



***The European strategy for a strengthened  
partnership with civil society in Myanmar***

**August 2018**

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## 1. Acronyms

<b>CSOs:</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>CS:</b>	Civil Society
<b>EU:</b>	European Union
<b>EUD:</b>	European Union Delegation to Myanmar
<b>GONGOs:</b>	Government-created/aligned Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>INGOs:</b>	International Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>MS:</b>	Member States
<b>SD:</b>	Structured Dialogue
<b>SDGs:</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UN:</b>	United Nations

## 2. Introduction

The European Commission's 2012 Communication, 'The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations'<sup>1</sup>, explicitly recognises that 'an empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and is an asset in itself' and calls for 'an enhanced and more strategic approach in its engagement with local civil society organisations (CSOs)<sup>2</sup> covering all regions'.

Engaging the European Union (EU) and its Member States (MS) to consider how CSOs could play a stronger role in the development of democratic governance has been recently reinforced by the EU Consensus on Development (2017), which called for stronger and more inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships. These commitments are relevant and pertinent to the 2030 Agenda, in which strong partnerships, including those with CSOs, are at the core of Sustainable Development Goals implementation.

To implement these commitments, the European Union Delegation (EUD) developed a new EU strategy to strengthen its partnership with civil society in Myanmar (2018–2020). Lessons learnt from the implementation of the EU Civil Society Road Map (2014–2017) were considered, and four regional consultations, in which over 300 CSO representatives participated, were organised. MS and other relevant development and EU implementing partners were also consulted in order to align and harmonise programming and approaches.

## 3. Context

### 3.1. Civil Society Landscape in Myanmar

Civil society in Myanmar is composed of many organisations that are culturally, politically, traditionally and ethnically diverse, and which have quite different configurations and levels of formality and informality.

The high level of informality in local CSOs combined with their limited capacity to absorb large amounts of external aid, have made partnerships with International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) indispensable for implementing programmes. This has led to INGOs becoming infrastructure

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<sup>1</sup> Communication [COM], 2012, 492

<sup>2</sup> According to Annex II.B.a of Regulation (EU) No. 233/2014, CSOs are defined as non-state, non-profit actors operating on an independent and accountable basis and include: non-governmental organisations, organisations representing indigenous peoples, organisations representing national and/or ethnic minorities, diaspora organisations, migrants' organisations in partner countries, local traders' associations and citizens' groups, cooperatives, employers' associations and trade unions (social partners), organisations representing economic and social interests, organisations fighting corruption and fraud and promoting good governance, civil rights organisations and organisations combating discrimination, local organisations (including networks) involved in decentralised regional cooperation and integration, consumer organisations, women's and youth organisations, environmental, teaching, cultural, research and scientific organisations, universities, churches and religious associations and communities, the media and any non-governmental associations and independent foundations, including independent political foundations.

organisations of local CSOs in the sense that they play a key role in providing opportunities for capacity development and access to funds for local CSOs. Nevertheless, there are a few local CSOs that have formed networks and umbrella organisations. These have become key agencies for the development of Community Based Organisations (CBOs), particularly in the regions and states where it is difficult for the EU and other international partners to provide services and enhance civic awareness. These organisations are also vital to distribute relief aid in areas of conflict while remaining impartial.

The work and achievements of many local CSOs lack visibility and too little is known about the risks and challenges they face and the changes they aim for. Furthermore, as in many other countries, civil society groups are not immune to ethnic and cultural divides, rural and urban tensions and contested political participation. In fact, there remains a great deal to learn about civil society in Myanmar which requires direct dialogue and research to understand how local CSOs promote change in Myanmar and how international partners can assist them in their efforts.

### **3.2. Government and Civil Society Relations**

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and civil society participation in public life are not new phenomena in Myanmar. However for more than 50 years, CSOs faced operational restrictions in Myanmar as many were thought to oppose the regime. Mainly faith-based organisations and those controlled by the military government (1962 – 2016) were tolerated. Others intentionally remained informal in order to continue their activities. But already during the last military government under Thein sein (2011 – 2016) some slow but progressive opening could be perceived. A publicly active civil society started to emerge and despite the adverse context characterised by political repression and armed conflicts, CSOs were key to provide access to basic services for most of the population and remain to do so till today especially in conflict areas.

In 2008, Cyclone Nargis devastated the Irrawaddy delta and parts of Yangon Region, affecting as many as 2.4 million people and claiming over 138,000 lives. The absence of an effective government response to this humanitarian disaster led to the formation of a number of de facto organisations that provided relief. Some of these subsequently formed into networks of community-based organisations and overall this went some way to legitimising civil society's role in Myanmar.

Since 2011 an opening for a more political engaged civil society can be observed. Both the elections in 2015 and the political reforms towards a more democratic system created high expectations about democratic advancement, including opportunities for civil society development, and respect for human rights. However, the role of civil society and its relation with authorities still remain ambiguous. The

current context is characterised by the co-existence of opportunities for CSOs to engage with public authorities in policy decision-making and implementation processes with elements of shrinking space for civil society participation in the public arena in the more general sense.

An Association Registration Law (ARL) approved in 2014 provided important legal modifications favourable to CSO registration. Today, many CSOs are registered or are in the process of being registered. With regard to CSOs' relationship with government, the law has increased opportunities for CSOs formal engagement with national and local authorities. Increased engagement between the government and CSOs can be observed in several sectors such as food security and nutrition, and social protection<sup>3</sup>, where CSOs formally and informally helped develop and review legislation and government strategies. At the regional and state levels, local authorities increasingly recognise the added value of CSOs by involving them in addressing local issues.

Nevertheless, mistrust and lack of awareness about the role of CSOs undermines their strategic engagement in policy-making processes. Although legal reform has undoubtedly increased the formalisation and consolidation of civil society, the current legal framework still poses many challenges in terms of liabilities and bureaucratic hurdles. Slow request processing, lack of registration information and delays in issuing implementing rules often lead to rejected CSOs applications. Other laws not causally linked to the constitution of CSOs but regulating related areas or sectors of intervention further limit both local CSOs and INGOs<sup>4</sup> operations.

### **3.3. Capacity of CSOs in Myanmar**

Most local CSOs in Myanmar are still small- to medium-sized organisations that, even with their limited capacities, play key roles in the provision of basic services for the poorest, most disadvantaged and excluded populations and, more recently, in holding public authorities accountable at the local level. Nevertheless, through foreign funding during military rule, capacity development programmes and grants for studying abroad some local CSOs have grown into large and well-structured organisations that support the development of smaller local CSOs through highly effective networking systems.

Notwithstanding the progress made major challenges remain. The CSOs' capacity to capitalise on successful practices to promote economic and democratic development remains weak. CSOs struggle to cope with strategic issues and critical understanding of their own challenges. Competition for funding,

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<sup>3</sup> Myanmar national social protection strategic plan

<sup>4</sup> Draft Law on International Non-Governmental Organizations ("INGO Law"; Anti-Law, State Secrecy Act, the 2004 Electronic Transactions Act, and the 2013 Telecommunications Law Defamation (last visit (08/18): <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/Myanmar.html>)

conflicts of interest, personal political interests, limited economic sustainability and financial diversification have not contributed to build public trust in CSOs.

Moreover, as CSO staff become more skilled and competitive, CSOs are unable to provide enough incentives to keep them. This is closely linked to the fact that CSOs are extremely aid-dependent. While they have progressed in developing capacities, economic sustainability and financial diversification remain a great challenge.

Within this context, INGOs have accompanied local civil society for many years. They have acted as donors by funding local CSO initiatives, as partners by providing capacity development and as facilitators by linking local CSOs to exercise collective actions. Nevertheless, they are often criticised for their predominantly Western management styles and top-down approaches to civil society development. As local CSOs consolidate their structures and gain the trust of development partners, INGOs are increasingly seen as additional competitors for foreign aid.

#### **3.4. Engagement of the EUD with CSO & Lessons Learnt**

The EU has supported CSOs in Myanmar since before the end of military rule and predominantly in the fields of human rights and peace promotion. Presently, the EU's National Indicative Programme (2014–2020) provides a total of 688 000 000- EUR to support rural development, education, peace and the rule of law. The EU, as many other development partners in country, has so far preferred to channel an important share of these funds through INGOs<sup>5</sup> and a few large local CSOs well-equipped to comply with the accountability standards. In turn, these organisations have sub-granted financial support to different local CSOs (CBOs, charity- and other aid-based organisations, faith-based organisations, etc.) to deliver services at community level and provide technical assistance to reach the populations living in remote and conflict-heavy areas.

Besides providing relief and development aid, the EUD has also engaged in numerous policy and political facilitation processes. For many years, the EU has organised the European Union – NGOs Human Rights Forum with the objective of strengthening Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and CSOs. This dialogue aims at enhancing the influence of these organisations in political decisions necessary for the creation of a more inclusive and sustainable democratic society in Myanmar. The results of these Forums feed into the formal, high-level Human Rights Dialogue between the EU and the Myanmar government.

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<sup>5</sup>See Annex 3

Recently, the EUD has also awarded grants<sup>6</sup> to watchdog and advocacy organisations aimed at facilitating civil society involvement in public affairs at the local and national level by supporting the engagement of local CSO's in policy dialogue platforms, advocacy and holding public hearings to hold local authorities accountable.

In 2014, the EU adopted the EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society in Myanmar (2014 – 2017). This constituted the first attempt to improve the predictability and visibility of EU's engagement with CSOs. An assessment of the EU Roadmap at the end of 2017 showed significant room for improvement and the following observations and lessons learnt were taken into account in the development of the current strategy:

- The overall results of EUD-CSO collaboration have been mixed. At the national level, CSO involvement in the policy process is still quite limited. At the local level, where projects have attempted to establish constructive relations between the government and CSOs, some successful projects have fostered good governance by promoting the co-management of natural resources or establishing social accountability mechanisms for basic community services.
- At the policy level, there are examples of successful partnerships between the EU and CSOs. The EUD engages with human rights organisations through the Forum on Human Rights, organised around the Myanmar-EU Human Rights Dialogue. This has also resulted in advancements in civil and political rights in Myanmar.
- The EUD leads CSO and INGO work streams and creates spaces to increase the coordination between development partners, local CSOs and INGOs.
- The EUD tends to organise consultations with CSOs as part of the programming process.
- The partnership between the EU and the wider spectrum of civil society remains limited. The use of third parties<sup>7</sup> for the implementation of many programmes has hampered EUD opportunities to reach and engage local CSOs in policy dialogue and has further resulted in competition for funding.
- The limited communication, capitalisation and visibility of EU's support to civil society has undermined local CSOs' ability to find opportunities and entry points to engage at policy, political and financial levels with the EUD.

It is clear from the above analysis, that the EUD already engages with civil society in a wide range of ways and at different levels but primarily through providing financial resources. Therefore, the question is not how to increase engagement, but how to make it more effective and efficient.

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<sup>6</sup>These grants are channelled through projects with INGOs such as Helvetas, VNG, Oxfam, Gender Network, Danish Church Aid

<sup>7</sup>UN organisations and INGO

## 4. Objectives, Expected Results and Guiding Principles of the Partnership Strategy

The present strategy for a strengthened partnership with civil society in Myanmar should guide the EU(D) and CSOs<sup>8</sup> to strengthen their strategic engagement, cooperation and communication. This strategy is complementary to the National Indicative Programme and aligns with the EU's commitments to democracy and human rights. It has also been designed to support the adoption of the Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles as well as with other international commitments related to civil society engagement. Moreover, the strategy will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The strategy aligns with the implementation of the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan and the Government of Myanmar's commitment to strengthening cooperation, collaboration and coordination among all stakeholders, including CSOs.

### 4.1. General Objective

*The overall objective of the present strategy is to* strengthen the partnership between the EU and Myanmar CSOs to promote an enabling environment for civil society's participation in policy dialogue, policy-making and policy implementation processes. Achieving this objective should enhance civil society's capacity for influencing and shaping the decisions made by local and national authorities as well as programming directions chosen by the EU in Myanmar.

### 4.2. Specific Objectives

- To establish a structured dialogue between the EU and CSOs to enhance strategic partnership and cooperation.
- To strengthen information-sharing, communication and learning between the EU and CSOs.

### 4.3. Expected Results

- **Result 1:** Improved EU-CSO dialogue and cooperation in key areas of common Interest
- **Result 2:** Enhanced enabling environment for civil society organisations to

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<sup>8</sup> According to Annex II.B.a of Regulation (EU) No. 233/2014, CSOs are defined as non-state, non-profit actors operating on an independent and accountable basis and include: non-governmental organisations, organisations representing indigenous peoples, organisations representing national and/or ethnic minorities, diaspora organisations, migrants' organisations in partner countries, local traders' associations and citizens' groups, cooperatives, employers' associations and trade unions (social partners), organisations representing economic and social interests, organisations fighting corruption and fraud and promoting good governance, civil rights organisations and organisations combating discrimination, local organisations (including networks) involved in decentralised regional cooperation and integration, consumer organisations, women's and youth organisations, environmental, teaching, cultural, research and scientific organisations, universities, churches and religious associations and communities, the media and any non-governmental associations and independent foundations, including independent political foundations.

contribute to the policy making process; and to human, social and civil rights, democratic and development outcomes

- **Result 3:** Strengthened mutual understanding about the EU and civil society roles
- **Result 4:** Improved communication of the EU's engagement with civil society at the financial and policy levels.

#### 4.4. Results indicators

##### **Indicators for Result 1:**

- *Number and extent of EU dialogue mechanisms with CSOs to discuss priority issues, including consultations for thematic programmes and the national indicative programme projects*
- *Level of participation of local CSOs in structured dialogue, Development Partners coordination meetings, Work Streams*

##### **Indicators for Result 2:**

- *Number of times topics discussed during EU consultations with CSOs are included in the agenda of the EU political/policy dialogue with the Government*
- *Number of policy papers submitted by CSOs in preparation of the structured dialogue;*
- *Number of (aid and non-aid) joint initiatives by the EU and CSOs to promote civil society participation in public policies*
- *Number of CSOs capacity building components included/mainstreamed in EU grants contracts*

##### **Indicators for Result 3:**

- *Number of information sessions and communication activities organized to raise awareness on EU support to CSOs and to increase mutual understanding besides SD*

##### **Indicators for Result 4:**

- *Existence and use of an information platform/website on the EU-CSOs related funded initiatives; CSOs and projects funded as well as on opportunities for CSOs projects funds.*

#### 4.5. Target group

The target of the present strategy is civil society in Myanmar and EU.

INGOs and UN agencies involved in the implementation of EU programmes, especially those with projects aimed at supporting local civil society organisations, might act as facilitators to increase and support the participation of local CSOs in the implementation of the present strategy.

#### **4.6. Guiding Principles**

To achieve these objectives, a set of guiding principles are adopted to ensure the effective implementation of the partnership strategy.

##### **Acknowledging the Dynamics of the Context**

Country-wide, Myanmar is currently experiencing a rapid expansion of CSOs with a diverse range of interests and approaches. These CSOs have different organisational structures based on distinct institutional arrangements. The divide between civil society in urban and rural areas requires adopting an approach that allows for context-based engagement with civil society at the local and national levels. Consequently, the present strategy includes activities targeting CSOs at the local and national levels to meet the different needs and priorities of civil society and make the implementation of this strategy as inclusive as possible.

Relations with the government are rapidly changing, and progress can be perceived in certain areas, such as access to public information, education and nutrition. However, hampering factors, such as the government's reluctance to open dialogue with local CSOs, resulting in an unstable and uncertain political landscape remain. Therefore, this strategy has been designed with some flexibility, to better adapt to this rapidly changing context.

##### **Mutual Accountability**

Mutual accountability is necessary for building trust and long-lasting relationships in any setting. If the EUD and civil society relationships are to develop into partnerships, as proposed by this strategy, then reciprocal commitments between the EUD and CSOs must be established. Thus, the strategy includes specific mechanisms to allow for this mutual accountability.

##### **Transparency**

Transparency is fundamental for mutual accountability; consequently, visibility, outreach and research are core components of the present strategy. To ensure transparency, the EUD will inform CSOs of the EU's actions in Myanmar, funding opportunities and the progress of the present strategy's implementation.

Direct communication with civil society also requires that CSOs share their knowledge and expertise by making visible their initiatives and publicising their effectiveness. This principle should support adopting equitable partnerships and solidarity, creating and sharing knowledge and committing to mutual learning principles, as stated in the Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles.

## Inclusiveness

A significant challenge in Myanmar is ensuring the inclusiveness of CSOs. This strategy will apply different implementation mechanisms to reach as many relevant CSOs as possible. The strategy will target urban and rural CSOs representing different ethnicities and disadvantaged population groups (disability, women and youth). The EU will encourage the participation of non-EU funded CSOs through existing platforms, networks and broad-based communication activities.

## A Learning Process

Continuous learning is necessary for understanding the complexity of the context and the dynamics of civil society. Learning also encourages analysing situations to improve decision-making and programme design. Translating lessons learnt into actions supports the development of a vibrant civil society. To this end, the strategy includes research activities<sup>9</sup> as well as the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure performance. These methods will encourage the EUD and CSOs to employ learning processes to improve their dialogue and projects.

## 5. Strategic Framework for a strengthened Partnership with CSOs in Myanmar

To achieve the abovementioned objectives and results, the present strategy relies on a strategic engagement in select areas related to the EU cooperation in Myanmar

### 5.1. Strategic Areas for Engagement and Targeted Geographic Zones

In this partnership strategy, CSOs -both local and international, are considered key implementing partners of aid programmes and important development actors playing a wide range of roles at the local and national levels in many different sectors. To acknowledge the challenges and limitations inherent in engaging civil society from all parts of the country, while also ensuring inclusiveness in the design of this strategy, four geographic zones were targeted: Mon and Shan State, Mandalay Region and Yangon<sup>10</sup>.

After the regional consultations in Myanmar language, the topics listed in Table 1 are considered priorities for the strategic partnership between the EU and the CSOs.

Table 1: Priorities for Engagement with Civil Society per Geographic Area

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<sup>9</sup>Existing research from CSOs will also be used to feed into the actions.

<sup>10</sup>The selection of these four regions and states were based on the following criteria:

- They are of easy access;
- Facilities to implement the activities are available;
- The geographic position of these regions permits interaction with organisations from neighbouring states and regions of difficult access.

Building upon the links and relations established through the consultations, these four geographic areas were chosen for the implementation of the present strategy

Geographic Area	Priorities
<b>Mon State</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drug abuse</li> <li>• Local governance</li> </ul>
<b>Shan State</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land issues</li> <li>• Peace</li> </ul>
<b>Mandalay Region</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rule of law</li> <li>• Land issues</li> </ul>
<b>Yangon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic awareness, including citizens' engagement in public policy reform and human rights</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Local governance</li> <li>• CSO space</li> </ul>

These topics are linked and complementary to three out of four EU focal sectors for cooperation in Myanmar: Rural development/Agriculture/Food and nutrition security and Governance/Rule of law and peace-building support. These topics also align with other EU initiatives, such as the EU /Myanmar dialogue on human rights. Moreover these topics were also highlighted as critical issues during discussions with other EU member states and international organisations. The final choice of the topic will be decided after consultation with the EU Member states and the CSOs.

## 5.2. Result areas

This strategy will be implemented through the following three main result areas:

### Result area 1: EU and Civil Society Structured Dialogue (SD)

As a precondition for strategic engagement with civil society, the EU considers structured dialogue with CSOs necessary. Hence, engaging in constructive structured dialogue (SD) is a core part of the present strategy. The SD will create a space to exchange ideas, knowledge, information, lessons learnt and opinions addressing the concerns shared by the EU and CSOs. *Ad hoc* and additional meetings might also be organised upon request to deal with unexpected issues or perceived needs.

#### What are the objectives of the SD?

The SD will consist of a process for engaging the EU and CSOs in a planned, regular, timely, predictable and transparent manner. The SD is an opportunity for both EU and CSOs:

- To discuss policy and policy processes, including lessons learnt related to a specific area or topic;
- To enhance the visibility and awareness of the roles of CSOs and their contribution to economic and democratic development; and
- To inform and influence EU programming.

Primarily, SD will encompass policy discussions on issues related to the topics in table 1<sup>11</sup>. The dialogues might occur in different settings or forms (i.e. workshops, discussion sessions, roundtables) depending on the subject or topic. EU Member States will be invited to actively participate and contribute to these dialogues. This can be done through experience sharing of Member States funded projects or research that has been, carried out by member States. These dialogues will be complementary to ongoing processes and exiting platforms for policy-engagement.

Specific consultations might be organised by the EUD to discuss operational issues with the CSOs, such as consultations for call for proposals, project identification and the next EU National Indicative Programme for Myanmar.

#### *How will it be done?*

In order to ensure a constructive and informed dialogue, the research result area (see result area 2) will be used to carry out policy/research papers to define the SD content at both the regional and national (Yangon/NPT) levels and to inform discussions, recommendations and commitments. The EU will feed these recommendations in its dialogue with the government as well as its dialogue with other development partners.

A feedback mechanism will communicate the outcomes of the dialogue, as well as any actions the EUD and the CSOs agree to or engage in. Member States will be encouraged to also use these recommendations in their bilateral policy dialogue. One of the feedback mechanisms will be the SD itself; each SD agenda will include a review of the previous SD and any actions taken by the EU and CSOs. The Work Streams will also be used by the EUD to provide feedback to other interested stakeholders in the implementation of the SD. The SD process is illustrated in Figure 1.

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<sup>11</sup> It is suggested that the first SD will be related to the priority of civic awareness, including citizens' engagement in public reform and shrinking spaces for civil society participation. It will take place in Yangon before the end of 2018.



Figure 1: The structured dialogue process.

#### When and where?

SDs at the national level (Yangon/NPT) are expected to occur twice per year<sup>12</sup>. SDs at the regional level are expected to occur once per year; each year in a different region or state.

#### Who will be involved?

A close collaboration between the EUD, EU Member States, CSOs and partners is necessary for making SD a success. CSOs will be invited to participate in agenda-setting through online consultations or other means. Based on their knowledge, capacity and expertise in the topic on the agenda, some CSOs might be invited to collaborate in the research<sup>13</sup>. To ensure maximum inclusiveness, each SD will be open to all CSOs interested in the process<sup>14</sup>. As entry points for reaching civil society, the following existing channels will be used:

- EU-funded local CSOs.
- INGOs, UN agencies and other international partners implementing EU-funded programmes supporting CSOs.
- Existing CSO networks.
- CSO and INGO Work Streams.

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<sup>13</sup>The research will heavily rely on existing research

<sup>14</sup>Nevertheless, priority of participation will be given to those CSOs that are more involved with the topic, have specialisation or expertise in the topic and other criteria that might be added. The organisation of the SD will always ensure representation for the most disadvantaged people, such as disabled people, women and youth.

## ➤ **EU-NGO Human Rights Forum**

### What are the objectives of the EU-NGO Human Rights Forum?

The EU-NGO Human Rights Forum continues as part of the EU's support for human rights. The main objectives of the EU's support are strengthening the efforts of human rights defenders (HRDs) and civil society in promoting and protecting the political, civic, economic and social human rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups and enhancing the influence of these groups in policy dialogue to create a more inclusive and sustainable democratic society in Myanmar.

### How is it done?

The EU-NGO Human Rights forum gathers the views from human rights organisations and human rights defenders in Myanmar on the achievements and challenges in terms of human rights. The results of the forum then feed into the deliberations of the formal, High-Level European Union-Myanmar Human Rights dialogue for advocacy efforts. A feedback mechanism in the form of a debriefing meeting for CSOs after the high-level HR dialogue is organised.

### Who is involved?

Invitations are extended to CSOs working in the field of human rights, including women's organisations, human rights defenders, networks and umbrella organisations.

## ➤ **Work Streams**

### What are the objectives of the Work Streams?

Currently, the EU chairs both INGO and CSO work streams that are part of the overall donor coordination mechanism process in Myanmar. The meetings, which encompass technical characteristics and the day-to-day progress on key issues, are another mechanism through which the EU interacts with CSOs. Discussions are ongoing regarding methods for making the work streams more efficient and effective.

### How is it done?

Meetings are organised by the Coordination Partners Group (CPG) in collaboration with the EUD. An agenda is attached to the invitation, and the meetings are mostly used for coordination purposes. The EUD will make use of the work streams to provide regular feedback on the implementation of this

strategy, especially the SD and research components. Members of the work streams will also be invited to participate in the SD and the research components where relevant.

#### *Who is involved?*

Representatives of the CSOs and INGOs in Myanmar, primarily umbrella organisations and other relevant representative institutions, are invited. Development partners, including member states, are also invited to attend.

#### *When and where?*

Both INGOs Work Stream and CSOs work Stream are held at the EUD every 3 months approximately.

### **Result area 2: Policy Research for Policy Change**

The main objective of the research result area is creating a comprehensive body of research<sup>15</sup> related to priority issues for the SDs at the regional/state and national levels. Research will be carried out for each topic selected for SD discussion and will be presented in the form of a policy research document, including an analysis of the situation, an examination of civil society's role in the issue, lessons learnt and recommendations for action. The results of the research will then be discussed during the SD. The research document could be also used by CSOs to further identify needs relevant to their areas of work and by EU and development partners in their policy dialogues. For this purpose, action research approach is considered the most suitable to implement this component.

Policy research should increase knowledge regarding the role of civil society, EU and other stakeholders in the concerned areas. The results should include actionable recommendations to inform the design of future EU(D) and civil society actions. Finally, policy research carried out under this component should serve to inform the public and support policy change at all levels.

#### *How will it be done?*

Once the topic for the SD is identified, CSOs will be invited to propose research they can accomplish as a basis for the SD or present the research they have already carried out in relation to the topic. Once the SD is finalised, the third component (visibility/communication) of the present strategy will be employed to publish and disseminate the research.

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<sup>15</sup> Existing research will also be included in the SD.

### Who is involved?

CSOs, universities and think-tanks will be engaged and supported to ensure delivery of the policy research documents. Development partners, including member states, will be also invited to contribute. Reports will be shared and published.

### Where and when?

Research will take place a few months before the structured dialogue. Research will be localised to fuel regional/state level SDs.

## **Result area 3: Communication, Outreach and Networking**

### ➤ **Communication and Outreach Activities**

This result area will support the dissemination of information about the partnership between the EU and CSO. This part of the strategy is to strengthen the institutional relations between the EU and CSOs through better communication and outreach, implementation arrangements and EU support for civil society. This will include but not be limited to:

- Creating networking spaces;
- Providing centralised information (e.g. one website) about open calls for proposals managed by the EUD and/or its implementing partners; EU MS might eventually use this site for their calls for proposals;
- Publishing an annual forecast of funding opportunities for CSOs from the EU (EUD and MS);
- Establishing a database of EUD and EU Member States-funded projects, including projects/grants implemented through partnerships with other international partners, national and regional CSOs;
- Publishing relevant EUD and EU Member States news and reports to CSOs; and
- Publishing stories from the field.

A combination of different communication tools and visibility activities will be used to reach CSOs. These might include:

- **Web-based tools**, such as Facebook, the EUD website, Myanmar Information Management Unit and other existing online platforms (e.g. development partners' websites, *Mohinga* website), e-mail distribution.

- **SDs** that provide a unique path of direct communication with primary and key stakeholders, to distribute information on the EU's engagement with civil society and civil society work.
- **Public information outreach** through press conferences on major initiatives and press releases.
- **Public events**, such as cultural events, civil society fairs, celebration of women's day, human rights day, the international day for persons with disabilities, etc.

➤ **Networking: Civil Society Fair**

*What are the objectives of the fair?*

The CSO fair will provide an opportunity for CSOs and the EU to showcase their activities and achievements, share reports and inform on ground-breaking campaigns. The aim is to improve networking and information sharing amongst CSOs and with international partners, especially the EU, MS and citizens at large.

*How will it be done?*

CSOs will be invited to express their interest in participating. Space will be made available for them to present their materials. If many CSOs apply, selection criteria will be based on content, interactivity (innovation, creativity, communication) and visual displays. Opportunities for the participation of EU Member States projects will be created<sup>16</sup>.

*When and where?*

The CSO fair will be linked to the SD and organised the same day, preferably in the same location.

*Who will be involved?*

The civil society fair will be open to local CSOs<sup>17</sup>, INGOs implementing EU projects supporting local civil society organisations, EU MS and international organisations (IIOO) actively supporting CSOs.

**Cross-Cutting Issues**

Cross-cutting issues, such as gender equality, capacity development and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, will be strategically mainstreamed throughout the implementation of the present strategy.

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<sup>16</sup> The concrete how and financial provisions will be discussed during implementation of the strategy.

<sup>17</sup> Local CSO organisations working in the sector chosen for the SD, whether they are beneficiaries of EU funds or not. The EUD might provide some facilities for the participation of local CSOs, mainly for those participating in the regional/state level fair.

## Capacity Development

Strengthening both the internal governance of CSOs and their capacities to play their roles is fundamental for the implementation of this strategy and, concretely, for both an effective and meaningful SD in the short term and an effective contribution in the policy process in the long term. Capacity development is effective when provided in parallel with practice (e.g. providing services, advocating etc.). Thus, capacity development will be mainstreamed across all the EU projects implemented by or aimed at supporting local CSOs and will be financed through existing project funds and programmes<sup>18</sup>. This can be accomplished by requesting capacity- and organisational-development-related activities in the call for proposals or direct award documents. Moreover, some strategic activities such as capacity development can be made compulsory in these projects. Therefore, no additional funds for capacity building activities will be available through the present strategy but the strategy will contribute to the mainstreaming of capacity building activities for CSOs in EU funded projects.

## Gender

Following the EU Council's Conclusions on gender in development, the present strategy will support implementing the gender action plan in Myanmar. This strategy will specifically contribute to two primary objectives: 1) promoting the social and economic rights and empowerment of women and girls and 2) strengthening female voices and participation.

To this end, gender will be mainstreamed across the implementation of the present strategy. SDs at the local and national levels will include women's organisations and should facilitate their participation through targeting the most relevant women's organisations active on the SD subject. Action research-related activities will consider gender aspects within the topic studied (e.g. a study on undernourishment in youth should include an analysis of gender-related aspects) through the involvement of women's organisations in the research (e.g. as the organisation leading the research, as a source of information, etc.), providing disaggregated data by gender and avoiding the use of gender discriminatory vocabulary. Visibility, communication and outreach activities will also avoid the use of gender discriminatory vocabulary.

## Disadvantaged Groups

As part of the principle of inclusiveness, the present strategy will also ensure the participation of the most disadvantaged groups within Myanmar's society, particularly people living with disabilities as well as

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<sup>18</sup>For example, the EU projects aimed at supporting civil society (mainly thematic programmes), as well as other EU projects in which CSOs are implementing partners, could require applicants to include capacity development actions aimed at institutional, technical and networking development.

ethnic minorities. Organisations representing these groups will be encouraged to participate in the SD. The research will include special references and, if needed, analysis of the needs and impact over these disadvantaged groups by the studied issues. Communication and visibility activities will continue to raise awareness by supporting the celebration of International Women's Day, Human's Rights day and International Day of Disabled Persons.

## 6. Implementation Instruments and Arrangements

The European Union strategy for a strengthened partnership with civil society in Myanmar will be implemented over a two- to three-year period (2018–2020). The EUD has mobilised necessary funds for the implementation of this strategy and its action plan. The organisation of the SD dialogues, research, and communication activities at the national and regional levels will require sufficient time for detailed planning and mobilisation.

### 6.1. Instruments

The present strategy brings together a wide range of financial (e.g. grants) and non-financial (e.g. technical assistance, information distribution, facilitation spaces for participation) instruments to support CSOs in Myanmar. These instruments will be combined to ensure additionality and synergy between them as well as to avoid *ad hoc* actions and overlapping support. The following EU instruments will be considered for the implementation the present strategy:

- **Policy and political dialogue and facilitation capacities of the EU(D)** to advocate an enabling environment for civil society participation in favour of human rights and democratic governance, as well as to facilitate the government's interaction with CSOs. Moreover the EUD will use the outcomes and recommendations of the SDs in its policy dialogue with the government.
- **Funding.** In order to ensure the implementation of the strategy, financial resources will be made available to cover the costs of technical assistance, research and organisation of Structured Dialogues, Civil Society Fair as well as of other communication and outreach events.

However it should be noted that no new funding opportunities for projects will become available under this strategy. Financial support towards CSOs projects will continue to be provided through existing programmes, mainly: EU focal Sectors as per NIP, Civil Society and Local Authorities Thematic programmes<sup>19</sup> and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (other might be occasionally available); using the same aid delivery mechanisms: grants to local CSOs

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<sup>19</sup> A budget of 9 million Euros for the CSO-LA has been made available for the period 2018 – 2020.; Calls for proposals will be launched starting in 2019.

through call for proposals and sub-grants in partnership with local CSOs, INGOs, UN agencies and other international organizations (see Annex 3).

- **An action plan** has been developed to ensure the present strategy is implemented using the above-mentioned instruments (see Annex 4).
- **Technical Assistance** to provide support to the EUD for implementation of the current strategy and to implement the action plan (primarily involves organising and facilitating the SD, providing technical assistance to the CSOs delivering research and delivering communication activities).

## 6.2. Roles and Responsibilities

### The EUD

The party primarily responsible for implementing the present strategy will be the EUD in Myanmar. The EUD will furnish all the instruments necessary for ensuring the strategy's implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Since the strategy focuses on cooperation between both policy and political facilitation and development, its implementation will require cross-sectional cooperation from the political and cooperation sections of the EUD and among programmes within the cooperation section. The Head of Delegation will lead the implementation with the support of EUD staff.

### Local CSOs

Local CSOs are expected to participate in various stages of strategy implementation. At the SD level, CSOs will be invited to participate in discussions. They will also be asked to participate in presentations and mobilise their actors to participate in the SD. At the level of policy research, the EUD might identify CSOs best suited for delivering the research activities. At communication level, the CSOs are the primary target group for the communication, information and outreach activities to increase opportunities for CSOs engagement with the EUD. At the fair, CSOs will be invited to showcase their work, achievements and success stories. This event should also enhance CSO networking and knowledge sharing.

### EU Implementing Partners (NGOs, INGOs and International Organisations)

Since much of the EU's support for local civil society is channelled through implementing partners, such as UN agencies and (I)NGOs, the EU will continue to collaborate with these organisations to facilitate the implementation of the present strategy. Beyond participating in the SDs, it is expected that implementing partners will help with:

- Identifying key stakeholders for carrying out the SDs;

- Identifying and publicising case studies, lessons learnt and success stories related to civil society promoting positive change through the implementation of EU projects;
- Implementing EU visibility and communication activities by disseminating the outputs of the strategy, where possible; and
- Providing information to the EU for publication on its website related to sub-granting opportunities, names of the awarded organisations and names of the projects.

## Member States

MS will be informed about the implementation of the present strategy through the SDs, work streams and other donor coordination mechanisms. Moreover, MS will be invited to actively contribute to the implementation of the partnership strategy, especially in the structured dialogues.

## 7. Risk Assessment

As with any other intervention, a risk assessment is required to ensure that the fewest possible surprises occur while the project is underway, especially in changing contexts like Myanmar. The following table presents some of the identified risks and mitigation measures:

**Table 2. Risk Assessment**

Risks	Mitigation Measures
<b><i>To ensure an inclusive process in SD: The number of CSOs in Myanmar is large and it is not always easy to reach them. Many CSOs are small with limited capacity, often overwhelmed by larger organisations.</i></b>	<i>It is expected that CSOs will show their interest according to the topic discussed (self-selection), allowing most active CSOs to participate. If this is not the case, selection criteria and a registration system might be established.</i>
<b><i>Low levels of present strategy implementation: One of the main challenges of the Road Map was the low level of implementation due to economic resources and leadership.</i></b>	<i>The cost of the present strategy has been assessed. The EU has made an envelope available to implement, monitor and evaluate it.</i>
<b><i>Language barrier: Only successful, urban CSOs have staff that speaks English. Most CSOs have staff that only speak the Myanmar language or other minority languages.</i></b>	<i>Most of the deliverables and information provided will be translated into the Myanmar language. Supporting the implementation of this strategy will rely on local expertise and knowledge.</i>
<b><i>The political context shifts toward an adverse situation for CSOs.</i></b>	<i>The strategy has been designed to adapt its activities to respond to unexpected political challenges.</i>
<b><i>The present strategy might have limited impact due to the way the EUD provides funds to local CSOs in the next three years.</i></b>	<i>The EUD will increase communication efforts, providing clear and concise information about different funding opportunities in both English and the Myanmar language. A full component of this strategy is devoted to this subject.</i>

<b><i>The change in space for civil society is not perceived by the EUD.</i></b>	<i>The implementation of this strategy and the resulting direct contact with local CSOs should help the EU target challenges and achievements that support enabling environment for civil society participation.</i>
<b><i>Low or limited buy-in from local CSOs.</i></b>	<i>Technical and economic resources will be made available to ensure the participation of local CSOs in the SDs. Technical assistance for action research and effective communication will also be provided. The EUD will use EU-funded programmes that support CSOs, INGOs work streams, CSOs Work Stream, local networks and platforms to encourage CSOs participation. Specific communication activities are foreseen</i>
<b><i>Topics selected for the structured dialogue and/or the Structured dialogue have limited attraction</i></b>	<i>Structured dialogue will be organised in areas where the first contact with local CSOs was made through the consultations. The topics selected for the SD are related to EU sectors of cooperation and, in turn, linked to funds and CSOs with EU projects. The results of structured dialogue might influence the allocation of EU funds. SD might include information forthcoming funding opportunities.</i>
<b><i>Low or limited participation of the EU MS.</i></b>	<i>The EUD will inform EU MS on the implementation of this strategy and encourage their participation</i>

The above risk assessment will be updated and revised on a regular basis to address any unexpected issues that might arise during the implementation

## **8. Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) is key to ensuring a results-oriented strategy. To improve the implementation of the strategy, address unexpected issues and guide future EU engagement with civil society, learning mechanisms are required. Result Indicators to monitor and evaluate the impact of this strategy have been included in the present document. Input and output indicators have also been added in the Action Plan. Nevertheless, a MEL plan will be developed once the strategy is launched and which might involve the review of the current indicators. The MEL will include mechanisms for ensuring regular feedback from CSOs on their perceptions of implementation progress of the strategy. These might include but are not limited to:

- A feedback session on the SD agenda.
- Sharing the results of the SD via mail, Facebook and other means.
- Reporting the results of the SD to CSO and INGO Work Streams.

## **9. Lists of Annexes**

**Annex 1\_ Methodology and Process for the elaboration of the EU-CSO partnership strategy**

**Annex 2\_ Overview of EU Delegation implementing system for grants to local CSOs**

**Annex 3\_ Logframe matrix of the strategic partnership strategy**

**Annex 4\_ Action Plan**

**Annex 5\_ Brochure**