



# EU-CSO Partnership Strategy Newsletter

Newsletter Issue 2 - December 2019

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## CSO FAIR

Kachin CSOs came together to share their work on land in the CSO Networking Fair organised by the EU-CSO Partnership Strategy in Myitkyina.



## STRUCTURED DIALOGUE

CSOs in Kachin discussed land issues and possible recommendations in a Structured Dialogue organised by the EU-CSO Partnership Strategy in Myitkyina.



## FUNDING FOR CSOs

Highlighting funding opportunities available to CSOs in Myanmar from the EU, EU member states and European donors and foundations.



## TOOLS FOR CSOs

Links to resources that can be helpful in your civil society work.



## SPOTLIGHT

Interview with H.E. Ambassador Kristian Schmidt, EU Ambassador/Head of EU Delegation to Myanmar.

## CSO FAIR

### CSO NETWORKING FAIR

24 September 2019



On 24 September 2019, the EU-CSO Partnership Strategy organised a CSO Networking Fair in Myitkyina, Kachin.

See EU-CSO Partnership Strategy team preparing for the CSO Fair: <https://tinyurl.com/sv7vykw>

Participants were able to visit the stalls prepared by CSOs to learn about their work and read their publications, as well as enjoy the “Photo Voices Exhibition.” The latter was prepared as part of an EU-funded project run by Oxfam, featuring a series of photographs taken by community members related to land issues.

The Photo Voices Exhibition included lively presentations and discussions with community members who presented the stories and issues behind their photos to participants of the CSO Networking Fair. Photos depicted issues in relation to joint titling of land, consequences of banana plantations and the need for new technologies for efficient farming.



## STRUCTURED DIALOGUE

### STRUCTURED DIALOGUE ON LAND ISSUES IN KACHIN STATE

25 September 2019

The objective of the Structured Dialogue on Land Issues was to gain a better understanding of the current situation concerning land in Myanmar and in Kachin in particular; to identify changes needed for a better future and to develop recommendations. 58 participants from civil society (CSOs and INGOs) and the EU attended the event. The event provided different actors from civil society, working on land from different perspectives, with the opportunity to learn from one another and to develop ideas for change and recommendations.

EU Ambassador Kristian Schmidt opened the event by underlining the importance of civil society and the commitment of the EU to support civil society work. He also emphasised the key issues around land, and how social injustice was something that the EU was strongly committed to eradicating.

Participants divided into thematic groups to discuss key issues, desired changes and steps needed for change. The themes covered were Land and Governance/Customary Land, Land and Gender, Land and Investment, Land and IDPs/Conflict and Land and Environment.

Key issues that emerged from discussions include land grabbing, the need for joint titling of land for women and environmental and social consequences of banana plantations. Recommendations include taking into consideration gender equality in legislation and decision-making, recognising customary practices, creating effective mechanisms for participation of communities in decision-making.

As a follow up to the Structured Dialogue, the EU-CSO Partnership Strategy has prepared the event report in infographic format, with key issues and recommendations, as expressed by the participants. The infographic report is available on the EU-CSO Strategy Facebook page.



# SPOTLIGHT

## INTERVIEW WITH H.E. AMBASSADOR KRISTIAN SCHMIDT, EU AMBASSADOR & HEAD OF EU DELEGATION IN MYANMAR



*Part of this interview was originally published by Local Myitkyina News Journal in September 2019.*

**Q:** Concerning the land issues in Myanmar, can you tell us what assistance is the European Union currently providing and what are the plans for the future?

**H.E. Ambassador Schmidt:** Let me first say that issues concerning land use, land justice and land reform are not specific to Myanmar. Issues with land often give rise to social issues, inequality, and injustice, particularly in areas of violent conflict.

Recognising the central role land tenure plays in guaranteeing economic activities of farmers and sustainable investments, the European Union supported the formulation process of the National Land Use Policy (NLUP) which was formally launched early 2016. Such policy integrates the FAO Voluntary Guidelines of Governance of Tenure and is among the first policies in Myanmar for which a genuine country-wide consultations process took place.

Moreover, EU's support to the agriculture and rural development sector has confirmed that land tenure issues are impacting negatively satisfactory levels of nutrition for rural communities which are currently impeded in their ability to diversify agricultural production largely dominated by rice production. As we are preparing a large programme with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation to support the implementation of the Multi Sector National Action

Plan for Nutrition (MS-NPAN), such programme anticipates specific indicators pertaining to securing land tenure in Shan and Ayeyawaddy for vulnerable people and facilitating land use conversion in these two states/regions in support of diversified production and nutrition. Discussions are currently on-going in order to agree on specific targets for land titling both under farmland and VFV land.

Importantly, the launch, in early 2018, of the National Land Use Council has created an opportunity for the National Land Use Policy to be implemented. The European Union is currently preparing a programme which will support the primary objective of the NLUP to promote sustainable land use management and protection of cultural heritage areas, environment and natural resources for the interest of all people in the country. The proposed initiative intends to (i) support institutional and capacity building to the NLUC at the national level and subnational level in particular the Working Committees linked with the National Land Law formulation and Land Use Planning (ii) pilot land use planning and promote innovative land use management at a given landscape level, and finally (iii) generate policy evidence and support stakeholders engagement in the land sector reform.

**Q:** What would be your recommendation about Chinese banana plantations in Kachin State?

**H.E. Ambassador Schmidt:** These banana plantations are a perfect example of the social injustice that I mentioned earlier.

First, people leave their land as a result of conflict that they did not cause. Second, while their lives are suspended sitting and waiting in IDP camps, the land is taken by investors coming from China. Third, instead of working their own land as owners, some of them are forced to become low-skilled, low-wage workers, labouring in very indecent working conditions, subject to health risks, exposed to pesticides and pollution. Fourth, even those not working in banana plantations suffer from the lack of water resources, due to very intensive use of water by the plantations, the confiscation and diversion of water resources, not to mention the pollution that entire communities are exposed to. This is not what foreign investment should look like. This is the perfect example of social injustice that needs to be regulated.

Finally, these are not opinions that I have invented. These are the stories we hear from people, and that is why we are here listening to civil society. The European Union wants to "put its ear to the ground" and listen to the voices of the local people and this is what I am hearing about the banana plantations.

## FUNDING FOR CSOs

Each newsletter will highlight a specific fund for CSOs. This time, the *Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT)*.

LIFT is a multi-donor fund set up in 2009. LIFT aims to strengthen the resilience and sustainable livelihoods of poor households by helping people to reach their full economic potential. This is achieved through increasing incomes, improving the nutrition of women and children, and decreasing vulnerabilities to shocks, stresses and adverse trends.

LIFT is a significant actor in Myanmar's development. To date, over 11.6 million people in 75 per cent of Myanmar's townships have benefitted from LIFT's programmes.

From January 2019, LIFT has been guided by a new five-year strategy that puts 'leaving no one behind' at the center and will in particular focus on social inclusion and cohesion, increased support to areas affected by conflict, bringing displaced people into LIFT's development programs and working with Government at all levels on targeted policies that achieve gains in these areas.

LIFT has received funding from altogether 15 international donors since it was established. The current donors are the UK, the EU, Australia, Switzerland, the US, Canada and Ireland.

For more information on LIFT and the grants programme please visit:  
<https://www.lift-fund.org/grant>

## TOOLS FOR CSOs

### RESEARCH COMPILATION ON LAND ISSUES

In order to provide a scan of land related issues, the EU-CSO Partnership Strategy prepared a scan of existing research to highlight key issues and recommendations. The infographic report can be found on the EU website/EU-CSO Strategy Facebook page.

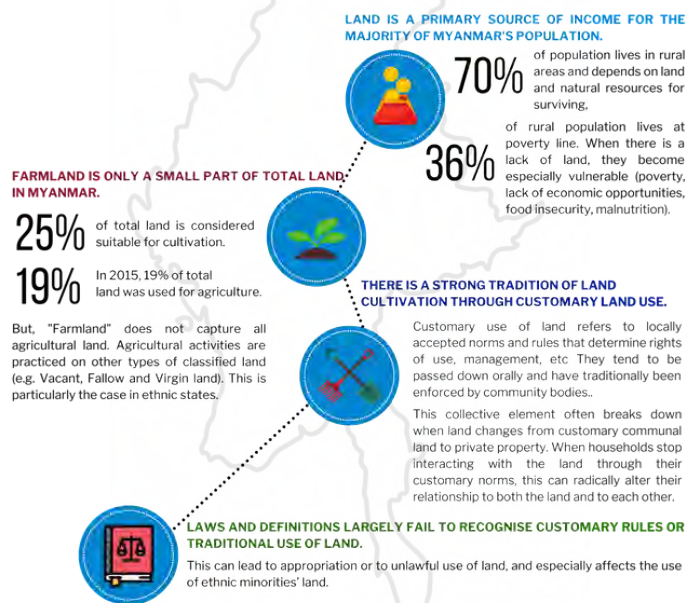
See and download the infographic:

In English: <https://tinyurl.com/v9y65dl>

In Myanmar: <https://tinyurl.com/vkfo8yj>

#### MYANMAR: LAND ISSUES SUMMARY

This visual report is a result of desk research into the body of publications on the issues concerning land in Myanmar available at the time of its preparation. Whilst effort has been made to make it as comprehensive as possible, its primary purpose is to serve as a basis for further discussion at the Structured Dialogue on Land Issues event taking place 24 - 25 September 2019 in Kachin.



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## CONTACT US

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us by phone at +95 9 762 630003 or email at [eucsostrategy.communication@gmail.com](mailto:eucsostrategy.communication@gmail.com).

You can find more information about our work here:

EU-CSO Partnership Strategy Facebook page:

<https://tinyurl.com/y3974mft>

EU Delegation in Myanmar webpage:

<http://www.euinmyanmar.eu/>