions in a context with coordination challenges and little direct support to the Government. Moreover, the donor cooperation through trust funds proved effective mechanisms, which achieved tangible results in the sectors supported at a large scale. However, with the advent of direct cooperation with the Government with budget support, blending and project funding, other avenues for coordination and dialogue are emerging. The EU joint programme delivered a division of labour and joint analyses, but did not lead to joint action, and was not continued due to little appetite among a number of EU Member States, who have also not engaged significantly in the nexus approach.

For some interventions, the EU brought NGOs together in “*arranged marriages*” for joint project implementation, but while this may have reduced the administrative burden for the EU Delegation it created coordination challenges in the implementation and project management.

The long-term presence, the EU joint programming, the active contribution to trust funds and sector coordination, and to the peace-process all contributed to making the EU one

of the most visible donors in Myanmar.

Based on: EQ2, EQ3, EQ5, EQ6, EQ8

6. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions presented in chapter 5, four main recommendation areas have been identified; each is supported by a set of implementable recommended actions. Figure 16 depicts the links between the conclusions and recommendations. Table 9 indicates the importance and urgency of each recommendation.

Figure 16: Links between conclusions and recommendations

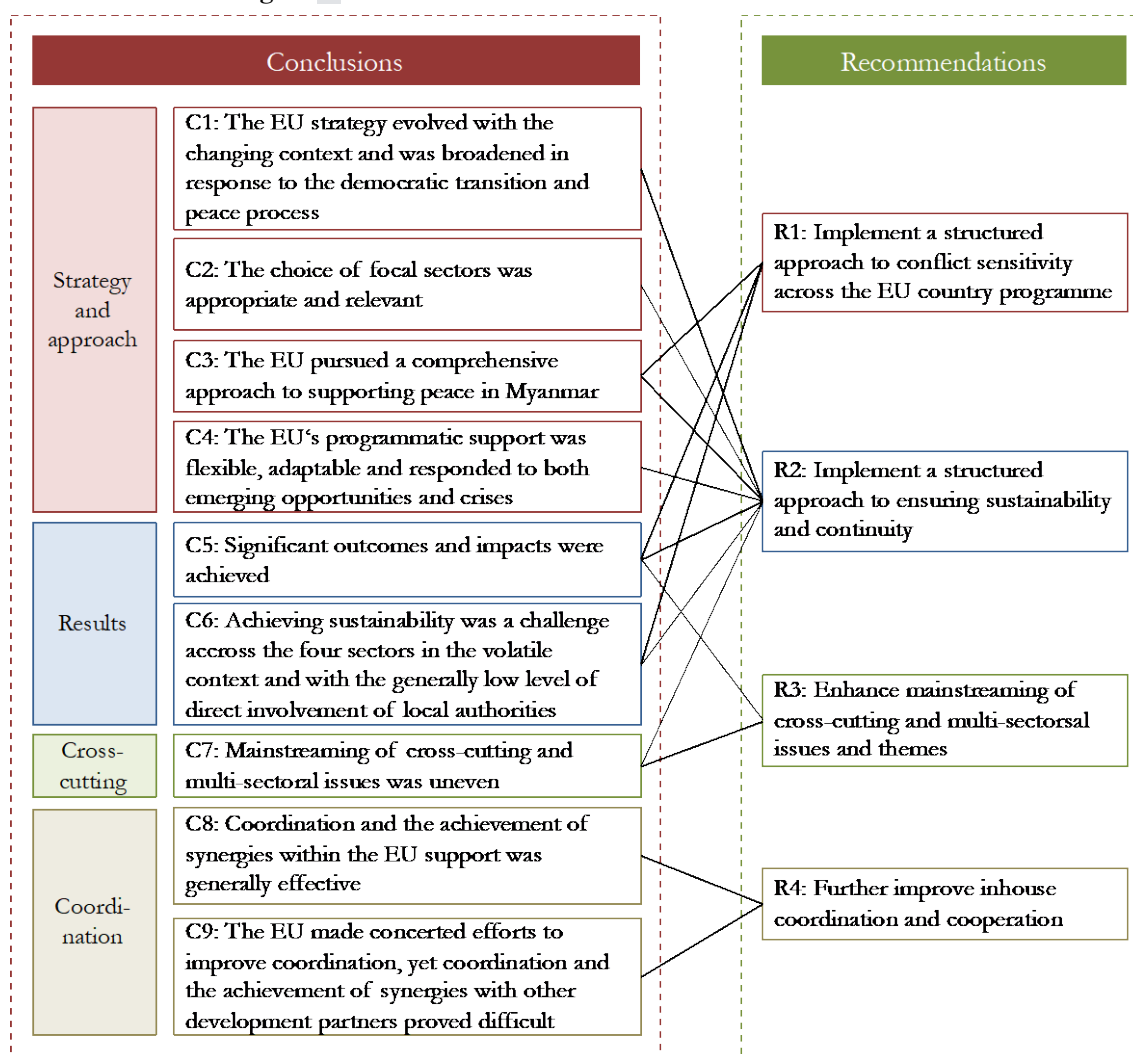


Table 9: Recommendation importance and urgency

	Recommendation	Importance	Urgency
R1	Implement a structured approach to conflict sensitivity across the EU country programme	High	Medium-term horizon
R2	Implement a structured approach to ensuring sustainability and continuity	Very high	Short-term horizon
R3	Enhance mainstreaming of cross-cutting and multi-sectoral issues and themes	High	Medium-term horizon
R4	Further improve inhouse coordination and cooperation	Medium	Medium-term horizon

Recommendation 1: Implement a systematic approach to conflict sensitivity across the EU country programme. Mainstream and standardise conflict sensitivity approaches by the EU and implementing partners.

Rationale: While there was a reasonable degree of conflict sensitivity in the interventions under the country programme, there was in general not a formal and systematic approach to conflict sensitivity. Informal, ad-hoc and personnel-driven measures were often the norm. The EU's recent introduction of conflict sensitivity as a cross-cutting issue in the DEVCO Programme Cycle Manual is a positive step in formalising and standardising conflict sensitivity in EU programming. Further work, however, is needed to ensure that conflict sensitivity guidance is acted on and mainstreaming is institutionalised.

Conclusions: This recommendation is based on conclusions 3, 5 and 6.

Implementation responsibility: EU Delegation, DEVCO, trust funds, project implementing partners

Recommended actions:

- Mainstream conflict sensitivity into the programme cycle. This could include requirements that implementing partners:
 - Conduct research with a conflict sensitivity focus during the inception phase, including conflict analysis and stakeholder mappings
 - Integrate conflict sensitivity measures in action documents and log frames
 - Integrate conflict sensitivity into monitoring and evaluation procedures, including conflict sensitive indicators
 - Conduct regular conflict sensitive reporting based on both continuous monitoring in programme/project areas and assessments based on 'do no harm' approaches
- Include conflict sensitivity measures in policy dialogue priorities for budget support operations
- Introduce explicit conflict sensitive standards and requirements into grant application procedures and contracts with implementing partners
- Strengthen staff capacities on conflict sensitivity, including recruiting experts and providing training to staff
- Establish a helpdesk function specifically for Myanmar, which provides guidance and support to the EU Delegation and implementing partners on how to develop and implement systematic conflict sensitive strategies and approaches
- Focus on conflict sensitivity good practice: conduct lessons learned studies and lessons-sharing workshops for staff and implementing partners
- For interventions in conflict-affected areas: develop non-discrimination and due diligence criteria to be applied and met prior to, and during, programme implementation (the new "Nexus Response Mechanism" is likely to yield relevant lessons, tools and tools for this)
- Invest in peacebuilding and conflict awareness-raising in areas that are not affected by conflict: peace education, including civic education, should extend nationwide,

particularly to those areas less directly familiar with, and affected by, conflict

Recommendation 2: Implement a systematic approach to ensuring sustainability and continuity. Emphasise ensuring continuity and consolidating processes initiated and results achieved, and improving the technical and financial capacity of the Government to implement policies and provide services to the citizens of Myanmar.

Rationale: While positive results were achieved, their sustainability remains a challenge. Continuity and further support are essential to ensure sustainability in the four sectors. So far, the results achieved were to a large extent dependent on NGOs and international organisations. Until recently, limited attention had been paid to enabling the Government to provide and maintain service delivery in accordance with citizen's needs and demands; this is particularly important for political stability and growth in a country undergoing a democratic transition. Increased capacity and increased tax/revenue generation are essential prerequisites for ensuring that the Government can improve service delivery and implement its policies. Nonetheless, the EU has in recent years engaged more directly in capacity development for the Government, for example through budget support and blending, including some support related to revenue generation.

Conclusions: This recommendation is based on conclusions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Implementation responsibility: EU Delegation, DEVCO, Government of Myanmar, trust funds, project implementing partners

Recommended actions:

- Maintain the four current focal sectors – education, peacebuilding, governance and rural development – in the next programme period
- Increase the focus on building the capacity of the Government to implement policies, including through further engagement of the Government in the implementation of EU-funded interventions; this may include project-based and trust fund support, as appropriate
- Engage in building the capacity of the Government at the local/sub-national level to deliver rural services, while keeping the local context and conflict-sensitivity issues in mind
- Engage in building the capacity of the Government at the local/sub-national level as duty-bearers to meet citizen's demands vis-à-vis good governance and peacebuilding, while keeping the local context and conflict-sensitivity issues in mind and maintaining support to ethnic providers
- Further engage in interventions that support the Government in enhancing its capacity to collect revenues, e.g. in connection with the provision of budget support – as a first step identify opportunities and potential partners for such engagement
- Ensure that any major changes in geographic or thematic focus at the strategic, portfolio and intervention levels are accompanied with the implementation of clear transition/sustainability strategies and a gradual transition

Recommendation 3: Enhance mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues and multi-sectoral themes. Include specific objectives, indicators, baselines and targets for cross-cutting issues, and introduce mainstreaming procedures and approaches across interventions.

Rationale: The mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues was uneven. There was positive progress in mainstreaming gender and human rights, though gender was addressed mainly at the intervention level (rather than the strategic level). However, mainstreaming was insufficient for environment and climate change, not least when considering the importance of Myanmar's rich natural resources for rural poor, the significant threats to these, and the vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather occurrences. Nutrition was tackled mainly from the nutrition supply side, but less so from the demand/behavioural change side.

Conclusions: This recommendation is based on conclusions 5 and 7.

Implementation responsibility: EU Delegation, trust funds, project implementing partners

Recommended actions:

- Apply an explicit gender focus in the country strategy, through the inclusion of explicit gender-specific objectives and a budget for gender specific actions in the 2021-2028 MIP
- Introduce environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction mainstreaming procedures and guidelines in trust funds
- Include environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction and awareness raising indicators and targets in sector budget support
- Include environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction in policy dialogue at the sector level
- Include climate risk assessments and adaptation measures in interventions
- Learn from and apply the tools and approaches developed by EU-funded programmes that specifically promote mainstreaming. Include nutrition awareness in the support for the education sector
- Include nutrition awareness in the support for the education sector

Recommendation 4: Further improve inhouse coordination and cooperation. Strengthen the joint implementation of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in conflict-affected areas, and the synergies between the programmatic support and the political engagement.

Rationale: Coordination and cooperation between different sections of the EU at Delegation level improved significantly over recent years. Examples of this include the humanitarian-development-peace nexus action plan, the joint DEVCO-ECHO situational analysis for Kachin State, joint DEVCO-EEAS risk management frameworks, and the joint DEVCO-EEAS engagement in policy dialogue in relation to sector budget support. Nonetheless, coordination at the technical level remains challenging, as does bridging the gap between emergency relief and longer-term development and resilience. As a result, opportunities for synergies and mutual reinforcement for enhanced results were often not fully capitalised upon.

<u>Conclusions:</u> This recommendation is based on conclusion 8.
<u>Implementation responsibility:</u> EU Delegation, DEVCO, EEAS, ECHO
<p><u>Recommended actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on existing structures for cooperation (such as the humanitarian-development-peace nexus action plan, conduct regular team meetings and the joint engagement in policy dialogue in relation to sector budget support), further institutionalise cooperation between DEVCO, EEAS and ECHO at the EU Delegation in the standard operating procedures, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare regular and joint updates of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus action plan - Sharing of political information with technical level staff as a standard agenda point for EU Delegation team meetings - Ensure that the design of all interventions planned in conflict-affected areas is peer reviewed by the different sections (DEVCO, EEAS, ECHO) – also with a view of identifying options for joint engagement - Ensure that the procedures for humanitarian-development-peace nexus are kept lean and operational - Pursue enhanced cooperation with EU MS on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus – with a medium-term view of using it as a lever to reactivate joint programming • Further enhance cooperation between DEVCO and EEAS at the technical level with joint engagement in the policy dialogue at the sector and intervention levels • Explore opportunities to further operationalise the humanitarian-development-peace nexus through joint development and funding of interventions with both DEVCO and ECHO components (the new “Nexus Response Mechanism” will involve DEVCO, ECHO and EEAS)