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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN KACHIN STATE

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Introduction

Myanmar has a large youth population. According to the 2014 census, the median age is 27 and approximately 55 percent of the population is under the age of 30. This makes investing in the future of the youth cohort critical for Myanmar's socio-economic and political development.

This report aims to fill a gap in existing research, which does not address the factors promoting or hindering effective youth engagement at the local level. The report first provides a brief overview of the major challenges facing youth in Kachin State, with attention to the impact of conflict and insecurity, and the differences between urban, rural and internally displaced (IDP) youth. Second, it explores patterns of youth engagement and function in communities and in the broader society of Kachin State. It is not possible in this brief report to address in detail the local specificities affecting youth engagement, but an attempt has been made to highlight important trends and areas where further research or more engagement by civil society organizations (CSOs) could be productive.

Methodology

This research covers five townships in Kachin State (Bhamo, Hpakant, Mohnyin, Myitkyina, and Waingmaw) and includes both areas under the control of the government and those controlled by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). For this report, youth is defined as those between the ages of 15 and 35 years.

Information was collected through eleven semi-structured key informant interviews with youth leaders; two each from Bhamo, Hpakant, Myitkyina, and Waingmaw Townships, and three from Mohnyin Township. Interviewees were identified through the snowball sampling method, with each interviewee being asked to suggest further contacts. This was considered the best approach as it enabled the researchers to benefit from the youth leaders' local knowledge of actively engaged youth and identify interviewees from outside their own networks. The small number of interviews meant that it was not possible to fully reflect the ethnic and religious diversity of Kachin State, however efforts were made to ensure that the views of different groups were reflected among the responses. These interviews were supplemented by previous USAID research, including 144 interviews conducted as part of a project on community decision-making processes, which included questions on youth participation in these local level processes.

Critical issues facing youth in Kachin State

Young people living in contested areas are at risk of violence, abuse, and exposure to harmful practices such as drug use, trafficking, child labor, and displacement.¹ Youth in Kachin State also suffer from the impact of insecurity on their lives, uncertainty about the future, and lack of support programs corresponding to their social and economic needs.

Drugs²

Drug use and the drug trade are both a driver and a consequence of conflict. Major elements that contribute to the broad availability of drugs in Kachin State are the existence of armed groups that are directly or indirectly involved in the drugs trade, the powerful vested interests engaged in or

benefiting from the sector, and pervasive corruption that undermines official efforts to effectively address drug use and the drug trade.

While the easy accessibility of drugs and their relatively affordability are likely the more significant factors in an individual's decision to use drugs, high levels of unemployment, insecurity, low levels of education, lack of entertainment options and social activities and, increasingly, an environment that normalizes drug use are also important factors. While drug use is a problem across all sectors of the population, it is particularly common among young men. Migrant workers and those engaged in physically demanding jobs such as jade mining often take drugs to help cope with the work, while IDP youth may take drugs as a coping mechanism when they feel marginalized by aid and relief efforts. A particularly worrying trend is the spread of drug use among middle and high school students. In all five townships, boys as young as 14 are reported to be using drugs.

Many community members, including Village Administrators and village elders, describe drug users as a significant threat to their community's security. Drug-related thefts are a concern, as drug users may resort to theft to pay for their drugs. Drug users also tend to congregate in neglected spaces and, increasingly, in public places, making them unsafe for other members of the community. In Hpakant Township, it has become increasingly hard for the Village and Ward Administrators to ensure public security due to a large but variable migrant population and rampant drug abuse. There are many reported cases of violent confrontations, murders and thefts at mining sites, but community representatives report police responses are often slow and ineffective.

There have been some efforts by the government and non-government actors to address the problem of drug use, including the provision of methadone treatment through government hospitals, rehabilitation centers that are often run by churches or church-affiliated organizations, and awareness-raising programs run by CSOs and ethnic youth groups. However, the services provided for drug users are inadequate to respond to the scale and complexity of the drug problem. Moreover, the stigma around drug use negatively affects the relationship between drug users and their communities. Drug users generally receive little support and are often shunned by village elders and community leaders. Given the high level of drug use among youth, this acts as a barrier to youth engagement in community affairs and local decision-making.

Forced recruitment

Youth in conflict areas are also at risk of forced recruitment by ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) or ethnic militia groups. Youth leaders emphasized that this is both a social issue and a security concern. Forced recruitment threatens family cohesion as young men are forced to leave their families and communities, weakening important social capital and reducing available members of the workforce.

In Bhamo, Myitkyina and Waingmaw Townships, youth leaders said that many young men and their family members live in constant fear of recruitment. While the biggest problem is within the Kachin community, there have also been cases of forced recruitment of youth from Shan Ni³ and Lisu communities.⁴

The KIA frequently target for recruitment orphans, children who have dropped out of school, and 'troublesome' youth, including those who use drugs or are involved in criminal activities. The KIA justifies the practice through claims that it provides a response to societal problems and provides

these youth with a free military education and training programs in exchange for military service. Forced recruitment is a problem for young men living in rural areas and for those in IDP camps. Previously, there had been specific cases of the KIA recruiting from IDP camps in KIA-controlled territory, but this has decreased since the camp committees asked the KIA to prohibit child recruitment. However, IDP youth continue to be warned not to leave the camps, as this could put them at risk of recruitment. While such restrictions have a clear purpose and aim to protect the youth, they create additional limitations on the opportunities available to these young people. At present, the only actors working to prevent recruitment or provide support to demobilized recruits are the child protection workers in some of the IDP camps.

Lack of livelihood opportunities and economic migration

Viable livelihood prospects for youth in Kachin State are constrained by the lack of sustainable economic opportunities and social protection. While the situation is worst in contested areas and for those displaced by the conflict, the lack of economic opportunities and low levels of employment are problems in all areas. This is true even in Hpakant Township, which attracts migrants from other parts of Kachin State and throughout Myanmar, although most job opportunities in Hpakant are limited to the jade mining sector or in the informal sector. Enhancing livelihood opportunities for youth would require intensive efforts at skills and job training, expanding the range of viable jobs, and enhancing the sustainability of livelihood initiatives. At present, there are few government or civil society programs addressing these issues. Faced with a lack of other opportunities, some young men choose to join Christian institutions and train as pastors, since this provides access to education and a hope of employment. Another coping strategy is to volunteer with the KIA, seen as a means of last resort that is particularly common in rural areas and among IDPs. Young women have fewer economic opportunities than young men, regardless of whether they live in urban, rural, or IDP communities.

In the absence of job opportunities in their own communities, many young people choose to migrate and seek work elsewhere. Hpakant and the gold mining area around Mohnyin attract internal migration, particularly from government-controlled areas in Kachin State. Youth from KIA-controlled areas are less likely to migrate within Myanmar as they may not have national registration cards (NRC) and so face difficulties travelling and living in government-controlled areas; they are more likely to migrate to China for work. Economic migration to China, which also includes youth from government-controlled areas in Kachin, is often informal and puts the youth at risk of trafficking and labor exploitation.

Migration often results in family disruption. There are many cases in which Kachin men and women leave for jobs, find a new partner, and settle down with them, leaving their old family behind. Even if the migrant intends to return, their temporary absence will disrupt relationships within the family and community. At the same time, the assumptions that youth will eventually migrate may impact the communities' expectations and relations with them. The scale of youth migration in Kachin State has a significant impact upon the communities and those left behind; many villages have few able-bodied adults, with adverse effects on community wellbeing in terms of agriculture production and socio-economic activities.

Trafficking

For young women, there is a particular risk that economic migration will result in trafficking and being forced into sex work or sold as 'brides'.⁵ Traffickers are known to target young women with a promise of work in China and then later force them into marriage. In other cases, the parents of the young women give their daughters to Chinese men under a traditional dowry system. In such cases the dowries offered may be as much as the parents earn in a year from work as daily laborers. This creates a considerable incentive for the parents to accept the dowries, particularly for those already in precarious situations due to poverty or displacement. Parents may feel they have no choice but to ask their daughters to go and the daughters may feel obliged to obey their parents' wishes. The young women are also often aware that this is one of the few options available to them in the absence of viable livelihood or educational opportunities. The same considerations and desire to support their families may make young women willing to accept jobs in China, even when they are aware of the associated risks with unofficial economic migration. There are few organizations working to identify, rescue, or support women who are the victims of trafficking and forced marriage.⁶ Those who manage to return to Myanmar receive no psychosocial support, counseling or care; they are instead often shunned within their own families and communities.⁷

Differences and similarities between urban, rural and IDP youth

Although rural and urban youth and those in IDP settlements face similar challenges, youth in IDP camps are the most disadvantaged group. They are particularly vulnerable to violations of human and child rights, directly suffer the negative consequences of decades-long conflict and have access to fewer resources and services than their peers. Some youth living in IDP camps in Waingmaw Township and the outskirts of Myitkyina Town have lived in these camps since the resumption of conflict between the KIA and the Tatmadaw in 2011. In addition to the trauma of conflict, this prolonged displacement has left them with an uncertain future, while the lack of educational opportunities available in the camps is likely to affect their prospects.

There are limited services available to youth, regardless of urban, rural and IDP settlement locations. There are few to no youth centers, recreational spaces, or public libraries where youth can interact, socialize and learn. The tendency for drug users to take over unused and public spaces compounds the problem as those few public spaces may then become unsafe. The creation of shared spaces could be particularly valuable in promoting inter-ethnic/ inter-religious interactions and in providing safe spaces for youth-oriented activities. A young woman who had lived in Mandalay noted that there was no public space in Mohnyin where youth could gather, unlike in Mandalay where youth held periodic discussions and dialogue in a private charity library.

Youth in Kachin State also report the need for more trainings, especially vocational training that would improve their livelihood opportunities. Most short-term vocational training programs, whether led by the government under the Community Driven Development project or by NGOs, take place in urban centers and are inaccessible to youth in remote areas and IDP camps. Many other trainings and longer-term educational projects are organized by Ethnic Literature and Culture Associations or religious institutions and are thus limited to an ethnic or religious group; such trainings are dependent on the availability of funding from local communities or international organizations. This can create disparities between ethnic/ religious groups, as those with established international organization contacts or from comparatively well-off communities are able to provide more trainings and services.

There is a limited pool of youth who are generally able to attend training opportunities. Many youth lack the financial means to attend trainings, so the provision of capacity building workshops risks deepening socio-economic disparities by enabling the advancement of the youth who are already in a privileged position while doing little for those most in need of support. In addition, it is often urban youth who can attend trainings, facilitated by the fact that most trainings are held in urban centers. Youth leaders have expressed concern about the resulting knowledge gap between urban, rural, and IDP youth. Urban youth are more educated and increasingly interested in political engagement, whereas rural and IDP youth are more focused on economics and ensuring day-to-day survival. Furthermore, youth in rural areas and IDP camps lack self-confidence, self-esteem, and motivation compared to youth from urban centers.

Within the IDP camps, young men feel marginalized and have the impression that the majority of humanitarian assistance is aimed at women, the elderly and children. There are few opportunities for youth to take on leadership roles in the IDP camps. Camp coordinators are either chosen by the IDP community or by the KBC for the camps which they operate. In either case, it is unusual to find young people serving as camp coordinators. Youth have suggested that there should be camp coordinators who are themselves youth or who understand the problems facing youth in the camp, which would have a corollary effect to facilitate youth-focused programs and activities in the IDP camps. IDPs have also stressed the need for psychosocial support to assist youth in dealing with the impact of the conflict on their lives. In addition to these stresses, the lack of education and livelihood opportunities in the camps contribute to IDP youth who lack self-esteem, confidence, and motivation.

Youth participation in community affairs

The major role that youth play in their communities is to organize social activities and participate in self-help groups and philanthropic groups. There are a significant number of young people involved in social affairs in their communities, including auspicious celebrations, funerals and cultural events. Young people also take part in relief efforts during emergency situations, and young men often support efforts to ensure community security by acting as guards at night. Youth are often appointed as community teachers or asked to serve as local language teachers in their communities. These roles suggest that youth are actively involved with their communities and treated as respected members of society. At the same time, interview respondents consistently raise concerns about the high levels of drug addiction among youth and the fear of drug-related theft or violence.

Youth engagement in organizations

Youth groups tend to be organized along ethnic and religious lines. For instance, many Ethnic Literature and Culture Associations have their own youth affairs committees. These youth affairs committees are often involved in organizing cultural events and literary celebrations as part of the associations' broader efforts to promote their ethnic identity. There is little to no coordination among these groups; any cooperation among the different ethnic youth groups would occur when a third-party CSO or NGO works across several groups to provide skills or awareness-raising trainings.

In both rural and urban areas, there are high levels of youth engagement and leadership in self-help groups and philanthropic groups. However, across all five townships, there are also areas where there is not a single youth group, except for the government-endorsed Youth Affairs Committee (see below, 'The Government-sponsored National Youth Policy'). Unlike the ethnic youth groups

referenced above, there is no intrinsic barrier to these philanthropic groups engaging youth from different identity groups. The major limitation to these groups' activities is the availability of funding; most are funded by independent donations, community support, and/or contributions and subscriptions from team members. For example, the Bhamo Youth Network says that additional funding would enable them to plan more activities, such as providing training on livelihood skills and organizing events and activities to enable youth to learn about their rights.

An anomaly among youth organizations is the Kachin Youth Movement, which emerged in 2018 around protests related to the conflict and treatment of IDPs. It is exceptional among the youth-led organizations in Kachin State in its explicit political engagement and willingness to risk confrontation with the authorities (see below, 'Youth participation in peace and politics'), as well as for bringing together different youth groups.

Youth participation in peace and politics

Few youth are engaged in political advocacy, in contrast to their active engagement in non-political communal activities. This trend holds true across all townships and ethnic or religious groups. Interviewees suggested that this is due to their lack of interest in politics and limited knowledge of citizens' political rights. The youth who do participate in political activities tend to be those who are more educated and have been trained in urban areas, including those receiving training at the American Center and local community schools supported by the KBC or KIO.⁸ Some Shan Ni respondents indicate that they believe Kachin youth groups have more political awareness, leading to greater political and civic engagement but also resentment at their more prominent voice.

A notable exception to this limited youth political engagement is the Kachin Youth Movement. The movement emerged in May 2018 with an event in Myitkyina to highlight the suffering of IDPs from Tanai, Injayang, Mogaung and Hpakant Townships and those trapped by fighting between Tatmadaw and KIA.⁹ Three of the organizers were arrested and charged with violating Article 19 of the Peaceful Assembly Law;¹⁰ they were subsequently sentenced to a six-month jail term and a 500,000 kyat fine. In June 2019, leaders of the Kachin Youth Movement organized another event to raise awareness of the issues facing IDPs. As before, the youth leaders who organized the event, including one of the same leaders as in 2018, were prosecuted under Article 19 of the Peaceful Assembly Law and ordered to pay a 30,000 kyat fine or serve a 15-day jail term.¹¹ These incidents highlight the dangers of political engagement and suggest that the generally low levels of youth political engagement may reflect fear of reprisals for such public activism, rather than a lack of interest. The youth leaders of the Kachin Youth Movement all have an established political background as members of the Kachin State People's Party, perhaps suggesting a greater willingness for risk.

Youth participation in decision-making process and leadership roles

Youth are rarely invited to participate in decision-making processes in the community or take on leadership roles. Although their participation in public meetings at the village level is not actively discouraged or prevented, it is also not actively encouraged. In general, few of those involved in a village's formal administration structure as Village Administrators, Village Tract Administrators, or community leaders are youth. An exception is Hpakant Township where most of the Village Administrators are under 35 years. Respondents suggested that this unique situation likely arose because the elders in Hpakant Township chose to promote and make space for youth leadership.

Respondents in this area also noted the high level of interest among youth in local governance processes. It should be noted that it is primarily local youth rather than newer migrants assuming these roles. This may be an indication that the lack of youth engagement in local governance elsewhere can be partly attributed to the high levels of outward youth migration. Respondents note that the youth leaders in Hpakant Township appear focused on broader village-wide development agendas, rather than narrower youth-focused plans.

Ethnic tensions and inter-ethnic cooperation

Most interviewees downplayed reports of significant tensions between youth from different ethnic groups. This may reflect a lack of awareness of tensions or a belief that the denial of tensions was a more socially desirable answer. However, one Shan Ni interviewee mentioned concerns about hate speech on social media, particularly negative comments by ethnic Kachin about other groups, including calls for “Shan Ni people to get out of our Kachin land”. A Lisu interviewee noted the existence of tensions between older Lisu and Jingphaw individuals, recognizing that these were likely to have an impact on the views of younger groups. These comments reflect the fact that fault lines for tensions appears to be between the ethnic Kachin and non-Kachin groups, as well as among sub-tribes within the Kachin community. The emergence of the Kachin Youth Movement may be a positive development to bridge these divides, as an array of youth mentioned support for the movement in its engagement with matters of general concern rather than mono-ethnic outreach efforts. However, the Kachin Youth Movement has not managed to bring a diverse range of youth into the movement to date. This may be in part attributed to youth reluctance to participate in protests and risk prosecution, rather than from a reticence to work with other identity groups.

Even those interviewees who denied the existence of inter-communal tensions noted the lack of contact and cooperation among youth from different ethnic groups. As previously noted, most cooperation occurs through ethnic-based organizations or via church groups, which are themselves often organized along ethnic lines. Organizations will invite each other’s members to meetings, but rarely work together on projects or to identify common concerns. Similar dynamics can be seen in the relations between Baptist and Catholic youth groups. Although members of both communities said that they were happy to work together, in practice such cooperation is limited to attending each other’s events rather than in-depth collaboration. In some cases, the lack of better cooperation is blamed on tensions between the adult community leaders; some community elders are reported to refuse to allow youth groups to use their facilities for collaborative events.

The Government-sponsored National Youth Policy

Since 2012, youth representatives have been organizing the Myanmar Youth Forum (MYF) on a bi-annual basis to discuss issues of human rights, democracy, the environment, drugs, peace, and the development of a national youth policy. In April 2016, the government invited youth organizations such as the National Youth Congress (NYC) - created following the first MYF - to participate in developing a national youth policy. These youth organizations organized local and regional consultations to gather diverse youth perspectives to feed into the process, culminating in the adoption of the National Youth Policy in 2017.¹² Youth Affairs Committees (YAC) have been established in all states and regions to oversee the implementation of the National Youth Policy.¹³ These YACs are composed of 40 percent government representatives and 60 percent youth

representatives; although youth constitute the majority of each committee, actual decision-making remains dominated by the government representatives who hold most executive positions.

The Kachin State Youth Affairs Committee includes 15 youth representatives, four from Myitkyina District and three from each of the remaining districts in the state. One of the members of Kachin State Youth Affairs Committee stated that they strive to ensure that youth representing different ethnic groups and geographical areas are included; however, few young women are involved in either the state-level or the township-level committees. The voluntary and unpaid nature of the work has proven to be a barrier for some youth; five of the initial committee members had resigned for this reason or because of other commitments. The youth committee members also complained that the government representatives were often absent from meetings, severely limiting its ability to make decisions. There is an increasing sense among the youth that the government perceives the committee has a relatively low priority, further undermining any sense that it has a real role to play. Some youth have started to express the view that the purpose of these committees is to improve the government's image, rather than to provide opportunities and services to youth.

The major barrier identified limiting implementation of the National Youth Policy is a lack of funding. Although the government has provided a budget to all states and regions, the costs of transport and implementation inevitably vary depending on the context and location. A large proportion of the Kachin budget has been used to transport members of the Youth Affairs Committee across the state to attend regional meetings. The high cost of transportation has left little funding for actual implementation of activities; the main activities undertaken thus far have been marking International Youth Day, International Day of Peace, and World Environment Day in collaboration with other youth organizations. However, if it had the resources, the Youth Affairs Committee envisions implementing longer term environmental protection and youth capacity building projects, as well as projects aiming to create and promote job opportunities for youth. Due to their broad reach and presence in communities, the Committee believes that it would be able to carry out activities reaching youth who rarely benefit from other projects.

Conclusion

While youth across Kachin State are engaged in a range of activities, there is broad consensus that these efforts have not been effective at bringing about change. This is likely attributed to several factors, including: the magnitude of numerous intractable issues in the environment; the limited availability of services and resources to complement youth efforts; rare engagement across ethnic and/or religious divides to address issues of common concern; and low levels of participation in decision-making processes or politically-oriented actions.

All youth are vulnerable to negative influences in their environment and the consequences of conflict, though youth in rural areas and IDP settlements are particularly poorly served and vulnerable. The wide availability of illicit drugs, exacerbated by few viable livelihood opportunities, has a disastrous effect on youth and community social cohesion. The limited drug rehabilitation or harm reduction services and ineffective vocational or skills training programs leave youth increasingly vulnerable. One coping mechanism to the situation is economic migration within Kachin State, internally within Myanmar, or to China, leaving youth vulnerable to labor exploitation and trafficking. Finally, years of armed conflict have caused youth prolonged displacement and at considerable risk of forced recruitment.

Within this context, youth are primarily engaged in social and communal affairs rather than political-oriented activism. Critically, however, these activities generally remain contained to a single identity group, rarely bringing together participants or representatives from a diverse range of ethnic and/or religious identity communities. The lack of coordination and collective action on issues of common concern not only limits the effectiveness of efforts, but also represents missed opportunities to strengthen the social fabric and communal cohesion across the state.

In general, it is rare for youth to play an active role in community decision making processes or to assume leadership roles in community affairs. This limited voice extends to mechanisms ostensibly designed to amplify youth engagement in leadership and decision making, such as through the Youth Affairs Committees' implementation of the National Youth Policy.

Thus, while it can be concluded that youth generally desire to play an active and effective role within their communities, their efforts remain stymied by few complementary services to pressing local issues, a lack of opportunity to engage across identity groups, and few genuine decision-making opportunities.

Annex: Literature Review

A majority of the existing literature on youth engagement in Myanmar has been written by the independent researcher Irena Grizelj, with a focus on youth in relation to peace and conflict. Nonetheless, some of her observations on youth inclusion, challenges, and communal participation are broadly relevant to topics of local youth participation and leadership.

A discussion paper on 'Youth and Everyday Peace in Myanmar: Fostering the Untapped Potential of Myanmar's Youth' published by Paung Sie Facility in 2017 reflects on the status of youth inclusion in peace-building and analyzes opportunities and barriers to youth engagement in peace-building efforts. The paper suggests that youth in Myanmar are contributing formally and informally to a host of peace-building initiatives; leveraging these contributions, which are often innovative and catalytic in their approaches, can support the multiple transitions that the country is undergoing. The paper also highlights good practices to be considered when designing and implementing measures to encourage youth inclusion and participation in the peace process. Similarly, Paung Sie Facility's 2016 discussion paper, 'Youth's Participation in Myanmar's Peace Process' (also written by Grizelj) sheds light on youth efforts to participate in the peace process since 2011, discusses some of the key challenges facing youth in this respect, and makes policy recommendations on how youth could be better engaged in the peace process. The author argues that despite a significant increase in the number of youth networks and youth-led organizations, youth inclusion in the peace process has not been sufficient or undertaken in a structured and consistent manner. In 'Protection Needs and Capacities of Youth: A Preliminary Report Exploring Youth Protection in Myanmar' (July 2018), Grizelj refers to the UN Security Council resolution on 'Youth Protection', noting that it provides guidance on developing policies for the protection of youth in armed conflict areas. Drawing on this resolution, she notes the importance of protection for youth both during conflict and post-conflict, and the added value of their participation in the peace process.

Another category of literature focuses on the status of youth, youth perceptions, youth aspirations and the attitude of youth. The British Council's 2019 'Next Generation' report for Myanmar collected information on the views of youth in various geographic areas, looking at values and identity, levels of social engagement, and attitudes towards institutions. The purpose of the report is to assist the government and other stakeholders in identifying how best to support youth to ensure that Myanmar reaps the demographic dividend of its young population. Finally, the 'Nationwide Youth Information Corners: Situation Analysis Report' carried out by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Sports examines the overall health status of youth, health and development, and sexual and reproductive health. The report also assessed the achievements of the Youth Information Corners, established under the Health Education Division of the Ministry of Health in 2002 as part of the 'National strategic plan for young people's health'. These reports have a shared aim to complement the government's assessments and to influence youth policy.

As this review shows, the existing literature provides a wealth of information about youth in Myanmar, but there is comparatively little information on their roles within their own communities or engagement with local issues. It is this gap that the present report aims to begin to address.

Endnotes

¹ UNICEF, 'Adolescents Living in Myanmar's Kachin State IDP Camps Voice Their Concerns and Aspirations to UNICEF Regional Director for East Asia and Pacific', 15 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/350PqyM>.

² Much of the information in this section is based on research conducted for a December 2018 USAID report on the status of drug issues in local communities, including in Kachin State.

³ Thu Thu Aung, 'Six Missing Youth Said to Have Escaped from KIA', *The Myanmar Times*, 20 January 2016, <https://bit.ly/2Xgm2Sp>.

⁴ Chit Min Tun, 'Party Demands KIA Release 3 Lisu Men Held for a Month', *The Irrawaddy*, 10 April 2019, <https://bit.ly/33Rvjmn>.

⁵ "'Give Us a Baby and We'll Let You Go" | Trafficking of Kachin "Brides" from Myanmar to China', 21 March 2019, <https://bit.ly/2NQ0yIY>.

⁶ Interview with youth leader, chairperson of disabled community, Bhamo, 26 August 2019.

⁷ "'Give Us a Baby and We'll Let You Go" | Trafficking of Kachin "Brides" from Myanmar to China'.

⁸ Interview with a young Jinghpaw journalist from Kachin News Group

⁹ Steve Tickner, Win Zar Ni Aung, and Oliver Slow, 'Kachin Youth Activists Launch Potent Anti-War Movement', *Frontier Myanmar*, 31 May 2018, <https://bit.ly/2QobXkS>.

¹⁰ Lawi Weng, 'Two Kachin Youth Leaders Fined for Organizing Protest Demanding Action on IDPs', *The Irrawaddy*, 2 May 2018, <https://bit.ly/2NSatOm>.

¹¹ 'Kachin Youth Protest Unjust Legal System, Lack of Free Speech', *Network Media Group*, 9 September 2019, <https://bit.ly/372NWpz>; Emily Fishbein, 'Myitkyina Court Fines Pair over Protests by IDP Youth', *Frontier Myanmar*, 12 September 2019, <https://bit.ly/32TF7uF>.

¹² Matilda Hald and Sarah Smith, 'Supporting Youth Contributions to Peace in Myanmar', Development Dialogue Paper, February 2018, <https://bit.ly/352mJkR>.

¹³ 'Youth Impact in Shaping Policy & Social Cohesion in Myanmar', 18 December 2018.