

## **Stopgap or Change Agent?**

### **The Role of Burma's Civil Society after the Crackdown**

JASMIN LORCH

#### **1 Introduction**

In summer 2007, Burma experienced a major popular uprising which was completely unexpected by most Burma observers.<sup>1</sup> On August 15, the country's military government increased the price for fuel and natural gas by up to 500 percent. In the following days and weeks there were several demonstrations of popular discontent and civil disobedience. In the beginning they were led by the so-called 88 Generation Students, an overtly political opposition group consisting of former political prisoners who had played a major role in the student demonstrations which triggered the 1988 popular uprising. Like the main national opposition party National League for Democracy (NLD) which won a landslide victory in the 1990 elections, the 88 Students were relatively well known to the international community even though it was widely believed that they had lost the potential to mobilise significant numbers of people. In fact, when they started demonstrating in the former capital Rangoon on the Sunday after the fuel price hike, many people stood watching in admiration but only a few dared to join in. Nevertheless, when most of the 88 Student leaders were arrested by the security forces a few days later the demonstrations continued, albeit on a very small scale.

On September 5, a group of young Buddhist monks demonstrated against the fuel price hike in the town of Pakkoku, a religious centre near the city of Mandalay. When the government violently cracked down on these demonstrations using police forces as well as the Swan Ah Shin, a militia linked to

---

<sup>1</sup> The following account of the protests is mainly based on interviews I conducted with eyewitnesses. Pinheiro (2007a and 2007), ICG (2008) and HRW (2008: 247-254) also provide valuable information about the topic.

the government mass organisation Union Solidarity Association (USDA), the situation reached a turning point. In various cities of central Burma Buddhist monks started to demonstrate in the streets. The demonstrations in Rangoon were the biggest and reached a symbolic peak on September 22 when the monks managed to pass a military checkpoint and get close to the house of the detained opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi who greeted them from behind her gate.

The protests in Rangoon received enormous media attention from all over the world, mostly because protesters and sympathetic bystanders could make use of the internet in order to get pictures and news out of the country. What particularly took the international community by surprise was not only the scale of the demonstrations (on September 24 they involved about 100,000 people in Rangoon alone) but also the emergence of a new opposition constituted by members of the Buddhist Sangha<sup>2</sup>. In recent years, the internationally well-known political opposition, particularly the NLD, has been severely weakened by government repression. During the 2007 uprising, various groups of young monks stepped into the political vacuum left by the old opposition and took a leadership role in what was the first major public expression of popular discontent in nearly twenty years.

As I have argued elsewhere, the Sangha is an important civil society actor in authoritarian central Burma<sup>3</sup> where big and well organised secular NGOs are still rather rare (Lorch 2006 and 2007). During last summer's demonstrations the Buddhist monks emerged as a new, primarily social, opposition. Even though they also articulated political goals the monks protested mainly against the socio-economic grievances of the population. In Burma, the Buddhist monasteries serve not only religious but also important social functions. Most importantly, many Buddhist monks run orphanages or monastic schools for poor children. In order to be able to provide these welfare services, they in turn rely on alms from the people. In recent years, the monks have been facing severe economic hardship because the Burmese population has become more and more impoverished and, as a consequence, could donate less and less to the monks. The Sangha is thus at the heart of the population and its sufferings. As many voices from within the country suggest, the demonstrations of the monks were not political initially. They

---

<sup>2</sup> Community of Buddhist monks and nuns in Burma.

<sup>3</sup> Burma, also known as Myanmar, comprises central Burma and seven officially recognised ethnic states bordering Burma's neighbouring countries. Some ethnic minority areas are de facto partly autonomous. Central Burma is inhabited mostly by the overwhelmingly Buddhist Burman majority that constitutes approximately two thirds of the population. The seven ethnic states are home to over 100 different linguistic groups, many of them Christians or animists, making up approximately one third of the population.

were above all driven by the economic hardship of the broader population which the monks expressed. As the Sangha is the highest moral authority in central Burma many people joined their protests.

Regardless of this moral and social status of the monks, however, the government brutally cracked down on the demonstrations and raided many monasteries after September 25. The death toll remains uncertain. According to government sources nine people were killed (NLM 2008). The UN Special Rapporteur, Sérgio Pinheiro, by contrast, confirmed fifteen deaths and officially stated that he had received credible reports of sixteen additional deaths and 74 people who had disappeared (Pinheiro 2007a and 2007b). A local group of social activists estimated that between 200 and 300 people died in Rangoon alone.<sup>4</sup>

What do these events suggest in terms of civil society development? Can the recent popular demonstrations be interpreted as a re-emergence of political civil society in Burma? Or does the ensuing violent government crackdown rather support the assumption of critics that civil society cannot persist in authoritarian Burma, a military regime which has been in power for more than 40 years (e.g. Steinberg 1999)? In recent years, various authors have argued that civil society has begun to re-emerge in Burma. The groups which they were referring to were mostly religious and community associations active in social service delivery (e.g. South 2004, Heidel 2006, ICG 2001). As I have argued elsewhere, in spite of the repressiveness of the regime, spaces for civil society actors do exist within at least two areas of state weakness: firstly, in sectors where the welfare state fails to perform its function; and secondly, in some of the partly autonomous ethnic ceasefire areas (Lorch 2006 and 2007). In welfare sectors as different as local infrastructure, funeral services and education, civil society actors provide makeshift solutions to compensate for the pervasive failure of the state. But don't the events of last summer suggest that a more political civil society exists in Burma as well? Is civil society just a stopgap for welfare state failure or can it act as an agent of political change as well? What kind of groups led the uprising? Did they represent Burma's civil society at large? And have they survived the crackdown? Last but not least, what role can the international aid community play in strengthening the capacities of civil society actors to deliver welfare services on the one hand and in helping them develop their political potential on the other?

This article tries to find some preliminary answers to these questions. Mainly, I will argue that even though the 2007 uprising showed that parts of

---

<sup>4</sup> This estimate is based on information received by the group from the crematorium in Rangoon.

the Buddhist Sangha have an enormous political potential which hardly anybody had expected, the bulk of Burma's civil society remains apolitical. Moreover, while it is possible that similar manifestations of popular discontent might occur in the more long-term future, under the current political circumstances civil society in central Burma can only survive if it goes back to where it started from: to serving a stopgap function in welfare provision.

An analysis of both the constraints to and the factors enabling the development of civil society in Burma is fruitful for the international aid community with regard to possible policy options. The humanitarian situation in Burma is constantly deteriorating. About half of the population is estimated to be „at or below the poverty line” (Steinberg 2004). Epidemics like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria continue to spread (e.g. UNAIDS 2004, UNDP 2005, Global Fund 2005). The consequences are bound to be dramatic, as mortality rates for both tuberculosis and malaria are extraordinarily high in Burma and drug resistance is also rising for both diseases (ICG 2006: 2). Moreover, aid workers and experts active in the country assume that more than 50 percent of all children drop out of school before finishing the primary level. While the humanitarian and social need for aid has been acknowledged in principle, critics still argue that it does not reach the people and bring relief, but rather strengthens the military regime and therefore inhibits political change (ICG 2002a; ALTSEAN Burma 2002: 9; 31–52). The development of civil society in Burma must thus be discussed against the broader picture of the debate on humanitarian aid for the country. If it is possible to identify local civil society actors in Burma, this would help international donors, since they could engage those domestic groups as partners. Aid could thus not only bring humanitarian relief but also strengthen social structures outside direct regime control and empower alternative social actors. For the EU in particular, Article 5 of the EU Council Common Position provides the appropriate legal framework for engaging with civil society actors in the sectors of aid and welfare provision, as it exempts projects and programmes in the areas of good governance, capacity building of civil society, health, environmental protection and education from the development aid ban (Art. 5, EU Council Common Position 2006/318/ CFSP).

However, at present the role of the aid community in Burma is also limited, as the room to manoeuvre conceded by the government to international aid organisations has been shrinking since the purge of former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt and other more pragmatic forces in late 2004. Hardliners in the military government have long suspected international aid of being a Trojan horse used by Western countries to promote their own political objectives and to undermine Burma's national sovereignty. After the removal of General Khin Nyunt, described by many experts as an inter-

nal coup, these hard-line forces have come to the fore. As a consequence, the government has constantly been extending its control of UN and International Non-Governmental Organisations' (INGOs) activities in the country since late 2004. In February 2006 this tendency became manifest in the „Guidelines for UN Agencies, International Organizations and NGO/INGOs on Cooperation Programme in Myanmar”. Among other restrictions the new guidelines stipulate that personnel from international aid organisations have to be accompanied by a government official when visiting their project sites (MOP 2006: 5). In November 2005, and thus even before the new guidelines came into effect, Médecins Sans Frontières left Burma because restrictions on travel made the work of the organisation nearly impossible (ICG 2006: 8). The International Red Cross is among the international organisations hardest hit by the new government restrictions and has been forced to stop almost all its programmes. In the aftermath of the 2007 protests, regime repressions against international aid organisations further increased, as several senior officials suspected them of having supported the uprising. Government intelligence tried to search UN bureaus in Rangoon and even wanted to confiscate their hard drives. UN officials managed to escape most severe government harassments in October. On November 2, however, the regime expelled the UN resident coordinator, Charles Petrie, for saying that the government had mismanaged the economy. Just as it had shown no willingness to respond to the monks' demands for economic reform, so did the regime strongly reject the United Nations Country Team statement concerning the socio-economic underpinnings of the uprising. Against this backdrop, what options does the international aid community still have for facilitating civil society development in Burma?

## **2 Conceptualising Civil Society in Authoritarian Burma**

Burma has one of the most enduring military regimes in the world. Research into civil society developments under its tutelage thus requires a sound theoretical basis. All the more since the concept itself is highly contested, particularly because it has both descriptive and normative dimensions (Guan 2004: 1). Rooted in Western democratic theory, conventional definitions of civil society have laid emphasis on its normative aspects. In this sense, civil society is closely associated with a sphere which is autonomous from the state and the market and defined as being characterised by voluntary participation, tolerance and horizontal networks. Correspondingly, it is assumed to promote democracy (Edwards 2004).

However, these normative assumptions about civil society cannot be taken for granted in non-Western and authoritarian contexts. Any definition of civil society has to take into account the specific context in which it operates. A relational understanding seems a fruitful approach,<sup>5</sup> as it relates civil society to the scope of action it has. Thereby, the most important institutions structuring the scope of civil society action can be considered to be those of the state, particularly because it is the state which sets the legal framework for civil society to operate.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, how national civil societies are able to constitute themselves bears a relation to the state in which they operate. A strong democratic constitutional state is the *conditio sine qua non* for an autonomous and democratic civil society to flourish. In Burma, however, civil society emerges in the context of state weakness<sup>7</sup> and authoritarianism, which has profound consequences for its capacity to constitute itself.

In authoritarian regimes that try to penetrate the social sphere, civil society organisations can hardly achieve extensive autonomy of action (Heng 2004: 145ff.). In contrast, civil society actors frequently have to maintain functional ties with members of the ruling establishment – or even let themselves become partially co-opted by the latter (Yang 2004: 13f.; Perinova 2005: 6ff.; 28). If one wishes to study the genesis of civil society under authoritarian rule, defining it as a sphere that is completely autonomous from the state and the market therefore misses the point. Instead, when looking for elements of civil society in authoritarian contexts it is more useful to define it as a specific type of action and interaction. According to this definition, which was developed by Kocka et al., civil society activities are characterised – not only but mainly – by self-organisation and self-reliance, by their operating in the public sphere, by using discourse as a means of resolving conflicts, by tolerance of heterogeneity and pluralism, by their opposition to violence and war and by their pursuit of the collective good (Gosewinkel/Rucht/van den Daele/Kocka 2003: 11).<sup>8</sup> Defined as such, civil society is not strictly confined to any specific sector of society at large.

---

<sup>5</sup> In developing my relational approach I was inspired by Gosewinkel (e.g. 2005). Nevertheless, our approaches are not identical. For a more detailed account of this aspect see Lorch 2006 and 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Gosewinkel (2003: 9-12) e.g. emphasises that the state and the legal framework which it sets can be an obstacle or – in the case of a democratic constitutional state – an enabling condition for an independent and democratic civil society (*ibid.*: 1). The role of legislation in NGO government relations in Asia has been pointed out by Mayhew (2005).

<sup>7</sup> For the categorisation of Burma as a weak state see e.g. Karetnikov (2004: 49); Pedersen, Rudland, May (2000) and Englehart (2005). Will categorises Burma as a „weak or failing state“ (Will 2004).

<sup>8</sup> My own translation.

Similarly, while the main characteristic of civil society organisations is the specific type of action and interaction they practise, their degree of formality and their institutional forms may differ considerably. In this sense, there are multiple examples of civil society organisations such as advocacy groups, registered charities and developmental NGOs, but also informal community groups, faith-based organisations and self-help groups (LSE 2004).<sup>9</sup> Equally, this understanding of civil society also allows for an analysis of its dark sides (Lauth 2003: 22). For example, vertically structured relationships as well as religious and ethnic cleavages in society as a whole are often found in civil society as well (Croissant 2000: 360; Howell 1999: 17). In other words, apart from the type of action and interaction which has been defined as the main characteristic of civil society, other modes of action and interaction – such as hierarchical procedures of decision-making or exclusiveness and intolerance towards outsiders – can also prevail within specific civil society organisations.

It is the theoretical premise of the relational approach that the way civil society constitutes itself generally bears a relation to the scope of action it has. If we take this premise further, it is reasonable to assume that, more specifically, the degree to which certain social groups practice the type of action and interaction that ideally characterises civil society and the degree to which they are on the other hand characterised by more uncivil and undemocratic modes of action and interaction are also related to the scope of action available to these civil society actors. I have already stated above that I believe civil society's room for manoeuvre depends largely on the state, which thus influences how specific civil society groups are able to constitute themselves. Civil society seen in the context of authoritarianism is likely to feature various dark sides such as co-option. Moreover, the case of Burma outlined below suggests that state structures and historical processes of state building also affect how other factors such as culture influence national civil societies. Social hierarchies in Burma's political culture, for example, often reflect the vertical and undemocratic way in which authoritarian state power has been exercised throughout the country's history. Moreover, religious and ethnic cleavages within Burma's civil society often run along the lines of conflicts which the ruling state elite itself has fuelled or which have evolved during the country's violent history of colonial and post-colonial state building.

---

<sup>9</sup> I have borrowed these examples from the London School of Economics' (LSE) empirical and descriptive definition of civil society, as they apply to my relational understanding. It should be noted, however, that the LSE does not define civil society as a specific type of action and interaction.

### **3 The Scope of Action for Civil Society in Burma**

Since the crackdown on the popular uprising in 1988 there have been considerable structural impediments hindering the emergence of civil society in Burma such as the lack of fundamental civil liberties. The freedom of association and the press, for instance, has been severely restricted ever since (Steinberg 1999; Liddell 1999). To counter attempts at independent organisation, the regime has established mass organisations such as the USDA and other, more service-delivery-oriented, Governmentally Organised NGOs (GONGOS). The USDA in particular has been strengthened and radicalised in recent years. NLD Executive Committee members from inside Burma claim for instance that USDA members were primarily responsible for the brutal attack on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters in Depayin in 2003 which later became known as the the Depayin Massacre. In summer 2007 the government deployed members of Swan Ah Shin, the armed militia of USDA, to crack down on the demonstration of Buddhist monks. The state press generally also plays a crucial role in countering attempts at individual expression and in preventing civil society from voicing opposition. All publications are subjected to strict censorship (Lidell 1999: 59) and the regime controls an extensive propaganda machine via newspapers and television channels. During the September 2007 demonstrations, the state-run media denounced the peaceful protesters as terrorists supported by imperialist forces in the West. Nevertheless, the events of summer 2007 also showed that regime constraints on information in Burma do have their limits. Protesters and sympathetic bystanders managed to film the demonstrations and sent the footage to international news agencies via internet. Even though the following government crackdown was very brutal and rightly outraged the entire world, it can be argued that without this international media coverage probably even more blood would have been shed<sup>10</sup>.

Moreover, gaps in the regime structure have for various years existed in sectors in which the authoritarian state is weak or failing. Modern definitions of state attribute three core functions to it: firstly, to provide for the security of the population and control the state's territory; secondly, to provide for the welfare of the population, which includes state activities in various sectors such as the economy, labour, health, education and the environment; and thirdly, to generate legitimacy, allow for popular participation and establish a democratic constitutional state (Schneckener 2004: 12–14).

---

<sup>10</sup> In 1988 when there was no such media coverage, 3000 people were estimated to have been killed.



The research on weak states has brought to light that if a state fails to perform one or several of its core functions, other actors can move into the gaps that exist. While Rotberg refers especially to warlords and other criminal non-state actors (Rotberg 2004 6ff.), Risse also identifies economic actors, NGOs, family clans and other local groups that practise alternative forms of governance in sectors of state weakness or failure (Risse 2005: 8–12). Some of these groups account for civil society actors in line with the relational definition. These observations from the research on weak states also correspond with the finding of transition theory that the failure of the state to perform its welfare function can be conducive to the emergence of civil society under authoritarian rule. Local self-help groups can advance to fill the gaps in the provision of basic needs such as food, health, education, development and environment protection (Croissant/Lauth/Merkel 2000: 28f.). These theoretical patterns of civil society emerging in gaps left by the state are highly relevant for Burma. The state of Burma can be considered as particularly weak with regard to welfare provision. Furthermore, certain ethnic minority areas are not under the direct control of the central state, which limits its territorial power monopoly. As a result, some room for manoeuvre exists for civil society actors in the sector of welfare provision and in certain territories with a degree of ethnic autonomy – and especially where these two areas of state weakness coincide or overlap.

In Burma's welfare sector local self-help groups take over core functions of the state and try to satisfy basic needs. The emergence of such self-help groups seems to be a fairly recent phenomenon, but at least until autumn 2007 their number seemed to be steadily increasing. Civil society initiatives in Burma's welfare sector vary in their degree of formality and organisation and only a few of them are officially registered as NGOs (Heidel 2006). Nevertheless, the Directory of Local Non-Government Organisations in Myanmar which only lists organisations that have human welfare aims, are registered with the government and have an office in Rangoon, already mentions 68 NGOs (DLN 2005)<sup>11</sup>. If we include more informal community-based initiatives as well – in line with the relational definition applied in this study – the number of civil society groups active in Burma's welfare sector can comfortably be estimated to be much higher. What is encouraging in terms of civil society development is that even though most of these groups are active exclusively in the field of service delivery, some have already managed to incorporate measures of capacity building and empowerment in their

---

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted however that the DLN also lists a couple of organisations which I would rather describe as GONGOS than genuine NGOs such as the Myanmar Medical Association.

projects. Accordingly, they not only provide basic public goods, but they also organise local communities into project units and teach them the skills which are necessary for them to tackle welfare issues on their own in the future.

Welfare state failure creates some room for civil society to manoeuvre all over the country. The vast majority of civil society associations in Burma perform a service delivery function. Apart from this commonality, however, Burmese civil society associations are very diverse, because civil society space in Burma is fractured along various ethnic and religious lines. As the territorial power monopoly of the state is limited, civil society space can be fundamentally different in government-controlled and in ethnic areas. This is highly relevant for whether civil society in Burma can develop some reform pressure on a national scale. I will now depict civil society activities in Burma's welfare sector, focusing first on the government-controlled and then on the ceasefire areas. For civil society to be able to act as an agent of political change two requirements would have to be met: Firstly, there would have to be reform pressure from relevant civil society groups in both government-controlled and ceasefire areas. And secondly, there would need to be meaningful connections between these two civil society spaces.

## **4 Civil Society in Government-Controlled Areas**

Civil society associations in government-controlled areas vary in their degree of formality and organisation. Even though many groups have both religious and service delivery functions (Heidel 2006), one can differentiate between more secular Community-based Organisations (CBOs) and NGOs on the one hand and the religious civil society associations run by the Buddhist Sangha on the other. The various organisations differ with regard to both their importance as service providers and political potential.

### **4.1 CBOs and NGOs**

While the term CBO refers to informal associations, the term NGO applies to groups with a more formal organisational structure. While NGOs are registered, CBOs are not. Some local community groups have set up humanitarian self-help initiatives in sectors concerned with basic needs like food and health care. Other self-help groups have conducted small infrastructure projects on a village level such as the construction of wells. Such projects are mostly funded by donations from members of the respective local com-

munities. Thus, these traditional groups fulfil important welfare tasks and can be considered civil society associations in the relational sense. These CBOs are mostly issue-orientated and operate on a very local scale.

A specific example of the activities of local CBOs is the establishment of community-based schools which are crucial in providing village children with basic education and skills. Officially, the government mostly portrays these institutions as government schools, but, in reality, they owe their existence to the engagement and the material contributions of the respective local communities. Community-based schools are established and organised according to various patterns including for example the following: While there is a government school (building) in the village, the government is unable to recruit a village teacher, a very common problem in present-day Burma. Professional teachers are usually highly reluctant to be transferred to remote areas, especially as they receive no adequate financial compensation. As a consequence, local communities frequently establish informal groups and collect money to pay the village teacher themselves. If no professional teacher is prepared to work in the village, CBOs sometimes even choose a teacher themselves. These makeshift teachers are mostly community leaders who have a certain education as well as certain skills but who have never actually been trained as teachers. Sometimes local CBOs even construct the village school building themselves. Thereafter, such a community-based school either shares a teacher with a nearby government school or, as depicted above, the local CBO also recruits and pays the teacher itself. Officially, the government mostly declares these types of community-based schools as „extensions” to existing government schools. In reality, however, it is the local communities themselves who must be given the credit for establishing and running these schools.

Due to their informal and localised character CBOs do not have a national impact. Instead, they are only able to provide makeshift solutions to specific local problems. As unregistered organisations CBOs are hard for international donors to identify. Furthermore, unregistered initiatives often lack the skills to formulate project proposals and are reluctant to establish close contacts with international organisations for fear of repression by the regime. In fact, unregistered groups are officially not allowed to receive foreign donations. Thus, registration generally remains a crucial issue for community-based groups. However, it is also a double-edged sword. On the one hand it constitutes the only way for civil society organisations to obtain an official permission to receive much needed foreign donations and to cooperate with international partners. As a consequence, many members of the international aid community in Burma have pushed for extensive registration. On the other hand, however, registration also increases the risk of for-

merly independent initiatives becoming coopted by the regime. For example, local authorities often try to portray social services delivered by private community groups as their own or those of the national government. Specifically, local authorities are frequently reported to show up at inauguration ceremonies of local infrastructure projects realised by civil society groups to claim the credit for themselves. However, as an aid worker active at the community level in Burma told me, the local population mostly well knows how to judge these showpieces.

Another example of civil society action in the welfare sector are funeral help associations. At the community level these associations are mostly unregistered CBOs but in the cities they usually have to register as NGOs (South 2004: 247). Working on the basis of private donations and the voluntary commitment of their members, they organise and finance funerals for poor people. This support is crucial for many needy families, since the expense of a funeral would otherwise plunge them into even greater poverty and debt. One funeral help NGO, the Free Funeral Service Association, has even enjoyed the support of famous local artists. According to Htain Linn, „Burma’s poverty and economic uncertainty make an association like this indispensable” (Htain Linn 2003). In this regard, it is noteworthy that funeral help associations also fulfil an important preventive health function. In Burma’s tropical climate, not, or improperly, burying corpses can have dramatic consequences in terms of popular hygiene as it can lead to the pollution of groundwater and the outbreak of epidemics. However, in spite of their important contributions and even though their work is purely apolitical, such organisations have sometimes faced severe regime constraints in the past. Publicity, particularly in the exiled opposition’s media (see Htain Linn 2003 cited above), might have contributed to this pressure as it shed too much light on the failure of the state to perform its welfare function. Both CBOs and registered NGOs in the government-controlled areas of central Burma are mostly localised in character. As a consequence, they lack the organisational structures to mobilise large numbers of people and act as political change agents. Moreover, all of the CBOs and NGOs I interviewed said that they preferred to stay away from politics. Most of them are based in the villages and thus played no role whatsoever in the 2007 uprising which was largely confined to the bigger towns and cities, particularly Rangoon and Mandalay.

#### **4.2 The Buddhist Sangha and its Social and Political Role**

The 2007 popular uprising became known as the Saffron Revolution. The term refers to the colour of the robes of the Buddhist monks who led the protests and thereby expressed the socio-economic grievances of the population at large. The Sangha is at the heart of the population and its sufferings not only because it is the main moral pillar of society in mainly Buddhist central Burma but also because it is directly affected by the socio-economic situation of the population. As stated above, the monks depend on alms. As the living conditions of the people further deteriorated after the fuel price hike, many practising Buddhists could donate less to the monks. According to various UN sources from within the country many monks could barely afford a meal a day in the run-up to the demonstrations. At the same time the social burden carried by the monks has increased in recent years. Monastic schools or monastic education centres as they are often called, are the most prominent civil society organisations in government-controlled areas. Monastic schools reach out to poor children especially, and they require no enrolment fees. Moreover, teaching materials are also mostly provided free. Some specifically target street children and orphans and not only teach them but also provide them with food and accommodation. In fact, many monastic education centres also serve as orphanages, or vice versa. Due to the impoverishment of the population the monks' teaching load has increased enormously in recent years. Moreover, the number of children in the Buddhist orphanages has risen dramatically as many people have abandoned their children because they could not feed them any more.

Given the magnitude of the problems, the monks who took to the streets this summer can be said to have articulated the social grievances of the whole Sangha as well as of the population at large. Due to the crisis of the welfare system the Sangha has for many years acted as a stopgap without raising any public demands for economic let alone political reform. In recent years, however, the capacities of the Buddhist monasteries have become overstrained due to the further impoverishment of the population. The fuel price hike was the last straw that broke the camel's back. Members of the Buddhist clergy started to demonstrate and due to the monks' moral authority many ordinary people joined in.<sup>12</sup> However, the monks who actually led the demonstrations were usually the younger ones from the big private monk

---

<sup>12</sup> It is worth mentioning, however, that during the first days of the protests the monks still discouraged lay people from joining them, because they felt that the government would be more reluctant to use force against the highly respected Buddhist monks than against ordinary civilians. Only when the demonstrations had gathered momentum did they allow lay supporters to join them.

schools in the bigger cities<sup>13</sup> and thus constituted only a part of the whole Sangha. Older monks and more co-opted Buddhist institutions only rarely joined in.

Generally, one can differentiate between three main sub-types of monastic schools: The first category confines itself to imparting Buddhist teachings at different educational levels. The young monks who led the uprising mainly came from monk schools, monasteries which teach Buddhist monks at the tertiary – i.e. college or university – level. The monk schools thus constitute a sub-category of this first subtype of monastic schools. In actual fact they do not teach children but young adult men and most of them are located in Rangoon, Mandalay and Pakkoku. There are private and state-run monk schools, and according to a scholar of Buddhism who has him/herself studied at one of those Buddhist universities the monks who led the uprising mostly came from the private ones. Since the government crack-down following the demonstrations these private monk schools have been facing severe repression and many head monks sent their students back to their hometowns or villages in order to protect them from arrests. At the moment it seems as if their organisational structures have been severely weakened, which will probably make it difficult for these schools to serve again as umbrellas for politically vocal forces in the near future.

Most monastic schools differ from the monk schools in that as they are usually run by only one senior monk who teaches Buddhist novices as well as a number of lay-children. As I have already stated, there are various types of monastic schools, but there seem to be three main categories: The first confines itself to imparting Buddhist teachings. As depicted above monk schools constitute a subtype of this category. The second category consists of monastic schools which consider it their main task to impart Buddhist teachings but, at the same time, also teach children basic literacy skills. These second-type monastic schools are, however, unable to hold exams or to award their pupils certificates which are recognised by the government. The third category of monastic schools is distinguished by the fact that it adopts the government curriculum, which means that those schools engage in formal education. This indicates that they deliberately try to fill a gap in the state-run education system by teaching the government curriculum to children whose parents can not afford to send them to a government school.

According to official government figures, 1183 of these third type monastic schools are recognised by the government in a kind of co-education system. They seem to be registered with both the Ministry of Education and

---

<sup>13</sup> Pakkoku, where the monks' demonstrations started is a quite small town but it is a religious centre and thus has a number of big monk schools as well.

the Ministry of Religious Affairs. According to the same source, these 1183 schools reached about 158 040 pupils in the 2003–2004 academic year (MOE 2006: 25). If monastic schools are recognised by the government, their pupils also have the possibility of acquiring an officially recognised degree. They can either do their final exams at a government school or at their respective monastic school, which then, however, has to send them to the ministry responsible for marking and issuing the certificates<sup>14</sup>. For officially recognised monastic schools there also seems to be a kind of bridge system, which makes it possible for pupils to change from monastic to government school. If, for example, pupils complete the primary level at an officially recognised monastic school, they often seem to be allowed to do a special test. If they pass this test, they can get accepted at a government middle school. According to other official statistics which I obtained from a UN agency active in the country and which are largely identical to the official source (MOE 2006) cited above, the bulk of all officially recognised monastic schools teaches at the primary level (four years) or at the so-called post-primary level (six years).<sup>15</sup> Some, but much less, officially recognised monastic schools teach at the middle level.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, two to five officially recognised monastic schools were reported to teach at the high school level.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, there are also various monastic education centres that engage in computer- or vocational skills training.

---

<sup>14</sup> During my field study in summer 2006 several experts as well as teachers at monastic schools said that officially recognised monastic schools were registered with the Ministry of Education and that it was also the Ministry of Education to which all officially recognised monastic schools had to send the final exam papers for marking. However, during another research trip in spring 2007 high ranking officials from the Ministry of Education claimed that all monastic schools were under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Nevertheless, a publication of the Ministry of Education itself claims that both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs are in charge of the officially recognised monastic schools.

<sup>15</sup> Officially, primary education is supposed to last four years. However, since in many poor areas there are only primary and no secondary schools, some government primary schools have been „upgraded“ to so-called post-primary schools, which means that they now have six classes. As monastic schools are often the only educational institutions that exist, many of them have adopted the same pattern.

<sup>16</sup> According to this second official source cited here, there are 1158 officially recognised monastic schools which altogether reach 161 492 children. According to the same source, 144 008 of these children are taught at the primary or post-primary level and only 17 484 at the middle level.

<sup>17</sup> This information about the number of monastic schools active at the high school level is based on interviews I conducted in Burma in summer 2006. While some of the people interviewed claimed that five monastic schools taught at the high school level, others said it was only two. I myself was able to visit one of them and read the funding proposal for a second one.

Most monastic schools teach novices and lay-children together. Moreover, teachers who work or volunteer at monastic schools are not necessarily always Buddhist monks. Quite often, indeed, Buddhist monasteries serve rather as protective umbrellas for more secular educational initiatives taking place under their auspices. Sometimes, for instance, monasteries simply provide their compound and then invite lay professional teachers to volunteer. Furthermore, many monastic education centres provide their services regardless of race and religion, but education is certainly conducted in accordance with Buddhist values. Indeed, the main purpose of some Buddhist education programmes is to counter similar efforts by the Christian churches and prevent people converting from Buddhism to Christianity. This is especially relevant with regard to those monastic schools which are orphanages at the same time. For instance, even though not all of the children they teach and care for are Buddhist, some monastic orphanages require every child who wants to live in their compound to wear a Buddhist novice's robe. Some of these orphanages have managed to establish their own medical as well as some income-generating facilities such as tailoring and carpentry. Moreover, as monastic orphanages mostly lack the money to pay any staff, their pupils usually not only have to cook and wash themselves but they also have to care for the maintenance of school buildings and other facilities. Consequently, monastic education centres are mostly highly self-organised. Financially, however, most of them depend on donations from local communities or, in some cases, international donors. Mostly with the help of small international donor organisations or friends, some monastic schools have also managed to establish libraries with relatively rich collections of books.

Monastic education centres vary both in size and in the degree to which they are co-opted by the regime. While some only have a few dozen pupils, others have between 100 and 800. Many rural Buddhist groups are localised and centred around individual monks. While they are relatively independent, their radius of action is necessarily limited to a few beneficiaries and their education facilities and materials are often very basic. Such informal initiatives are often invisible to Western donors and consequently receive little or no foreign support (South 2004: 248f.). By contrast, large monastic schools are often granted a surprisingly large scope of action at first glance. The Dhamma Buddhist Education Centre in Rangoon,<sup>18</sup> for example, runs its own medical as well as some income-generating facilities. It teaches English as a foreign language and has established some so-called special classes for talented pupils. These are much smaller than the regular classes where usually up to 100 students sit in one room. The Dhamma Buddhist Education

---

<sup>18</sup> Organisation known to me; name and place changed for safety's sake.



Centre is highly popular with poor parents not only because it provides good educational services free of charge but also because it teaches all its classes in shifts, thereby accommodating its schedules to the need of working children. Teachers at the school are mostly university students who have not yet completed their studies.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the school is officially allowed to engage in formal education. In addition, it maintains a library with a relatively rich collection of books. It also has a language laboratory as well as computer facilities and offers computer training courses for pupils and teachers alike. However, this room for manoeuvre is directly dependent on the personal contacts that the presiding monk maintains or used to maintain with several high-ranking officials. While such personal linkages with the ruling establishment undoubtedly compromise organisational independence, they are also the reason the institution has not faced any serious repression and been granted considerable autonomy in running its programmes up to the present day. As a local university professor told me, many of the monks who run big monastic schools in Burma received their own education at the state-run Theravada Buddhist University, an institution which can be considered as an instrument of the government to both promote but also to „purify” and control the Buddhist faith. To sum up, in spite of co-option (or precisely because of it), a large part of the Buddhist Sangha still enjoys a measurable scope of action, which enables it to offer essential welfare services that the state fails to provide.

Monastic schools and orphanages are undoubtedly the most important civil-society-based welfare institutions in government-controlled areas. The establishment of a bridge system which integrates some of the monastic schools into the formal education system suggests that even the government has realised the importance of the contributions they make. Nevertheless, the officially recognised monastic schools are still quite few and reliable data about the overall number of monastic schools is not available. As a consequence, it is reasonable to assume that even though monastic education and welfare institutions serve an important stopgap function in social service delivery they do not have the capacities to act as a substitute for a functioning welfare state.

The monk schools, where most of the young monks who led the 2007 uprising came from, constitute only a relatively small but nonetheless well organised and politically vocal subcategory of all monastic schools. However, the organisational structures of these private monk schools seem to

---

<sup>19</sup> This is not to suggest that the school performs worse than state-run schools. Even the Ministry of Education itself admits that not all teachers who work in government schools have received academic training (MOE 2006).

have been severely weakened during the government raids following the demonstrations. How has monastic education in general been affected by the crackdown? As first indications suggest, monastic schools which are run by a single head monk or a small number of senior monks and teach a large number of young novices and lay-children do not seem to have been greatly affected. The picture might look different for some of the monastic orphanages though. Many of them require the children they host to wear monks' robes and a number of them cater to older boys. As voices from within the country suggest, these orphanages might now seem suspicious to the regime and have to face more repression than before, since they resemble the monk schools in terms of their structures and beneficiaries. As a rule, the more co-opted a monastic school, the less repression it seems to be presently facing. While almost all private monk schools in Rangoon had to be abandoned, for instance, the government monk schools seem to be continuing to work as usual.

As regards the role of the international aid community in the field of monastic education two aspects are crucial. Firstly, while there are quite a number of international support initiatives for monastic schools these are usually informal in character and mostly based on personal relations between a Burmese head monk on the one hand and private individuals or rather small friendship groups from abroad on the other. The big INGOs and UN organisations active in Burma usually do not cooperate with the monastic schools as the latter normally do not comply with international donor regulations. Secondly, the private monk schools used to be completely unknown to most aid workers and Burma scholars, which is one of the main reasons why hardly any Burma expert had expected the monks to play a leading role in a popular uprising – let alone any uprising.

## **5 Room for Manoeuvre for Civil Society in the Welfare Sector: Ceasefire Areas**

Burma's ethnic conflicts are in large part rooted in colonial state-building and rule (e.g. Smith 2002). From 1885 to 1937 the country was governed by the British as part of British India. Like many states in the South the Burmese state is mainly a colonial construct and Martin Smith has described the minority policy of the British colonial administration as a classical case of divide and rule (*ibid.*: 2002: 6). Consequently, the violent civil wars which erupted shortly after independence and in which ethnic minority groups struggled for territorial and cultural autonomy can be described as „protracted post-colonial conflict(s)”, as Grawers has aptly stated (Grawers

2007: 8). Due to such ethnic civil wars in several parts of the country the power monopoly of the Burmese central government has been severely limited ever since. Various ethnic territories have long been exempted from the direct control of the central state. Paradoxically, it is also true, however, that the Burmese military regime has sometimes deliberately fuelled ethnic conflicts as part of its divide and rule strategy in order to legitimate its authoritarian grip on power. Up to the present day the military continues to portray its rule as a necessity to preserve national unity in an ethnically fragmented country (Hingst 2003: 107f.).

While a number of ethnic regions have thus been outside the direct control of the central state for decades, it was the ceasefire movement that caused the change in state-society relations, which in turn enabled the re-emergence of civil society in ethnic areas in recent years (South 2007: 149f.). Since 1989 the regime has negotiated ceasefires with most of the armed ethnic resistance groups, thereby officially granting them some degree of autonomy. As a matter of fact, the refusal of the military regime to negotiate with collective ethnic fronts again reflected the pattern of a deliberate divide and rule policy (South 2003). Nevertheless, many experts and international aid workers agree that some of the ceasefire agreements have led to the emergence or enlargement of spaces for civil society (Smith 1999: 37–49; Purcell 1999: 89ff.; South 2004: 233).

Furthermore, the emergence of civil society spaces in some minority areas has not only been facilitated by the end of armed conflict brought about by the ceasefires and the increase in government-recognised ethnic autonomy resulting therefrom. It must also be seen in the broader context of the enormous underdevelopment in these war-torn communities. While the central government is mostly unable or unwilling to invest adequate amounts of money in the reconstruction of ethnic minority areas, it might equally be afraid that the armed resistance groups will call off the ceasefires due to economic frustration. This may be an important reason why the military regime allows development projects to be conducted by civil society actors in ethnic minority areas (ICG 2001: 23). Consequently, as in government-controlled areas, it is mostly in the sector of welfare provision that civil society activities have been tolerated in ethnic territories.

The emergent spaces are filled by civil society initiatives, varying in degree of formality and organisation, in the sectors of development, culture, education and welfare. Civil society in ethnic minority regions – which are in fact often multi-ethnic and not ethnically homogeneous areas – is often divided along the ethnic cleavages that have emerged and consolidated during decades of divide and rule in the colonial and post-colonial Burmese state. Particularly, most ethnic minority-based civil society groups are ex-

tremely suspicious of members of the Burman majority and often do not accept them as beneficiaries let alone as partners of their development projects. Nor did the Saffron Revolution reach most ceasefire areas. As many people in Burma's ethnic minority areas are Christians or animists the demonstrating Buddhist monks could not mobilise many followers there. While there seem to have been some rather small-scale demonstrations in the towns of Sittwe (Rakhine State), Myitkyina (Kachin State) and Mawlemyein (Mon State) (ICG 2008: 2), most other major ethnic towns have remained completely unaffected by the uprising in central Burma, and while the major ethnic political parties as well as civil society actors – such as the Culture and Literature Committees – seem to have empathised with the monks, they have not staged any protests on their own.

### **5.1 CBOs and NGOs**

At the local level, there are some informal initiatives, CBOs and small NGOs that focus on the basic developmental needs and reconstruction of war-torn local ethnic minority communities. Mostly, these are issue-orientated and are highly decentralised. The Development Support Programme in Mon State<sup>20</sup>, for example, focuses on informal education and capacity building. Its organisers train local beneficiaries in the analysis of social problems, in the writing of funding proposals and in project management. The final goal of this initiative is to promote the emergence of new, self-supporting NGOs. According to its organisers, it is unregistered, but it is still tolerated by the local authorities because it will satisfy basic human and developmental needs in the long term.

Unlike in the government-controlled areas where there are no really big secular NGOs, at least two big NGOs exist in the ceasefire areas. Both of them grew out of the Kachin ceasefire but have since managed to extend their scope of action to other ceasefire, and even some government-controlled areas as well. The Metta Development and the Shalom Foundation are registered NGOs that have become popular with international experts and aid workers on account of their relative independence and community-based approach to reconstructing their war-torn areas (e.g. South 2004: 247f.; ICG 2001: 23; ICG 2003: 17; Perinova 2005: 14–25).

The Metta Development Foundation was set up in 1998 (ICG 2001: 23). In 2006 the organisation had sixteen staff members in Rangoon and Lashio as well as 112 more in other cities and towns. Moreover, 200 associates

---

<sup>20</sup> Organisation known to me; name and place changed for safety's sake.

were working for Metta on a project basis. Metta is active in a variety of welfare sectors such as the reconstruction of local communities after decades of civil war, sustainable agriculture, disaster relief and emergency food assistance, the promotion of women in development and early childhood care (Metta Development Foundation 2006). As a matter of principle, it provides services regardless of ethnicity and religion. Metta has contributed greatly to bringing humanitarian relief and laying the foundations for sustainable development. What is more, however, is that the organisation has also managed to incorporate various community-building measures into its projects which are to lead ultimately to the creation of self-reliant NGOs.

To this end, Participatory Action Research (PAR) forms the basis of Metta's fieldwork. At the outset of the PAR phase of a project, members of the envisaged target communities are provided with the skills necessary to identify their communities' most pressing needs. In 2006, 5324 community representatives had already received such PAR training (Metta Development Foundation 2006: 4). On the basis of the PAR analyses conducted by the communities themselves, Metta initiates development programmes tailored to the needs of its beneficiaries. After the completion of the PAR phase, grassroots programmes are organised empowering local communities to conduct development projects themselves. To implement its projects, Metta organises the target communities into local development committees and later supports their coalescence into self-reliant NGOs under the umbrella of Metta (Metta website). The emergent organisations are very diverse as regards their focus and goals and include women's savings and loan groups, Early Child Care and Development Centres, community hospitals and community nursing schools.

A recent success story is Metta's Farmer Field Schools' (FFS) programme, as it has served as a catalyst for increasing rice production in various parts of Kachin state (Metta Development Foundation 2006: 8). Basically, the FFS constitute forums – each with approximately 30 members – where farmers can exchange experiences and identify best practices concerning different cultivation methods. The FFS also serve as capacity building centres where farmers are taught how they can lawfully purchase land, register their estate or acquire rights of land use. The full importance of this particular function only becomes obvious against the backdrop that civil war, constant insecurity and forced migration have affected many of the now ceasefire regions for decades. As a consequence, many farmers are not familiar with the legal requirements to purchase and own land. (In fact, many people living in these former civil war areas are not familiar with the economic opportunities and the practical needs that come with settling down in general.) Furthermore, the FFS programme is also special in that it provides

communities with a legal space to organise, which is another opportunity that most communities in former civil war areas have not enjoyed for decades. From 2001 to 2004 471 FFS were implemented and 8,169 farmers participated in the related training programmes, thereby enabling them to share their experiences within the broader community as well (Metta Development Foundation 2006: 8). Programme Director Daw Seng Raw has issued public statements about Metta's work, which provide evidence that the organisation deliberately attempts to contribute to the development of civil society in Burma. „We believe“, she stated in her foreword to Metta's 2004 Annual Report, „the concept of community based projects lends itself readily to the creation of civil society in Myanmar“ (Seng Raw 2004).

In 2001 Saboi Jum, mediator in the Kachin ceasefire negotiations, founded the Shalom Foundation (ICG 2003: 17). Even though Saboi Jum is a pastor, Shalom was founded as a secular NGO that is active in conflict resolution and peace building between various ethnic groups, some of which used to fight each other in the past. Its personnel are highly qualified and committed to their work. Shalom's project approach is participative and the foundation uses traditional Christian and Buddhist ideas on peace and mutual understanding in order to reach communities that are unfamiliar with modern concepts of peace building. In a country like Burma, which is divided along various ethnic and religious lines, such a bottom-up approach to establishing mutual trust constitutes an indispensable contribution to social development.

While having to keep up some functional ties with the ruling establishment, both Metta and Shalom also serve as protective umbrellas for smaller and more independent civil society groups within their radius of action (e.g. South 2004: 248). Despite their size, neither of the two seems to have any real political potential; rather do they tend to steer clear of politics and carefully manage their relations with the authorities. Interestingly, representatives of both organisations describe their main formula for success as making themselves transparent, thereby proving to the regime that they do not have a hidden agenda. While their prominence with the international community is fully justified by their valuable achievements in the field of social welfare it also comes at a cost. As an expert from within Burma suggested, Metta in particular might have been growing too fast in recent years. Due to their context of action the organisational structures of both Metta and Shalom are still rudimentary in comparison to big and well-known developmental NGOs in other – particularly democratic – developing countries. The absorptive capacities of even these two biggest Burmese NGOs are thus limited and too much funding and responsibilities might easily overstrain their structures and human resources. Moreover, Metta and Shalom are often taken to represent Burmese civil society at large. This can be problematic as

well. The picture of Burma's civil society is much more multifaceted. Particularly, most indigenous civil society associations have a religious background. Yet, the international focus on Metta and Shalom often prevents donors from searching for other local partners and only a few of the big international organisations in Burma cooperate with religious associations or CBOs. In order to contribute to social change however, donor policies would need to promote a diversification and pluralisation of civil society in Burma instead of fostering the growth of two organisations only, however valuable their work may be.

## **5.2 Christian Churches**

Burma's Christian churches are the most important providers of fundamental welfare services in the sectors of development and education in the ceasefire areas.<sup>21</sup> As Daw May Oo, who was a refugee in Karen State<sup>22</sup> in the late 1980s and therefore became a beneficiary of the welfare and education programmes conducted by the Christian churches, aptly says, „fundamental needs like education, health and food, most of the time in remote areas, will be addressed by the church organisations, instead of the government having a programme or a system.” (May Oo 2004)

The contributions which Burma's Christian churches make to bridging some of the gaps that exist in the state-run welfare system of the ceasefire areas often go hand in hand with community-based self-help initiatives, such as the establishment of community-based schools depicted above. As regards community-based schools in particular, a common scheme seems to be that the government provides the educational infrastructure such as a school building but – just as in remote areas under government control – is unable to pay for a teacher. In such cases, teachers are often provided by the local churches and supported by the respective local communities. If there is not even a government school building in the village, local ethnic communities sometimes even construct the school building on their own and the teacher is again provided by the local church or bible school. Parallels to civil society

---

<sup>21</sup> As most Christians in Burma belong to minority groups, the churches are mostly active in ethnic areas.

<sup>22</sup> At that time Karen State was an area of civil war between Karen insurgents and the Burmese central government. Up to the present day, the Karen National Union (KNU) still engages in armed struggle against the government and some parts of Karen State are still areas of ongoing military conflict. However, the role that the churches play in delivering welfare services in the ceasefire areas is the same as illustrated in the quote.

engagement in gaps of the state-run education system in government-controlled areas are thus evident.

Furthermore, according to a leading church official, Burma's Christian churches run about 1500 nursery or pre-primary schools, particularly in ethnic minority areas. Apart from playing and singing songs, children who go to church-based pre-primary schools also learn the Burmese and the Roman alphabet as well as the alphabet of their respective ethnic language. Interestingly, up to now, church-based pre-primary schools seem to have been relatively free to formulate their own curriculum and set their topics as long as they refrained from criticising the regime. Recently, however, the government seems to have become a bit wary of these church-based education institutions. As a consequence, it is currently planning to develop certain guidelines for the curricula of church-based pre-primary schools, but as the competences here seem to be divided or even disputed between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Welfare, this plan seems so far to exist on paper only. Moreover, according to one source, the government has announced that in the future teachers working at church-based pre-primary schools need to be trained by the government. While this measure would definitely curtail the independence of these Christian schools, it remains highly questionable whether the government actually has the capacity necessary to implement it.

Moreover, there are about 30 Christian colleges – or so-called Seminaries – all over the country, but especially in ethnic minority areas. The Seminaries can be attended after matriculation. Their prime mission is to teach Bible Studies, but as most of the books they use are in English, they also impart good spoken and written English skills. Like many monastic schools, some Seminaries are highly self-organised. Often, students live in the compound of the Seminary, because their home towns or villages are far away. One such Christian college which I visited not only had its own cooking and basic medical facilities but also a number of sewing machines so that the students could mend and make their own clothes. In theory, all important decisions were supposed to be made by the founder and principal of the Seminary. However, he/she usually had to travel a lot. Thus, in practice, a committee of teachers administered the college. Students were allowed to form a students' council which was in charge of organising community activities such as sports competitions.

The Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT) in Rangoon serves as a Christian University and gives Bachelor as well as Master degrees. Even though it provides tertiary education, it is registered as a religious and not as an educational institution. Students who attend the MIT can not only study Theology but also choose among a limited number of secular subjects in-



cluding English and Economy. The degrees from the Christian colleges and from the MIT are not recognised by the government. They are however recognised within the national Christian community with which most of the students seek employment after completing their education. Some of these tertiary Christian education institutions also resort to alternative accreditation methods such as having certificates accredited by international education associations.

In Christian communities the co-ordination between local associations and INGOs has often worked well. Many Christian church leaders have contacts to churches abroad and are therefore familiar with Western approaches to education, development and welfare provision. Furthermore, local congregations often have a fairly sophisticated organisational structure, including youth and women's groups, which facilitates targeted implementation of communal projects (Smith 1999: 44). Another interesting aspect is that Burma's Christian churches have managed to establish and maintain national network structures, such as the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC), the Catholic Bishops' Conference (CBC) and the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) (ICG 2003: 17). These network structures constitute a great asset with regard to the coordination of the various national church-based welfare activities. The MCC, for example, provides capacity-building programmes including teacher trainings for its member churches and constitutes a common forum where representatives from different member churches can exchange experiences from the welfare sector. Generally speaking, almost all the big national Christian umbrella associations such as the MBC, the CBC and the MCC run various developmental programmes, some of which focus on matters like peace building and women's affairs. Moreover, they deliver humanitarian aid and disaster relief and conduct poppy substitution projects as well as HIV/AIDS and other health programmes in remote minority areas.

According to the International Crisis Group (ICG) „The regime likely tolerates Christian projects particularly in ethnic minority areas, because they fulfil basic welfare demands not met by the state“ (ICG 2003: 18). Furthermore, church leaders have often acted as mediators in ceasefire negotiations (ibid.: 17). As a consequence, some of them have managed to negotiate an expansion of the scope of action available for church-related organisations in their respective ceasefire areas. It would be wrong to assume that the relations between the Christian churches and the central government are free of tensions though. The churches have sometimes used their welfare projects for missionary purposes as well, which has often annoyed state authorities. On the other hand the central government has in some cases prohibited the establishment of purely welfare-oriented Church programmes

in areas with a predominantly Buddhist population even though they could have benefited impoverished groups for whom adequate state welfare services are not available. In sum, the Christian churches are very important, well organised and astonishingly independent civil society actors, but mutual mistrust between them and the military government persists and regime restrictions linger. Moreover, as the vast majority of the Burmese population is Buddhist the churches are marginalised. This limits both their role as social service providers and their political potential. As a consequence, it is very unlikely that they will be able to develop any great pressure for political reform on a national scale. Accordingly, to my knowledge, church organisations played no role in the 2007 uprising.

### **5.3 Culture and Literature Committees**

In recent years, the regime has allowed various ethnic minority parties to issue publications in their own ethnic and local languages, which would have been unthinkable before the ceasefires. Following this increase in ethnic autonomy, civil society initiatives in the sectors of culture and literature have been mushrooming, manifest in the local Culture and Literature Committees which are legal organisations and exist in almost every ethnic village. As a consequence of their legal status, a lot of different activities take place under the umbrellas of these committees. Specifically, most of them focus in some way on literacy and teach children and illiterate adults important spoken and written language skills. Most Culture and Literature Committees teach the local ethnic language and rely mainly on community education approaches such as informal education programmes and summer schools. Others, however, already seem to have incorporated Burmese and other non-culture-related subjects into their curriculum. In fact, one UN representative active in the country told me that some Culture and Literature Committees were even able to engage in formal education and had adopted the government curriculum, particularly in Mon State. Like the Buddhist monastic schools and the educational institutions run by the Christian churches, most Culture and Literature Committees are active at the primary education level. However, there also seem to be some that teach at a higher level and impart a number of skills. Apart from their activities in the field of education in the narrow sense, some Culture and Literature Committees also engage in health-related educational initiatives. For example they translate information brochures about HIV/AIDS prevention and other health issues which international aid organisations active in Burma's health sector mostly publish in Burmese, into the ethnic language of their respective region and distribute them among the members of their local communities.

While ethnic Culture and Literature Committees teach members of their respective ethnic communities important spoken and written language skills, at least some of them tend to exclude members of other ethnic groups. Their welfare provision is thus often selective and localised. What is more, Culture and Literature Committees also risk becoming culturally divisive, thereby reinforcing ethnic cleavages. It is thus highly questionable whether they can develop pressure for democratic reform on a national scale, though at least some Culture and Literature Committees can probably mobilise their local constituencies for political purposes. In the 50s they sometimes served as the backbone of various ethnic nationalist movements. As a consequence they probably continue to be important points of reference with regard to the (re)construction of ethnic identity in Burma. An important future challenge for international actors cooperating with Culture and Literature Committees will thus be to encourage an internal change towards a more inclusive character of these organisations so that they can facilitate a much needed dialogue and exchange between different ethnic groups as well.

## **6 Conclusion**

State weakness has led to the emergence of civil society spaces in present-day Burma. However, state weakness and authoritarianism also affect how Burmese civil society is able to constitute itself. Thus, whether Burma's civil society will be confined to serving a stopgap function or whether it can act as an agent of political change as well eventually also depends on the state in which it operates. State weakness can be conducive to the emergence of civil society but it is also Janus-faced, particularly in highly authoritarian regimes.

State failure to provide adequate welfare facilities seems to be the key factor enabling the existence of civil society spaces in Burma. Moreover, the state is also weak with regard to its territorial power monopoly and many ethnic minority areas are not under the direct control of the central state. Due to the conclusion of ceasefire agreements which have brought an end to armed conflict in many of these regions, civil society spaces have grown significantly in various areas with a degree of ethnic autonomy since the early 90s. What is also crucial in this regard is that Burma's ethnic territories are also particularly affected by the failure of the national welfare system. In other words, they constitute regions in which two areas of state weakness – territorial state weakness and welfare state failure – coincide or overlap. The Burmese ceasefire areas are particularly interesting with regard to research on authoritarian sub-types of weak states, suggesting as they do

that in authoritarian regimes territorial state weakness can in general be conducive to the emergence of civil society, because the constraints posed by the authoritarian central state are limited in areas which have a degree of local autonomy. However, whether civil society does in fact emerge in such partly autonomous territories ultimately depends on the political character of the respective parastatal authority that has moved into the gap left by the central state. While some ceasefire parties govern their areas in a hierarchical manner and have mainly prevented the emergence of civil society associations, others such as the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) have been more willing to tolerate self-help initiatives in the welfare sector (ICG 2003: 13).

State weakness has been conducive to the re-emergence of civil society associations all over Burma, but it has also led to various ethnic and religious cleavages within the national civil society. Most importantly, civil society space in Burma is territorially fractured along ethnic lines, as the territorial power monopoly of the state is limited. Due to the existence of partly autonomous regions which are territorially and politically largely separated from each other (as well as from the central state), civil society can not act as a change agent on a national scale. This became evident last summer, when the Saffron Revolution led by members of the Buddhist Sangha did not reach most ceasefire areas but remained largely confined to the bigger towns and cities in predominantly Buddhist central Burma, which limited its pressure for economic and political reform.

In both central Burma and in the ceasefire areas there are a number of civil society initiatives in the welfare sector. However, they are mostly localised and lack meaningful connections with each other. Similarly, the private monk schools which most of the young monks who led the 2007 uprising came from, constitute only a relatively small, albeit well organised, subgroup of the monastic schools in Burma. Even though they certainly expressed the economic grievances of the whole Sangha (as well as those of the broader population) many of the more conservative Buddhist institutions as well as many secular (and Christian) civil society groups did not join their protests. The overwhelming majority of the civil society groups active in Burma's welfare sector are still apolitical in character or even to some degree co-opted by the regime. While it became apparent during last summer's demonstrations that parts of the Buddhist Sangha have an enormous political potential which the international community had not expected it currently seems as if these groups have been severely weakened by the crackdown. Many young monks who led the protests were arrested and most of the private monk schools were abandoned as the head monks sent their students to the villages in order to protect them from prosecution.

Even though they were not involved in the protests, many other independent civil society initiatives have also been facing increased government repression since the crackdown. The more apolitical and co-opted organisations seem to have been less affected, but the overall tendency seems to be that civil society space is shrinking. Once again the military government has shown that it absolutely refuses to tolerate any kind of open political opposition. Given that the prosecution of dissidents is still going on, it seems that currently, civil society in central Burma can only survive if it goes back to where it started from: to the apolitical delivery of welfare services.

International aid organisations have never really considered Burma's civil society as an agent of political change. To my knowledge all the civil-society-based welfare groups that international donors work with are purely apolitical in character. Indeed, the fact that the donor community in Burma did not foresee the uprising and was virtually taken by surprise, should provide evidence enough for their apolitical engagement. Currently, international aid organisations active in Burma will have to focus on trying their best to protect the social space that emerged for civil society before 2007. Even though they lack the capacity to act as a substitute for a functioning welfare state, civil society groups help to sustain basic welfare structures and human resources. Thus, they can and should be engaged as partners in the delivery and distribution of humanitarian aid. Even if purely welfare-oriented, such cooperation can be considered as highly valuable in its own terms as it helps to create local ownership of aid programmes without necessarily strengthening the regime and thereby contributes to making donor engagement more sustainable.

In terms of sustainability itself, local and small civil society initiatives appear to be particularly important. Apolitical in character and based on personal arrangements with local authorities, they seem to be much less dependent on developments and changes at the level of high power politics than bigger and somewhat more political civil society associations as well as international aid organisations including INGOs or the UN. However, cooperating with local civil society actors in Burma will require difficult compromises and decisions on the part of the donor community. One such difficult choice which donors mostly have to make when choosing local counterpart organisations is between cooption and informality. Bigger organisations are mostly more formalised and have better capacities to meet funding requirements such as proposal writing and monitoring. Moreover, they are often registered and as a consequence officially permitted to receive foreign funding. However, the bigger an organisation is, the more coopted it usually tends to be. Metta and Shalom are maybe the only exceptions to that rule. Smaller initiatives are usually much more independent but they are also

often completely unfamiliar with formal donor requirements. Moreover, if they are not registered, channelling funds to them often requires unconventional approaches which might clash with the guidelines which international aid organisations have to follow in order to satisfy their own donors' demands for transparency. Moreover, civil society organisations in Burma mirror many of the dark sides of the state in which they are operating. For example, the internal structure of civil society groups in Burma is often hierarchical, they don't favour active participation by their members with respect to decision-making, and they sometimes lack transparency. They thus reflect the vertical and undemocratic way in which authoritarian state power has been exercised in Burma for decades, which corresponds to the theoretical assumptions of the relational approach.

At present the biggest problem for international aid organisations may well be that they are facing harsh regime repression themselves, which limits their ability to protect and create space for local civil society actors. What is needed at this stage is more research about the changing conditions on the ground. The fact that most aid workers and Burma experts could not foresee the 2007 uprising and had no contacts whatsoever with its main actors aptly shows how little the international community knows about the state of civil society in Burma. As international organisations remain fixated on secular NGOs when looking for local partners almost none of the big aid organisations active in the country has maintained meaningful working relations with the Buddhist monastic schools. When the monk schools emerged as the most important institutions in the 2007 uprising they were known by nobody except a few scholars of Buddhism. There is an urgent need for more extensive and open discussion both among the donor community and between donors and experts from various fields of Burma Studies, aimed at pooling experiences in order to identify best practices in overcoming the obstacles that exist.

## Literature

- ALTSEAN Burma (2002), *A Peace of Pie? Burma's Humanitarian Aid Debate*, Special Report, Bangkok: ALTSEAN Burma
- Croissant, Aurel (2000), "Zivilgesellschaft und Transformation in Ostasien", in: Merkel, Wolfgang (ed.), *Systemwechsel 5. Zivilgesellschaft und Transformation*, Opladen: Leske+Budrich, pp. 335–372
- Croissant, Aurel / Lauth, Hans-Joachim / Merkel, Wolfgang (2000), "Zivilgesellschaft und Transformation: ein internationaler Vergleich", in: Merkel, Wolfgang (ed.), *Systemwechsel 5. Zivilgesellschaft und Transformation*, Opladen: Leske+Budrich, pp. 9–49

- Directory of Local Non-Government Organizations in Myanmar (DLN 2005), November 2005
- Edwards, Michael (2004), *Civil Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Englehart, N. A. (2005), "Is Regime Change enough for Burma? The Problem of State Capacity", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLV, No. 4, pp. 622–644
- EU Council Common Position 2006/318/CFSP of 27 April 2006 renewing restrictive measures against Burma/Myanmar
- Global Fund (2005), "Fact Sheet: Termination of Grants to Myanmar", 18.8.05. Online: [http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/media\\_center/press/pr\\_050819\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/media_center/press/pr_050819_factsheet.pdf), accessed 19.8.05
- Gosewinkel, Dieter (2003), *Zivilgesellschaft – eine Erschließung des Themas von seinen Grenzen her*, Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Discussion Paper No. SP IV 2003–505
- (2005), "Civil Society – Developing the Topic from its Boundaries", in: Heinrich Böll Foundation (ed.), *Towards Good Society? Civil Society Actors, the State, and the Business Class in Southeast Asia – Facilitators of or Impediments to a Strong, Democratic, and Fair Society?*, Berlin, pp. 11–24
- Gosewinkel, Dieter / Rucht, Dieter / van den Daele, Wolfgang / Kocka, Jürgen (2003), "Introduction", in: Gosewinkel, Dieter et al. (ed.), *Zivilgesellschaft national und transnational*, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Jahrbuch 2003, Berlin: edition sigma, pp. 11–26
- Grawers, Mikael (2007), "Introduction: Ethnicity against State – State against Ethnic Diversity?", in: Grawers, Mikael (ed.), *Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Burma*, Copenhagen: NIAS Press, pp. 1–33
- Guan, Lee Hock (2004), "Introduction: Civil Society in Southeast Asia", in: Guan, Lee Hock (ed.), *Civil Society in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: NIAS Press, pp. 1–26
- Heidel, Brian (2006), "The Growth of Civil Society in Myanmar". Online: <http://him.civiblog.org/attachments/1791034/Myanmar%20Civil%20Society%20text.pdf>, accessed 25.04.08
- Heng, Russell Hian-Khng (2004), "Civil Society Effectiveness and the Vietnamese State – Despite or Because of the Lack of Autonomy", in: Guan, Lee Hock (ed.), *Civil Society in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: NIAS Press, pp. 144–166
- Hingst, René (2003), *Burma im Wandel. Hindernisse und Chancen einer Demokratisierung in Burma/Myanmar*, Berlin: Logos
- Howell, Jude (1999), "Manufacturing Civil Society from the Outside: Some Dilemmas and Challenges", Paper Presented at the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) Conference in September 1999
- Htain Linn (2003), "Dead Set on Helping", *The Irrawaddy*, Vol. 11, No. 10, December. Online: <http://www.irrawaddy.org/database/2003/vol11.10/culture/html>, accessed 03.10.05

- Human Rights Watch (ed.) (2008), *World Report 2008*. Online: [http://hrw.org/wr2k8/pdfs/wr2k8\\_web.pdf](http://hrw.org/wr2k8/pdfs/wr2k8_web.pdf), accessed 25.04.08
- International Crisis Group (ICG) (2001), *Myanmar: The Role of Civil Society*, Asia Report No. 27, Bangkok/Brussels. Online: [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/report\\_archive/A400503\\_06122001.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/report_archive/A400503_06122001.pdf), accessed 25.04.08
- (2002a), *Myanmar: The Politics of Humanitarian Aid*, Asia Report No. 32, Bangkok/Brussels. Online: [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/report\\_archive/A400602\\_02042002-2.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/report_archive/A400602_02042002-2.pdf), accessed 25.04.08
- (2003), *Myanmar Backgrounder: Ethnic Minority Politics*, Asia Report No. 52, Bangkok/Brussels. Online: [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/report\\_archive/A400967\\_07052003.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/report_archive/A400967_07052003.pdf), accessed 25.04.08
- (2006), *New Threats to Humanitarian Aid*, Asia Briefing No. 58, Yangon/Brussels. Online: [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/burma\\_myanmar/b58\\_myanmar\\_new\\_threats\\_to\\_humanitarian\\_aid.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/burma_myanmar/b58_myanmar_new_threats_to_humanitarian_aid.pdf), accessed 25.04.08
- (2008), *Burma/Myanmar: After the Crackdown*, Asia Report No. 144, Yangon/Jakarta/Brussels. Online: [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/burma\\_myanmar/144\\_burma\\_myanmar\\_after\\_the\\_crackdown.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/burma_myanmar/144_burma_myanmar_after_the_crackdown.pdf), accessed 25.04.08
- Karetnikov, Dimitri (2004), “Figure 1.4. Collapsed, Failed, Failing and Weak States, 2003: Region 4: Asia”, in: Rotberg, Robert I. (ed.), *When States Fail. Causes and Consequences*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 49
- Lauth, Hans-Joachim (2003), “Zivilgesellschaft als Konzept und die Suche nach ihren Akteuren”, in: Bauerkämper, Arnd (ed.), *Die Praxis der Zivilgesellschaft. Akteure, Handeln und Strukturen in internationalen Vergleich*, Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, pp. 31–54
- Liddell, Zunetta (1999), “No Room to Move: Legal Constraints on Civil Society in Burma”, in: Burma Center Netherlands (BNC) and Transnational Institute (TNI) (eds.) (1999), *Strengthening Civil Society in Burma. Possibilities and Dilemmas for International NGOs*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp. 54–68
- Lorch, Jasmin (2006): “Civil Society under Authoritarian Rule: The Case of Myanmar”, *Südostasien aktuell*, No. 2/2006, pp. 3–37
- (2007): “Myanmar’s Civil Society – a Patch for the National Education System? The Emergence of Civil Society in Areas of State Weakness”, *Südostasien aktuell*, No. 3/2007, pp. 3–35
- London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) (2004), “Definition of Civil Society”. Online: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/introduction.htm>, accessed 12.03.04
- May Oo (2004), Director of Communication of the Free Burma Coalition, Interview, Washington D.C., 20 February
- Mayhew, S. H. (2005), “Hegemony, Politics and Ideology: The Role of Legislation in NGO-Government Relations in Asia”, *The Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 5, pp. 727–758



- Metta Development Foundation (ed.) (2006), *Metta Annual Report 2005–2006. Promoting Local Initiatives, Ending Exclusion. Regeneration Initiative*. 8th Annual Report, 01 April 2005 – 31 March 2006, Yangon 2006
- Metta website. Online: <http://www.metta-myanmar.org>, accessed 18.03.05
- Ministry of Education (MOE) (2006), *EFA Implementation in Myanmar*. Government of the Union of Myanmar, Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MOP) (2006), *Guidelines for UN Agencies, International Organizations and NGO/INGOs on Cooperation Programme in Myanmar*
- New Light of Myanmar*, 28 September 2007
- Pedersen, Morten B. / Rudland, Emily / May, Ronald J. (eds.) (2000), *Burma/Myanmar. Strong Regime, Weak State?*, Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing
- Perinova, Marie (2005), *Civil Society in Authoritarian Regime. The Analysis of China, Burma and Vietnam*, ed. by LUND University Department of Political Science. Online: [http://theses.lub.lu.se/archive/2005/05/23/1116839547-15844-327/thesis\\_of\\_Marie\\_Perinova.PDF](http://theses.lub.lu.se/archive/2005/05/23/1116839547-15844-327/thesis_of_Marie_Perinova.PDF), accessed 30.09.05
- Pinheiro, Sérgio (2007a), *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar (advanced and edited version)*, Human Rights Council A/HRC/6/14, 7 December 2007. Online: [http://209.85.135.104/search?q=cache:Ggvp3xl09\\_8J:www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/6session/A.HRC.6.14.doc+Pinheiro,+S%C3%A9rgio+Report+of+the+Special+Rapporteur+on+the+situation+of+human+rights+in+Myanmar+\(advanced+and+edited+version\),+Human+Rights+Council&hl=de&ct=clnk&cd=3&gl=de&client=firefox-a](http://209.85.135.104/search?q=cache:Ggvp3xl09_8J:www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/6session/A.HRC.6.14.doc+Pinheiro,+S%C3%A9rgio+Report+of+the+Special+Rapporteur+on+the+situation+of+human+rights+in+Myanmar+(advanced+and+edited+version),+Human+Rights+Council&hl=de&ct=clnk&cd=3&gl=de&client=firefox-a), accessed 25.04.08
- (2007b), *Statement by Mr. Sérgio Pinheiro, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*. Resumed sixth session of the Human Rights Council Item 4, 11 December 2007, Geneva.
- Purcell, Marc (1999), “Ace-handles or Willing Minions?: International NGOs in Burma”, in: Burma Center Netherlands (BNC) and Transnational Institute (TNI) (eds.) (1999), *Strengthening Civil Society in Burma. Possibilities and Dilemmas for International NGOs*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp. 69–109
- Risse, Thomas (2005), “Governance in Räumen begrenzter Staatlichkeit. ‘Failed states’ werden zum zentralen Problem der Weltpolitik”, *Internationale Politik*, Vol. 60, No. 9, pp. 6–12
- Rotberg, Robert I. (2004), “Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators”, in: Rotberg, Robert I. (ed.), *When States Fail. Causes and Consequences*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 1–25
- Schneckener, Ulrich (2004), “States at Risk. Zur Analyse fragiler Staatlichkeit”, in: Schneckener, Ulrich (ed.), *States at Risk. Fragile Staaten als Sicherheits- und Entwicklungsproblem*, SWP Studie S 43, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik

- Seng Raw (2004), "Message from the Programm Director", in: *Metta Annual Report 2004*, p. 1. Online: [http://www.metta-myanmar.org/pdf\\_files/2004\\_Metta\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://www.metta-myanmar.org/pdf_files/2004_Metta_Annual_Report.pdf), accessed 18.03.2005
- Smith, Martin (1999), "Ethnic Conflict and the Challenge of Civil Society in Burma", in: Burma Center Netherlands (BNC) and Transnational Institute (TNI) (eds.), *Strengthening Civil Society in Burma. Possibilities and Dilemmas for International NGOs*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp. 15–53
- (2002), *Burma (Myanmar): The Time for Change*, ed. by Minority Rights Group International. Online: <http://www.minorityrights.org/admin/Download/Pdf/Burma%20Report.pdf>, accessed 01.12.05
- South, Ashley (2003), Roadmaps and Political Transition in Burma: The Need for Two-Way Traffic. This text was the basis of Ashley South's presentation at the "Burma Day 2003: Political and humanitarian options for the international community" conference in Brussels, 08.10.03. A slightly abridged version appeared in two parts, *The Irrawaddy Online*, 16–17 October. Online: [http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Ashley-South\\_Political\\_Transition.htm](http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Ashley-South_Political_Transition.htm), accessed 01.10.05
- (2004), "Political Transition in Myanmar: A New Model for Democratization", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 233–255
- (2007), "Ceasefires and Civil Society: The Case of the Mon", in: Grawers, Mikael (ed.), *Exploring Ethnic Diversity in Burma*, Copenhagen: NIAS Press, pp. 149–177
- Steinberg, David I. (1999), "A Void in Myanmar: Civil Society in Burma", in: Burma Center Netherlands (BNC) and Transnational Institute (TNI) (eds.), *Strengthening Civil Society in Burma. Possibilities and Dilemmas for International NGOs*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp. 1–14
- Steinberg David (2004), "Burma: Feel-Good US Sanctions Wrongheaded", *Yale Global*, 19 May 2004. Online: <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=3901>, accessed 24.07.2007.
- UNAIDS (2004), "Epidemiological Fact Sheets on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections, Myanmar, 2004 Update". Online: [http://data.unaids.org/Publications/Fact-Sheets01/Myanmar\\_EN.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/Publications/Fact-Sheets01/Myanmar_EN.pdf), accessed 25.04.08
- UNDP (2005), "Youandaids: The HIV/AIDS Portal for Asia Pacific: Myanmar". Online: <http://www.youandaids.org/Asia%20Pacific%20at%20a%20Glance/Myanmar/index.asp#scenario>, accessed 20.1.05
- Will, Gerhard (2004), "Case Study Burma", Discussion Paper for the Third Europe-Southeast Asia Forum on Southeast Asian Security: Challenges and Structures. A Conference Jointly Organised by the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Jakarta, Federal Ministry of Defence, Berlin, 13–15 December. Online: [http://www.swp-berlin.org/common/get\\_document.php?id=1160](http://www.swp-berlin.org/common/get_document.php?id=1160) (accessed 16.11.05)
- Yang, Da-hua David (2004), "Civil Society as an Analytic Lens for Contemporary China", *China: An International Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 1–27