

Arts Internship Report:  
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# Towards a new era in Myanmar -

A case study on planning for the future in the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
IID	Institute for International Development
NLD	National League for Democracy
PNO	Pa-O National Organisation
SDP	Strategic Development Plan
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

# Executive Summary

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The present report is the outcome of an internship undertaken with the Institute for International Development (IID) as part of the University of Adelaide, Arts Internship programme. It offers at onset an overview of decentralisation as a policy direction for developing countries, and secondly, an examination of the decentralisation reforms that have been introduced in Myanmar, drawing on the nation's history to elucidate the challenges ahead. The final section presents the main aim of the report: to document and critically evaluate the progress of the Pa-O, who represent the first of Myanmar's newly empowered ethnic minority groups to assume their duties to administer and plan for their own future. The Pa-O requested the aid of IID in the pursuit of this endeavour.

## METHOD

The report draws upon academic literature on decentralisation as a grounding, and then upon the history of Myanmar and the *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar* (2008) to develop a fuller depiction of progress occurring in the nation. The case study relies on formal and informal reports produced by IID and interviews with a director of the organisation, and the team leader of the Pa-O project, John Leake. Analysis of the approach taken by the Pa-O is contrived through consideration of the findings of the first two sections. Although there remains a degree of information scarcity in Myanmar as a result of its history of isolation and suppression of free speech, the main limitation of the report is its reliance on IID's documents to assess the progress of the Pa-O.

## FINDINGS

Decentralisation is found by this report to be a popular policy direction among developing countries with as many potential benefits as risks. With this in mind, two key themes of local capacity and accountability are focused upon to assess how to best mitigate the risk of undesirable outcomes. For accountability, important factors are competitive and fair elections, effective reporting and evaluation mechanisms, and the presence of a clear statement of funding and management responsibilities. Local capacity development has less clear guidelines, but generally needs to be internally driven or based upon a system of reward rather than reprimand.

When closely analysed the new constitution of Myanmar does not suggest a dramatic departure from past practices. However, the entrenchment of decentralisation policies which sanction the self-autonomy of six identified ethnic minority groups is an important step towards lasting peace. Along with designated legislative and executive powers, the Constitution also prescribes a reporting requirement, one step towards strong accountability, and rights are endowed upon Self-Administered Zones and Divisions to access funds from higher levels of government.

The case study suggests an optimistic future for the Pa-O people. Through a self-recognised need to acquire external assistance, the Pa-O leadership have obtained the guidance of IID in the production

of a Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for their area. This has enabled IID to encourage participation and strong policies whilst conserving enough autonomy of the Pa-O National Organisation for their own self-driven capacity development. Commitment to accountability has also been evident, with a project drafted which focuses solely on the establishment of an evaluation and monitoring system. The process has also facilitated the increased participation of stakeholders, and a civil society organisation has been established with a role inclusive of coordinating the implementation of the SDP.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions are provided for the benefit of the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone, but may also assist the other five areas which are yet to begin this same process:

- Additions to the SDP could include:
  - A foreword by a Pa-O representative – this would attest to local ownership of the plan
  - Longer term goals and aspirations, in particular, the inclusion of the vision statement
  - An outline of the administrative hierarchy
  - Some conjecture as to when the implementation phase will begin
- The production of a management and funding responsibility statement once the funding and implementing agencies are finalised
- Strengthened efforts aimed at raising public awareness and developing a mechanism for making current information available. May require research into prominent forms of information dissemination in the area
- Increased focus on developing the administrative structure, administrative processes and institutional capacity. IID suggest tasks such as explaining rule of law principles, for example, that all administrative acts must have a legal base (IID 2012e)
- Continued increase in the use of participatory mechanisms
- The development of an information sharing network between Self-Administered Zones and Division to facilitate collective learning
- Further gathering of data to assist in the implementation process.

# Introduction

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Since the 1962 coup against the civilian government, Myanmar<sup>1</sup> has oscillated between direct and indirect forms of military rule which have treated the concerns and demands of the country's many ethnic minority groups as security threats requiring military response (Bunte 2011). The decades of armed conflict have compounded and created further issues in the country, including international isolation, economic decline, severe human rights abuse and displacement, amongst many others (Transnational Institute 2012). Recent developments in the country appear to suggest it is moving towards genuine democratisation, and the new constitution, which came into force by decree in March 2011, entrenches the decentralisation reforms necessary to afford minority groups the powers of self-autonomy they have long been seeking.

The report will be divided into three sections. The first will review decentralisation in general, providing an overview of the theory behind the policy direction and an examination of its risks and potential. Section two will introduce decentralisation in Myanmar specifically, beginning with a snapshot of the nation's cultural and historical context, and then relating this to the decentralisation reforms. The final section, which constitutes the bulk of the report, provides a case study of the Pa-O people; one minority group to be empowered by their constitutional re-classification as a Self-Administered Zone. This will document their progress in pursuing self-autonomy and the role of the Institute for International Development (IID) in this process. Included will be the steps they have taken towards producing a Strategic Development Plan (SDP) for the area, and the strengths and weaknesses of the approach taken.

The report concludes with a level of optimism for the future of the Pa-O people based on findings of a strong groundwork having been laid in the planning process.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1989 the military government changed the nation's official name from 'Burma' to 'Myanmar'. This name change has been accepted by the United Nations, but not by numerous countries including Australia. This paper will use 'Myanmar', but note this does not reflect a political position.

# An Overview of Decentralisation

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The declining legitimacy of centralised states across the globe left ripe an opportunity for an alternate governance structure to emerge. Decentralisation is what took hold. Since the mid-1980s decentralisation reforms have been implemented in an astonishing number and array of countries, with military dictatorships and democracies alike pursuing its many promised benefits (Crook & Sverrisson 2002). Simple in its essence; ‘decentralization entails the transfer of political, fiscal and administrative powers to subnational units of government’ (World Bank 1999, 108).

The professed benefits of decentralisation are wide ranging and promise an increase in many areas of development which are currently highly valued and popularly sought after. However, more recently the potential risks of decentralisation have been prominent in academic literature, and the previous optimism for reform of this type has been somewhat dulled. Table 1.1 provides a summary of most frequently cited benefits and risks of decentralisation.

**Table 1.1 – The Potential Risks and Benefits of Decentralisation**

Perceived Benefits	Potential Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Localisation of governance increases efficiency and responsiveness to local preferences, leading to the improved delivery of public services</li><li>• Through proximity local officials have better knowledge of conditions and are more accessible to their constituents – bringing the government closer to the people</li><li>• Local elections increase incentive for good performance and give citizens a mechanism for holding officials accountable</li><li>• Competition amongst local governments provides further incentive for good performance, and allows citizens to ‘vote with their feet’ and move to areas with better services</li><li>• Provides an institutional mechanism for bringing opposing groups into a rule-bound bargaining process, increasing communication and decreasing conflict</li><li>• Can afford ethnic and minority groups greater control over their social, political and economic affairs, reducing conflict and secessionism</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regional inequalities due to differing fiscal capacity of areas</li><li>• Unclear management and funding responsibilities of different levels of government, leading to no accountability for deficiencies in service provision</li><li>• Elite capture at the local level preventing pro-poor outcomes and increasing inequality</li><li>• Macroeconomic instability due to a reduction in the central government’s control over public resources and ability to adjust the budget to shocks</li><li>• Deficiency in local capacity in technical, administrative and managerial skills leading to debt, poor service delivery, conflict and inefficiency</li><li>• Local institutions may be given the legal authority to make decisions but not the financial and human resources to implement them – setting them up for failure and diverting the responsibility away from the central government</li></ul>

Sources: World Bank 1999; Bigombe, Collier & Sambanis 2000; Brancati 2006; Bardhan 2002; Burki, Perry & Dillinger 1999; Fritzen & Lim 2006; Crook & Sverrisson 2002



## 1.2 MITIGATING THE RISKS

The experience of each individual country in designing and implementing decentralisation policies is ensuing of that country's unique characteristics and history. As a consultant of the United Nations noted, "Best practice" in one country may not be "best". Promising practice needs to be reinvented locally to make a positive difference' (Theisohn 2007, 34). However, general lessons compiled through the experiences of the many nations which have instituted decentralisation reforms provide some guidance on how to mitigate the risks. Two principal issues of accountability and local capacity will be examined more closely.

### 1.2.1 Accountability

Crook and Sverrisson note that the 'Achilles heel' of decentralisation is deficiency in accountability (2002, 240). Devoid of proper accountability mechanisms, no one is held responsible for poor performance and gaps in service provision may be overlooked. Lack of accountability can also lead to elite capture and corruption. Three key mechanisms have been found to enhance accountability:

1. A well administered and competitive electoral system
2. Clear responsibility allocation and administrative structure
3. Strong reporting and evaluation mechanisms

Numerous academics advocate that elite capture is best prevented by competitive electoral politics, supplemented by fair and well administered elections (Brancati 2006, Fritzen & Lim 2006, Crook & Sverrisson 2002). In addition, the direct election of the executive members of local government has been found beneficial. As the World Bank asserts, 'Mayors elected directly are more likely than appointees to challenge the status quo' (1999, 121). Turner & Podger (2003) concur, suggesting that accountability in Indonesia would be enhanced by instituting the public election of executives rather than allowing elected members to choose amongst themselves. Theoretically, this maximises the likelihood of leaders being chosen on the basis of their policies and performance, and minimises their ability to buy themselves an executive position.

Another common issue is the lack of a clear administrative structure and unambiguous statement of funding and management responsibilities. Countries devoid of these find that no one can be held to blame when basic service provision falls short. Kathyola and Job found such issues to be present in all five of the decentralising countries they examined (2011). In Botswana they found that the district council, tribal administration and land boards all operated at the same level, but had their own vested interests which often conflicted. Disputes were rarely resolved as no institution had authority over the others, and any failures were simply the fault of the other institutions. Ghana had discrepancies between higher and lower levels of government, with higher levels resisting constitutional intentions to decentralise as it conflicted with their own political interests. They also took issue with having to cede any of their budget or influence to lower levels of government (Kathyola & Job 2011). The clear provision of responsibilities and administrative hierarchy is imperative.

Reporting and evaluation mechanisms should be both effective and useful. Performance monitoring data can be used not only to report on outcomes to higher levels of government, but also to stimulate change, gain funding, and demonstrate commitment to constituents (Wholey & Hatrey

1992). Key considerations when developing reporting mechanisms include simplicity, cost, frequency of use, development goals, data uses and training of officials (Horsch 1996).

### 1.2.2 Local Capacity

Fritzen and Lim note: ‘decentralization expands the responsibilities of local government from just program implementation and service delivery to include policymaking’ (2006, 6). This in turn necessitates a greater range of capacities and skills that local governments need to employ in order to fulfil their functions. Brinkerhoff and Crosby note that there are positives and negatives of reformers who are new to governance and unfamiliar with the policy environment. Positives include not being wedded to established routines or mortgaged to entrenched interests. Negatives include that reformers are unfamiliar with administrative structures and unaccustomed to the ‘time and energy required to overcome bureaucratic inertia and resistance, and often become worn down’. This can result in higher levels of susceptibility to corruption and poor decision making (2002, 20).

Issues of capacity deficiency have been addressed in a plethora of different ways. A common approach is for the central government to provide technical assistance by placing delegates in local communities. This has achieved mixed results, for example, in Cameroon it frequently led to issues of domination and exploitation of inexperienced members by the central government official (Kathyola & Job 2011, 58).

The Philippines and Ghana both introduced incentive schemes promoting good governance. The Philippines introduced the annual ‘Gawad Galing Pook Award’ recognising innovative local governance (Fritzen & Lim, 2006). In Ghana a performance based grant scheme was established. This had a dual effect in that it encouraged local governments to perform well by offering financial incentives, and also increased their use of the ‘Functional Organisational Assessment Tool’ as it was necessary to prove their success.

The training of management and administration staff is also frequently pursued. Turner and Podger (2003) note that two lessons from their experiences in Indonesia:

- Training programs must be up to date
- The skills and knowledge taught must be appropriate for use at the local level

Burki, Perry and Dillinger also note that training in Latin American countries was more successful ‘when organised as information sharing among peers than as top-down technical assistance directed at recalcitrant mayors’ (1999, 3).

## 1.3 DISCUSSION

Two critical points must necessarily be made in conclusion of this section. Firstly, ‘even the best set of intergovernmental rules has little effect if it is not consistent with political culture. Successful decentralization requires more than good rules’ (Burki, Perry & Dillinger 1999, 6). Although strong policy and calculated planning may set reform up for success, the people in governance and their attitudes and commitment will be the determining factor in the outcome. This report does not suggest that even the most outstanding planning process and risk aversion strategies will necessarily

lead to success. Secondly, decentralisation is a process which takes time to develop and for benefits to become apparent. Achieving stability is likely a prerequisite to success and a decade or more may be required before results are seen (Crook and Sverrisson 2002).

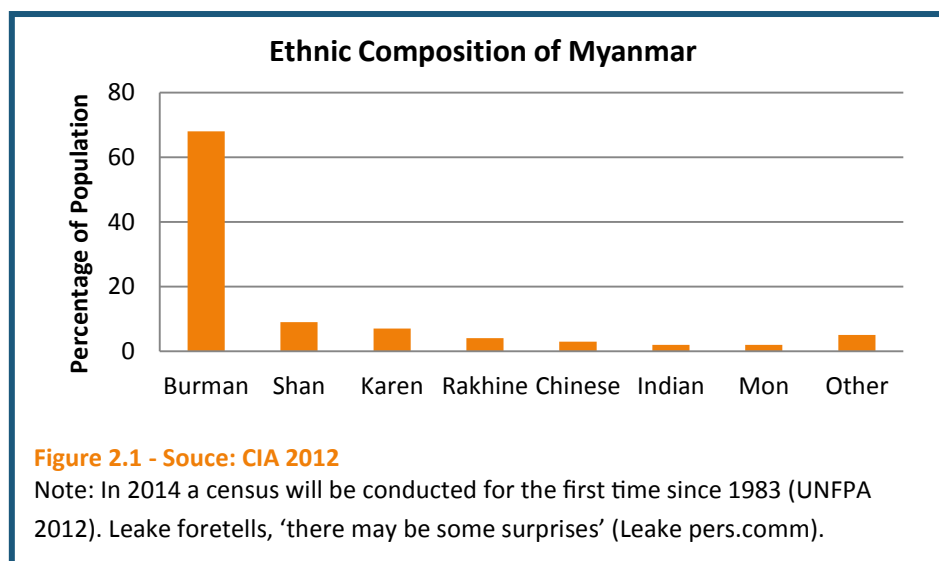
## Decentralisation in Myanmar

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Despite its resource rich environment and strategic location between the world's most populous countries, Myanmar continues to be the poorest nation in south-east Asia with an approximate third of its 60 million living in poverty (DFAT 2012). Although the nation was once amongst the wealthiest in the area, the long-running civil war has had compounding deleterious effects leading to not only economic decline, but also international isolation and condemnation. This section will track the history of Myanmar and analyse the current situation.

### 2.2 COUNTRY SNAPSHOT

Officially known as the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, this nation is one of the most ethnically diverse in the world with over 100 ethnic groups existing in addition to the majority ethnicity – Burman (see figure 1). Major exports include natural gas, wood products, fish, rice, clothing, jade and gemstones (CIA 2012). Myanmar is currently ranked 149 of 187 countries on the Human Development Index with an index classified as low (UNDP 2011).



### 2.3 A HISTORY OF REPRESSION

'To understand the causes of decentralization, it is necessary to first understand the causes of the centralism that preceded it' (Burki, Perry and Dillinger 1999, 9). Towards this purpose, a brief timeline of Myanmar's history is provided at Figure 2.2.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Note: Myanmar was known as Burma until 1989.

Figure 2.2 – Timeline outlining significant events in Myanmar's history

pre 1885	<b>Pre-colonisation</b> - multiple attempts by monarchs to establish absolute rule, and at times divided into independent nations
1885	<b>Colonisation</b> - British Government colonised Burma
<hr/>	
1947	<b>New constitution drafted</b> - ethnic groups agreed to join the Union on the condition that they could secede after ten years
	<b>Assassination</b> - Aung San and many of his Cabinet assassinated
1948	<b>Independence</b> - Burma gained independence from Britain with U Nu as leader of the democratic government
	<b>Insurgencies began</b> - ethnic groups were unhappy with the political system and their lack of autonomy
<hr/>	
1958	<b>Caretaker government</b> - U Nu invited General Ne Win to takeover the country to restore law and order
1960	<b>Return of democratic governance</b> - elections held, won by U Nu
1962	<b>Military coup</b> - Ne Win took over the country, imprisoning U Nu and many ethnic leaders. He abolished federalism and inaugurated 'the Burmese Way to Socialism'. The teaching of ethnic languages was banned, the media censored, travel both in and out of the country was prevented and opposing ideologies were repressed by force.
1972	<b>'Civilian' Government</b> - Ne Win and others resigned from the military so that the government could be classified as civilian
1974	<b>New constitution</b> - removed all decision making powers of states, transferred power from the armed forces to a People's Assembly headed by Ne Win and other former military leaders
1988	<b>Nationwide uprising</b> - led to resignation of Ne Win, military brutally repressed protests and formed a ruling junta
1989	<b>Burma became Myanmar</b> - ruling junta changed the nation's official name
1990	<b>Elections</b> - the election was to decide who was to write a new constitution, not rule the country. The National League for Democracy (NLD) won on a landslide under the patronage of Aung San Suu Kyi. The NLD demanded that they also be given control of the nation. The junta refused. International sanctions begin to be imposed on Myanmar.
1990	<b>Ceasefire agreements</b> - the ruling junta start signing ceasefire agreements with insurgent groups.
<hr/>	
2008	<b>New constitution drafted</b> - referendum proceeds despite the humanitarian crisis of Cyclone Nargis, passes
2010	<b>Elections</b> - won by the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party
2011	<b>New Parliament convened</b> - Thein Sein selected as President
2011	<b>2008 Constitution came into force by decree</b>

Sources: Burma Watch 2010; BBC 2012; Curriculum Project 2008; Canadian Friends of Burma n.d; CIA 2012

The Government has since instituted a series of economic and political reforms which have led to the lifting of most sanctions by the international community. Reforms have included the re-registration of the NLD as a political party, the release of many political prisoners, the removal of all press censorship and the loosening of travel restrictions (CIA 2012).



Figure 2.3 - Lieutenant-General U Khin Maung Than presents the 2008 Constitution to a crowd of onlookers (Davy 2010)

## 2.6 THE 2008 CONSTITUTION

At article 6, the *Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar* (2008) (henceforth the Constitution), provides that the Union's consistent objectives are:

- (a) non-disintegration of the Union;
- (b) non-disintegration of National solidarity;
- (c) perpetuation of sovereignty;
- (d) flourishing of a genuine, disciplined multi-party democratic system;
- (e) enhancing the eternal principles of Justice, Liberty and Equality in the Union and;
- (f) enabling the Defence Services to be able to participate in the National political leadership role of the State.

These key themes run throughout the document and at a superficial level are commendable. However, critics such as Aung Htoo, Secretary of the Burma Lawyers' Council, assert that the Constitution actually 'guarantees the perpetual rule of the military dictatorship' (Htoo 2010, 53). Equally strong comments are present in the commentary of Williams (2011) and Bunte (2011). Numerous clauses of the document are used to provide evidence of their claim. For example:

- Article 20(b) – the Defence Services has the right to independently administer all of its affairs and cannot therefore be controlled by the civilian government.
- Article 40(c) – the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services can take over and exercise State sovereign power 'if there arises a state of emergency that could cause disintegration of the Union, disintegration of national solidarity and loss of sovereign power'.
- Article 232(b)(ii) – the legislative chamber is to be comprised of 25 percent serving soldiers, in effect making a constitutional amendment impossible without their support (when read in conjunction with article 436(b)).

To place these articles in perspective, parallels may be drawn with the Australian Constitution, which similarly bestows far reaching powers and duties upon the Governor-General as the representative of the Queen. In reality, since the proclamation of the Constitution in 1901 the reserve powers of the Governor-General have been exercised but four times and conventions generally expect actions in line with ministerial advice (Australian Government 2008). Therefore, the presence of such powers alone is not enough to assert that the cycle is perpetual. IID Director, John Leake, advises

that it is best not to dwell on the past: 'What counts now is the determination of the new Government to follow through with their reform process' (Leake pers.comm).

### 2.6.1 Ethnic Minority Groups and the New Constitution

The new Constitution prescribes a level of autonomy for six ethnic minority groups, as identified in article 52. Their locations are depicted in figure 2.3; the new administrative map of Myanmar. At article 196 the 'Leading Body' of each area is bequeathed the legislative powers listed in Schedule Three. Sectors within their legislative jurisdiction include social services, development affairs, infrastructure and 'market matters'. Importantly, at article 199, and as clarified in article 277, Leading Bodies are also given the executive powers necessary to implement the laws they pass, in addition to ordinary executive functions such as law and order.

A potentially limiting clarification of their powers is present at article 198, which provides that if any legislation enacted by Self-Administered Zones is inconsistent with that at higher levels of government, the latter will prevail. Furthermore, Leading Bodies are also subject to the requirement that a quarter of their minimum ten members are occupied by Defence Services personnel (article 276(i)). Unlike the other members of a Leading Body, the Defence Services personnel will not be elected. Per article 276 (e), the Chairperson of a Leading Body is to be decided by the Leading Body itself from its own members, and not elected by the public.

Two further articles of importance:

- Article 281 – the Leading Bodies shall submit reports of the general situations of their territory to the Union and State Governments.
- Article 279 – Leading Bodies must draw annual budgets and co-ordinate with the State Government for approval. They have the right to expend the allotted fund included in the Budget Law of the State Government concerned.

## 2.7 TOWARDS A NEW ERA

When considered in conjunction with the history of the nation, the new Constitution is a significant landmark. Dating back to pre-colonisation, the ethnic minority groups forbore central control and sought self-autonomy. Centuries later lasting peace is finally becoming a real prospect, and decentralisation policies are firmly entrenched in the Constitution. This means that unlike a mere legislative experiment, a full referendum will need to ensue for it to be changed. Although military control is still present, processes of reform are occurring and no one can expect that the decades of extreme centralism will be reversed overnight.



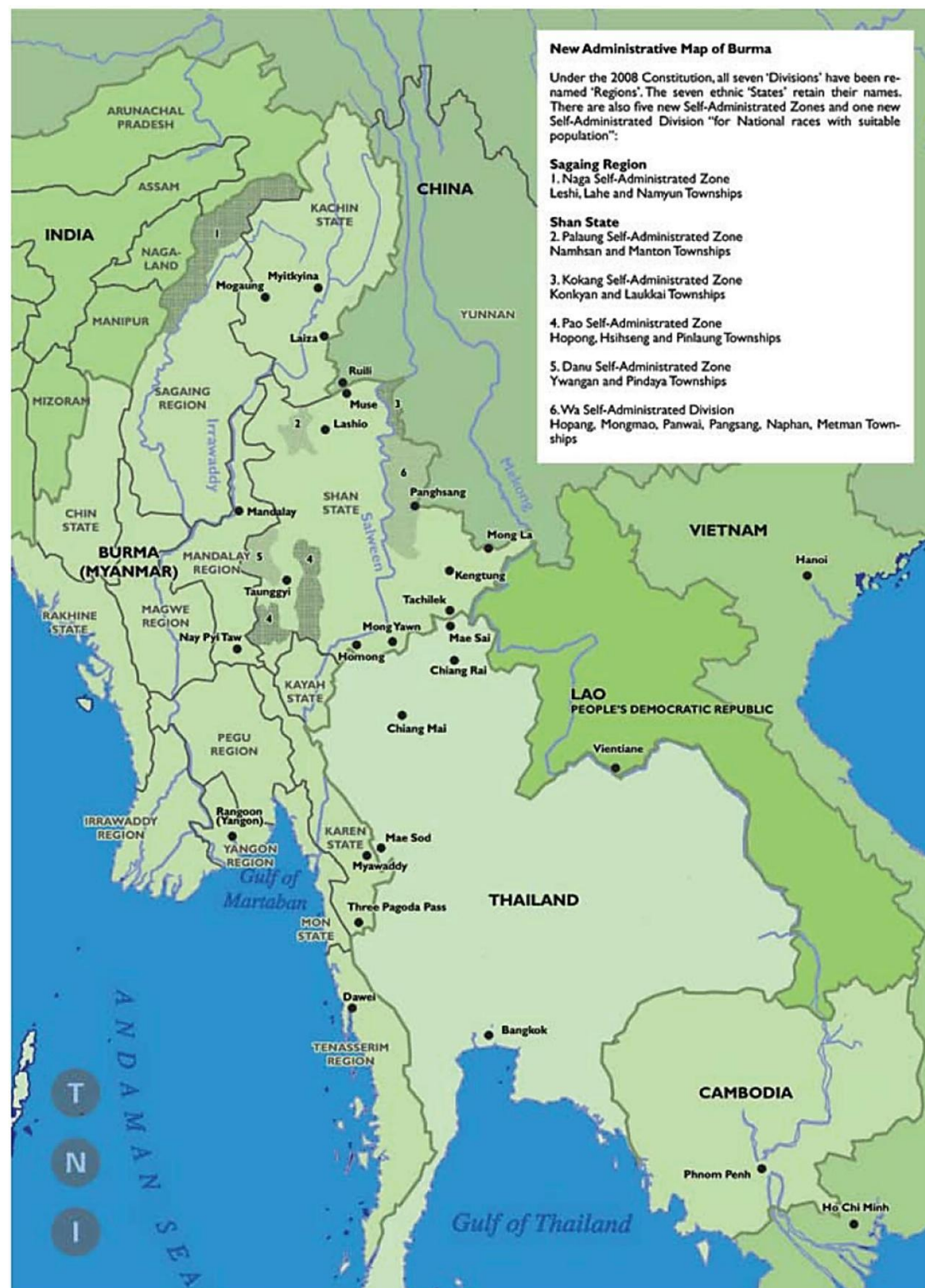


Figure 2.4 – New Administrative Map of Myanmar (Transnational Institute 2011)



## Case Study: The Pa-O Self-Administered Zone

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The new Myanmar Constitution offers self-autonomy for the six specified areas, and also imparts upon them a duty to plan for their own future. The Pa-O Self-Administered Zone is the first of the six areas to pursue this endeavour. With the assistance of IID, they aim to produce a SDP for their area that outlines their plans and priorities for economic and social development. Their progress will be of note and guidance to the other areas, and the success or failure of the project 'could influence the way the Government of Myanmar approaches development throughout the country and especially the way it supports the empowerment of local communities' (IID 2011a, 1). Following a brief summary of the key characteristics and challenges of the Pa-O Zone, this section tracks the steps taken towards the end goal of producing a plan for the area.

### 3.2 THE PA-O SELF-ADMINISTERED ZONE

The Pa-O Self-Administered Zone is located within the Shan State (see figure 2.3). The area covers over 750 000 hectares and is inhabited by a population of approximately 300 000 (IID 2012a).

The Leading Body of the Zone is comprised of an amalgam of the political and military wings of the Pa-O National Organisation (PNO). At present, the members are unelected; however, it is an eventual aim of the group to become an elected body. The Chairman is currently Khun San Lwin who is a member of the Shan State Government.

The Pa-O people are predominantly Buddhist and are considered to be one of the four sub-groups of the Karen (IID 2011a). Agriculture provides the main source of employment, with over 90 percent earning their living through the cultivation of various crops (IID 2012a).



Figure 3.1 – Pa-O women with the corn harvest  
(Kristensen 2011)

#### 3.2.1 Background

The PNO was engaged in a 40 year insurgency against the central government, ending in 1991 under a ceasefire agreement. Three years later the Red Pa-O, a communist division of the Pa-O also ceased fire under contract with the Government. Despite these agreements, little development has occurred since as displacement and isolation have remained unrelenting issues (IID 2011a).

### 3.2.2 Specific Challenges in Moving Forward

Although enthusiasm to see social and economic development is not in short supply among Pa-O leadership and stakeholders, preoccupation with conflict and decades of isolation have consequently resulted in a lack of experience and technical capacity. In addition, time spent as a ceasefire area meant that access was restricted, limiting external interest and knowledge of conditions (IID 2011a). Data and records are therefore insufficient. Furthermore, the Pa-O people's experiences of repression and conflict strain the relationships between them and higher levels of government. Trust between them will be developed gradually, but for now, an internalised planning process is imperative.

## 3.3 TOWARDS A STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE PA-O SELF-ADMINISTERED ZONE

### 3.3.1 Method

For the purposes of this report, the steps towards the final production of the plan are divided into five stages. These five stages are depicted in figure 3.2.

### 3.3.2 Stage 1 – Consultative Process

In April 2011, Khun San Lwin communicated to IID member, Joern Kristensen, his concern that the PNO did not at present have the capacity to be able to fully optimise the opportunities afforded by the new constitution. He therefore requested the assistance of IID (Leake 2011). Importantly, the PNO recognised this issue internally and made the decision itself to approach IID for help. As noted in section one, local capacity is a frequent issue of decentralisation and there are many ways that a solution may be gained. The PNO have decided to engage a trusted neutral party with experience in the region and in negotiating with numbered invested parties (see box 3.1). This appears to be an appropriate solution as any influence of central government officials may have given rise to issues of distrust or domination. However, there are still some risks to this solution, discussed in section 3.4.

#### The Stakeholder Workshop

In June 2011, IID responded to the request of the PNO by visiting the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone. The visit was funded by IID's own resources, with some additional support provided by the Norwegian Government. The primary undertaking of this visit was a Stakeholder's Workshop that sought to gain insight into the

#### **Box 3.1 – IID in Myanmar**

IID has established an office in Yangon; officially registered enabling it to provide development services in Myanmar. Although IID was founded in 1993, the experience of staff in Myanmar exceeds three decades. IID has worked with numerous high-profile development organisations on projects in Myanmar, for example, the commissioning of IID by UNODC to prepare a 10 year economic development plan involving an international commitment of \$300 million in return for giving up opium cultivation (IID 2012b). In addition, IID is currently implementing a conservation programme for the Inlay Lake and surrounding watershed, which is located within the Pa-O Zone. This is an advantage as it facilitates the coordination of economic initiatives and sustainability efforts between the Pa-O and the Intha, the ethnic group who live on the lake. There has been a history of tension between these groups that has inhibited progress for both (IID 2011a). For the Pa-O project, IID's aim is to employ 'participatory approaches to ensure effective communications with all stakeholders' (IID 2012b, 8).

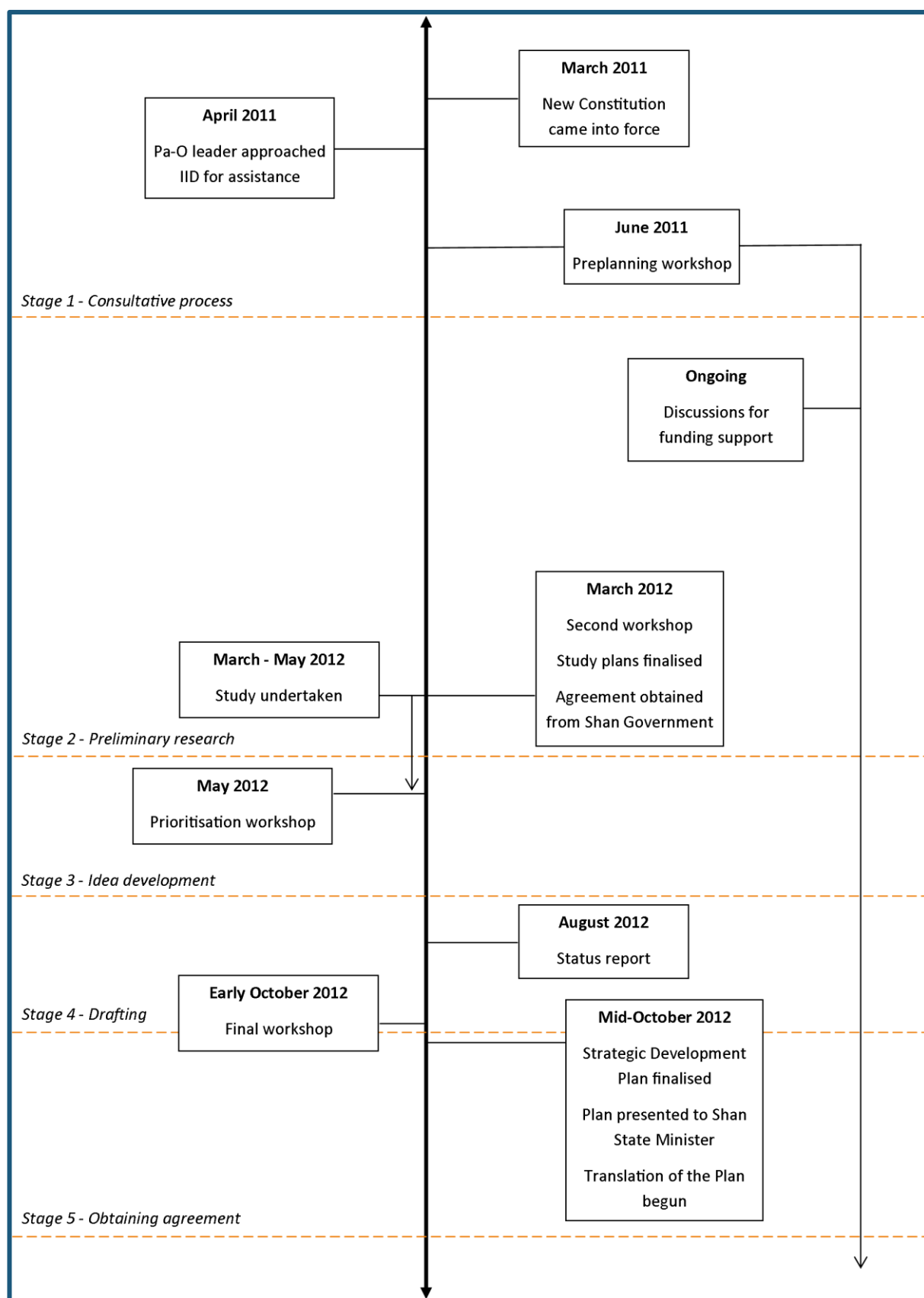


Figure 3.2 – Timeline depicting the five stages towards the production of a Strategic Development Plan

community's ideas and needs relating to development. The 38 workshop participants were nominated by the PNO and included seven women, eleven administrators, eight agricultural workers, ten educators, and a group of PNO members (Leake 2012a). Three sessions were run across two days. Throughout the sessions, participants were divided into their respective interest groups. This as aimed to 'facilitate the emergence of some contrasting views for the benefit of others and to broaden the groups' analysis' (Leake 2012a, 5).

The first session focused on explaining the process, answering questions and clarifying the meanings of any technical terms used. A vision statement for the Pa-O Zone was also suggested, not aiming to become permanent, but to provide a grounding direction for the participants: *'To build a prosperous community for this and future generations'* (Leake 2012a, 5). This vision was reviewed and accepted in all subsequent workshops. The following sessions involved group exercises facilitated and recorded by IID staff.

The key exercise involved a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. SWOT is a tool popularly used for business and market planning. It allows organisations to develop strategies that align their resource capabilities with the requirements of the environment in which they operate (Europa 2005). IID followed the standard model, with assessment of strengths and weaknesses taken from an internal standpoint, and opportunities and threats considered from an external standpoint. SWOT analysis can be somewhat limited in that it can be too simplistic for analysis of complex issues (Queensland Government 2012). For example, one factor may be both a strength and weakness. However, used at it was by IID as a preplanning, team building and brainstorming tool, such limitations have minimal effect.

The workshop also allowed an opportunity for IID to make recommendations that the Pa-O could pursue until the next collaborative planning workshop. The primary recommendation was the foundation of a secretariat tasked to collecting further information necessary for planning and to prepare for the next workshop. IID requested that the secretariat perform such tasks as (Leake 2011):

- Report on potential funding from investors, banks and NGOs
- Obtain current maps that provide details such as the standard of the roads marked and the capacity of schools
- Assess the skills requirement for both public and private sectors
- Conduct a stakeholder report which lists and describes all stakeholders, as well as proposes how to best involve their skills and interests

### **3.3.3 Stage 2 – Preliminary Research**

#### The Inception Workshop

The IID team returned to the Pa-O Zone in March of 2012 and attended an Inception Workshop convened by the PNO. The workshop had four main elements (Leake 2012c):

1. The IID team leader, John Leake, presented the results of the previous workshop and reviewed the key strategic concepts that were introduced at that meeting.

2. The PNO reported their achievements since the initial workshop. A secretariat had been established, however, only some of the information requested had been able to be collected.
3. An exercise was run which aimed to reassess key stakeholder groups and confirm that each were represented. The lack of representation of religious stakeholders was the most prominent absence noted by participants.
4. Study plans were finalised and the Pa-O stakeholders to be part of the study team were elected.

The purpose of the study tour was to review potential development opportunities and take note of any constraints to development. This information could then be used to produce options for the development of each sector. An important part of the study was also an analysis of the availability of investment capital. The Pa-O have a limited ability to generate income from tax and therefore need to rely on the private sector, central government and NGOs to fund most initiatives. A third element of the study was to assess the implementation capacity of the PNO in recognition of IID's experience that most projects fail due to issues of implementation capacity, not funding (Leake 2012c).

The planning of the study tour was aided by the maps and data that the Planning Secretariat had collected. The plans divided the study into sector specific teams. The plan of each group listed the team leader and members, summarised the methodology to be employed, and supplied the logistics and the purpose of their research. The studies were divided into the following sectors:

- Natural resource management
- Education
- Health
- Infrastructure
- Agriculture, sustainable farming and agro-processing and marketing
- Sustainable tourism
- Agro-Forestry and community forestry
- Pa-O institutional development

The study plans had required a permission request to be submitted for travel into parts of the Pa-O Zone that had been restricted to foreigners. The response was an invitation to address the Shan State Minister and three of his cabinet members on March 10. IID report that 'the Minister warmly endorsed the team's objectives and offered his Governments support to the study' (Leake 2012c, 3).

#### The Study Tour

The study tour took place primarily between March 10-30, but also ongoing throughout April and May. An in-depth report was produced for each sector.

### **3.3.4 Stage 3 – Idea development**

#### The Prioritisation Workshop

This workshop was run over two days in late May. The first day was dedicated to the presentation of study findings from each sector. The second day involved group discussion and the prioritisation of

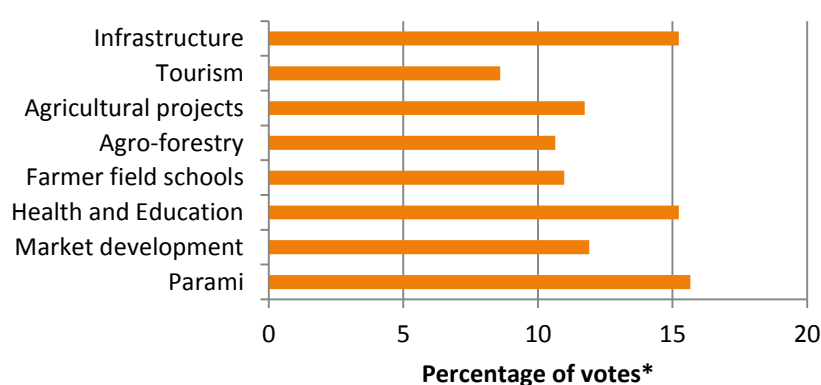
proposed projects (see box 3.2). The workshop was attended by 38 participants, and IID report that the discussions were animated (Leake 2012d). Participants were grouped into common interests:

- PNO members
- Service providers such as health and education
- Tourism focused
- NGOs
- Farmers and market people
- Local and international consultants

### Box 3.2 – The eight proposals (Leake 2012d)

1. Parami: An organisation to plan and coordinate the Pa-O development plan; *an intervention in capacity development*
2. Market development unit: *an intervention to develop markets and market knowledge*
3. Education and health services: *recommended technical inputs and improved infrastructure*
4. Farmer field schools: *An intervention to develop an extension capacity and help farmers organise for credit and other collaborative action*
5. Agro-forestry/plantations: *an intervention to seek international collaboration for plantation forestry and community agroforestry*
6. Specific agricultural development projects; *Specific support to assist in the development of new income earning opportunities*
7. Tourism Capacity development for GIC to develop tourism in Pa-O region: Interventions in training etc.
8. Infrastructure: Capacity to repair and build secondary roads, bridges, water supplies, irrigation, ability to repair and maintain health and education facilities: *Equipment and training for more self reliance in repair and maintenance*

### Ranking of the eight proposals



**Figure 3.3 – Ranking of proposals through use of a preferential voting system**

\*Score attained by assigning 8 points to first priority and so on, with 1 point to the participants last priority (Leake 2012d)

The participants voted using a preferential voting system under secret ballot. Figure 3.3 provides the overall preference votes, which shows a fuller perspective of the participants' priorities than looking only at their first preferences.

The Parami proposal not only attained the highest weighted score, but also attained 19/38 of first preference votes (Leake 2012d). 'Parami' is an apt name for the proposed civil society organisation as it connotes exceptional talent. The Parami's tasks would include:

- Generate community action for enhancing and maintaining own environment; mobilizing support for projects and funding
- Encouraging capacity development by providing scholarships for learning in areas such as project planning and monitoring, economic and social analysis, and business planning and management
- Planning and coordination of the development plan; advocating for investment and policy change
- Coordinating NGO actors and assisting small community groups in their development projects

The voting of Parami as the first priority represents a clear commitment to the development of their institutional and social capital.

At this workshop it was also agreed that the first draft of the plan should be composed by IID, using the results of this workshop as a guide. Follow-up meetings were to be held in August and September of 2012 to maintain the participation of the PNO and stakeholders, and to support IID in the drafting process (IID 2012c).



### 3.3.5 Stage 4 – Drafting

In the months subsequent to the prioritisation workshop drafting was the primary endeavour. This involved further fieldwork in townships and rural areas, and the consolidation of plans as to produce reports to be presented to stakeholders. Extensive interviewing was also carried out and open discussion forums were held in various villages (IID 2012c). Also taken into account were any suggestions made by participants of the prioritisation workshop.

#### Status Report

IID issued a status report in August 2012 that summarised the proposals and their progression since the prioritisation workshop. For each proposal a breakdown of the tasks was given, along with the responsible agent and cost for each task. An aim of the Development Plan is to outline the projects to be undertaken as to invite donor support. For this reason in many cases the 'responsible agent' is



left undetermined (Leake pers.comm). As an example of the format, the breakdown provided for the Parami proposal is provided at Table 3.1:

**Table 3.1 – Task breakdown for the Parami Proposal (IID 2012d)**

<b>Task (Average costs over 6 main towns over 1,5 years)</b>	<b>Responsible agent</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Unit cost</b>	<b>Cost (\$USD)</b>
Project inception phase, detailed planning including travel	Implementing agency	1	20,000	20,000
Administrative and organisation training for Parami Network leaders in HQ and each main town.	Experienced training organization	6	3,000	18,000
Training of trainers in group formation and administrative support, 4 in each of 6 towns	Consultant to Parami Network,	24	2,000	48,000
Study tours within Myanmar to visit other public service NGO's, tours open to all civil groups by tender, groups of 5 in each town + Parami HQ	Parami Network	30	600	18,000
To provide a focused project to improve community exposure to modern trends in civil society including building civil society links to other areas in Myanmar.	Parami Network Implementing agency	1	85,000	85,000
NRM input grants for natural and heritage asset restoration, one round in each town	Parami Network	6	2,500	15,000
Grants for tree planting and 'tidy town' campaigns one in each town	Parami/DOF/ Dept Rural Dev	6	1000	6,000
Administrative support to Parami Network in each township, rent, utilities 1,5 years. Among other duties would be assistance with distribution of National Registration Cards	Parami/ Implementing agency	9	2,000	18,000
Local staff salaries (assumed already to be residing in each township) includes assistants, 3 sets in each office	Parami Network	6	5,000	30,000
Vehicle and motorcycle purchase one vehicle 2 motorcycles, petrol and service,	Parami Network Implementing agency	4	30,000	120,000
Printing and media to promote Parami within the Self-Administered Zone	Parami Network	3	2,000	6,000
Facilitate marketing of the Pa-O brand	Parami Network	1	10,000	10,000
Support for education of community councils, study tours and maintenance of 'partner councils' relationships for 3 selected officials	Parami Network	4	5,000	20,000
<b>Total</b>				<b>414,000</b>
Admin fee		0.7		29,000
<b>Total</b>				<b>443,000</b>



The Status Report also detailed a proposal for establishing an evaluation and monitoring system. This was discussed in all of the workshops, but was not specifically covered by a proposal at the prioritisation workshop. IID aptly summarises the importance of this proposal:

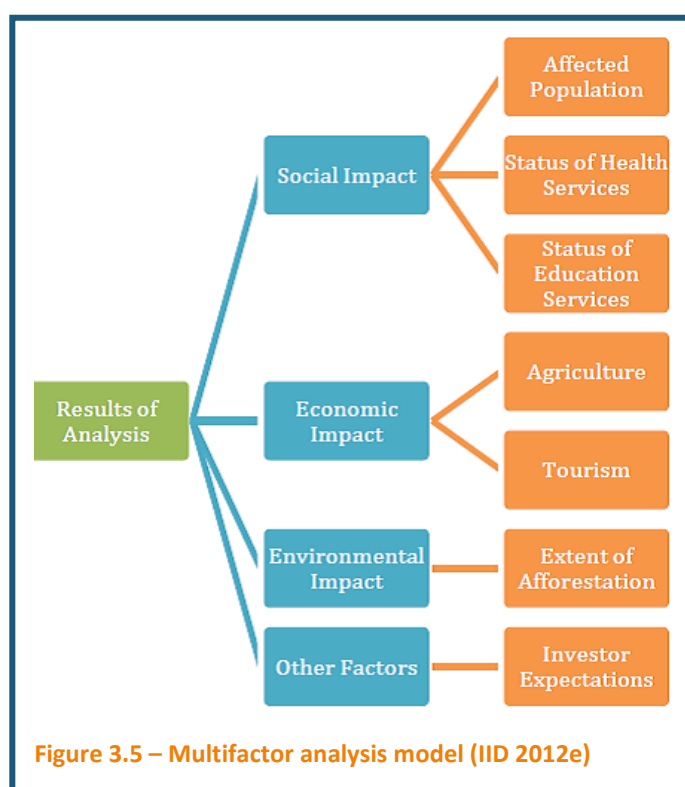
A permanent monitoring mechanism is needed to administer the outcomes of development activities and to report on the results in a manner that facilitates change as circumstances change. There is also need to communicate information across Government departments at the Shan State level and to supporting donors (IID 2012d, 5).

This proposal also recognises that training in the use of accountability systems is as important as their existence (Horsch 1996). The proposal does not, however, provide any plans or intentions for what will occur at the end of the two year period identified. Continuity of training and mechanisms will be important for long term development.

The report was translated and circulated among the participants and stakeholders.

### Final Workshop

Early October saw a draft of the development plan presented to the PNO and their Planning Secretariat by IID. This plan was discussed in relation to its 'expected beneficial output regarding



health, education and economic development' (IID 2012c, 3). IID also presented a multifactor economic analysis of investments in infrastructure, which was discussed by the group. Multifactor analysis enabled the proposed roads to be prioritised by consideration of not only social and economic benefits, but also potential environmental impacts and other possible investor concerns such as security risk (see figure 3.5). As noted by Petry, 'procedures must be selected which allow for interaction between analysts and decision-makers ... the decision-maker must be given the opportunity to understand the basic logic of analysis, hence *simple* techniques' (1990, 221). By introducing this form of analysis to the Pa-O workshop

participants, IID have provided a conceptually simple tool for more complex analysis than previously employed, facilitating discussion and the development of decision-making skills.

Comments made by the Pa-O representatives during this workshop led to the finalisation of the SDP for the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone in mid-October, 2012.

### The Strategic Development Plan for the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone

The SDP contains:

- A foreword written by IID staff
- Introductory and background information
- An outline of the steps towards the production of the plan
- The details of the eight project proposals
- A few recommendations made by IID, such as the collection of more detailed information and additional tasks to which support could be directed

The project proposals have two-three year time frames. The logic of this is grounded in investor preferences (Leake pers.comm), however, the longer term vision for the area is unclear. IID view the SDP as a learning process that will primarily lead to the expansion of local capacity, increasing their ability to plan projects subsequent. This is to be contrasted with the SDPs prepared by local governments in China. It was noted that ironically the plans focused on long-term visions, but were prepared in very short time frames of less than three months. Consequently, the plans were only actionable to a limited extent (Wu & Zhang 2007). The opposite may be true of the Pa-O SDP, which focuses on short-term tasks and is supported by over eighteen months of planning. The lacking long term perspective could be easily rectified by a short paragraph outlining how the plan fits within long term goals. The inclusion of the vision statement, *'To build a prosperous community for this and future generations'*, would provide a good foundation.

### 3.3.6 Stage 5 – Obtaining agreement

The results of the Plan were recently presented to the Shan State Minister and members of his Cabinet. Their reaction was very positive and led to the request for IID to also assist the other Self-Administered Zones of the Shan State to produce similar plans (IID 2012c). The Pa-O will next need to lodge the plan with the central Government to meet their constitutional duties. The plan is currently being translated into Burmese. At present, IID hopes the implementation phase will begin in early 2013 (Leake pers.comm).

## 3.4 DISCUSSION OF THE APPROACH

### 3.4.1 Local Capacity

The risk in procuring external assistance in order to address capacity deficiency is twofold. Firstly, IID may have dominated the process, limiting local ownership of the product and participation in the process. Secondly, the PNO could have become too dependent on the guidance of IID, missing out on an opportunity for their own capacity development and potentially raising issues when IID move on. Godfrey et al provide that many projects are 'donor-driven in their identification, design and implementation, to the detriment of capacity development' (2003, 355).

Numerous factors lend to a conclusion that neither of these risks are present:

- The process was driven by the Pa-O, who convened most of the workshops
- IID took the time to explain processes and technical terms rather than simply exclude local parties from difficult tasks
- The participant's project priorities guided the plan

- The Planning Secretariat and the Parami were established and are responsible for coordinating the project
- A project has been drafted with the specific intent of expanding local capacity
- IID ensured the time frames between workshops were long enough for participant reflection on processes and proposed directions

Although the assistance of IID may be required on the long-term, IID have demonstrated an ability to ensure appropriate processes are utilised whilst also preserving the autonomy of the local institutions, and therefore facilitate their capacity development.

### 3.4.2 Accountability

In terms of accountability, ‘strategies are most effective when they are cumulative and combined’ (Olowu 2003, 46). The following strategies are being instituted in the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone:

- Hierarchical control of Leading Bodies established at article 281 of the Constitution – this is complemented by the power of the central government to require Leading Bodies to perform particular tasks at article 282. However, this may be to the detriment of peace efforts and best left as a final resolution.
- The establishment of an evaluation and monitoring system as proposed in the development plan. This will facilitate reporting across departments, and to the Shan State Government, donors and other involved NGOs and parties.
- One role of the Parami is identified as ‘Undertaking monitoring and evaluation services for the Pa-O community to assist in adaptive management’ (IID 2012e, 6). However, it is unclear what powers the Parami will have if results are deemed unsatisfactory.

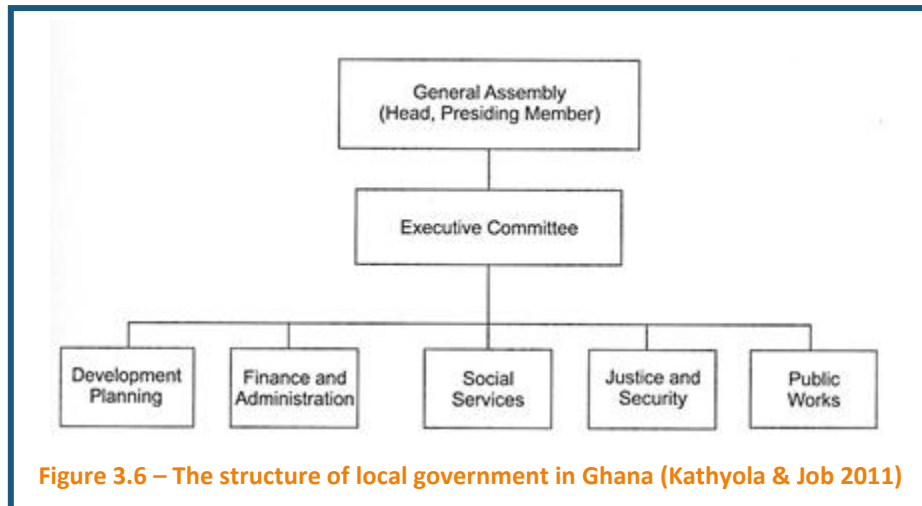
Some additional accountability mechanisms require further development:

- Media – with freedom of the press finally present in Myanmar, media is a potential avenue for raising awareness of local developments and performance.
- Elections – are a long term goal of the Leading Body. No plans have been made towards achieving this goal to date.

Of particular note is that there is no clear indication of administrative hierarchy and responsibility allocation. For example, if there arises a dispute between the PNO and the Parami, which institution has supremacy? Leake notes that such discussions have not yet been had, but that the issue will be resolved within a year (Leake pers.comm). This is somewhat unfortunate as a diagram similar to the one provided at figure 3.5 would be a useful reference for readers of the Pa-O Zone’s SDP, as well as a step towards administrative clarity.

### 3.4.3 Participation

Participation in the planning process is essential for ensuring local ownership and was a key goal of IID. However, notions such as community-driven, participatory planning are foreign to a culture which has to date experienced only top-down, command orientated leadership. Leake acknowledges that some observers may suggest that not enough participatory processes have been employed, however, in response he reiterated the importance of allowing the process to be client-driven: ‘we



aim for a gradual learning process that will gradually involve more stakeholders and eventually a more pluristic system’ (Leake pers.comm). Necessitating the use of unfamiliar processes would have alienated the client, and IID would have acted in the same manner as past authoritarian leaders.

Constraints aside, the range of participating stakeholders was discussed at all workshops and increased consequently. Notably, military delegates also participated in some planning activities (Leake pers.comm). Participation increase will likely continue over time as progress becomes evident and new ideas and approaches become more familiar.

Future public participation will be increased by ensuring the availability of current information. IID report that ‘there is widespread lack of knowledge within the Pa-O community regarding the general concepts of Rule of Law, good governance, basic rights of citizens’ (IID 2012e, 32). Explanation of these concepts, along with information about progress in their Zone, will allow more Pa-O people to engage in and monitor developments. This will likely fall within the responsibilities of the Parami, who are tasked to ‘enlarge the space for civil society’ (IID 2012e).

# Recommendations and Conclusion

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The promulgation of a new constitution in Myanmar entrenched decentralisation policies which afford six ethnic minority groups the rights to self-autonomy that they have pursued for decades, if not centuries. This new found autonomy, however, greatly increases the responsibilities of local leadership in administering and planning for their region.

This report began with an overview of decentralisation, highlighting its potential risks and benefits as gleaned from the numbered and varied nations which have undertaken this policy direction. Two key areas of local capacity and accountability were focused upon as strong policies in these areas increase the ability to mitigate some of the most prevalent risks of decentralisation.

In section two, the contemporary history of Myanmar was outlined with the grounding rationale that a prerequisite to understanding the decentralisation processes in a country is to understand the centralism which it succeeded. This placed the implications of the 2008 Constitution within the historical and cultural context of Myanmar and enabled identification of the consistencies and breaks from tradition.

The report goes on to track the progress of the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone, drawing on the findings of the preceding sections to analyse the approach taken. In terms of local capacity, it is found that the Pa-O have insightfully recruited the aid of IID, who in turn have managed to balance the competing obligations of ensuring best practice, whilst allowing enough independence of local institutions to facilitate their capacity development. Complementary to this has been the increased participation of stakeholders in the planning process. Accountability is found to be progressing; good intentions are evident, but further work is necessary.

The product of the Pa-O's progress so far has been a Strategic Development Plan for their area. This plan closely follows the results of the study tour and the priorities of workshop participants. Eight project proposals are laid out for the development of their area. These proposals provide clear funding requirements and tasks to be achieved. Some minor additions to the plan are suggested below.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions are provided for the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone, but may also assist the other five areas which are yet to begin this same process:

- Additions to the Strategic Development Plan could include:
  - A foreword by a Pa-O representative – this would attest to local ownership of the plan
  - Longer term goals and aspirations, in particular, the inclusion of the vision statement
  - An outline of the administrative hierarchy
  - Some conjecture as to when the implementation phase will begin

- The production of a management and funding responsibility statement once the funding and implementing agencies are finalised
- Strengthened efforts aimed at raising public awareness and developing a mechanism for making current information available. May require research into prominent forms of information dissemination in the area
- Increased focus on developing the administrative structure, administrative processes and institutional capacity. IID suggest tasks such as explaining rule of law principles, for example, that all administrative acts must have a legal base (IID 2012e)
- Continue to increase the use of participatory mechanisms
- The development of an information sharing network between Self-Administered Zones and Divisions, facilitating collective learning
- Further gathering of data to assist in the implementation process.

## CONCLUSION

The nation's violent history is a challenging backdrop for achieving development. Command orientated governance has been the norm, and notions such as participatory development and accountability will take time to evolve internally. However, the positive steps taken by the Pa-O people, enabled by the new Myanmar Constitution, suggest change is not unmanageable. Documented in this report are just the beginning steps that already span across over eighteen months. Evident then, is that patience must be practiced. Decades of insurgency and its consequences will not be reversed overnight, and true decentralisation is a slow process.

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