Karen Community Based Organizations

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Karen Community Based Organisations' Position on Peace Funds

24th July, 2012

The undersigned Karen community-based organisations working on relief, education, healthcare, women's rights, human rights, youth development, environmental protection, community development , and sustainable livelihood, among other issues, are concerned about the current lack of transparency and community involvement in the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI). We are grateful that Norway has shown concern and a willingness to try to help move peace forward here. We are asking for improvements so this Initiative can make the type of contribution in that effort that everyone wants it to.

We are fully committed to peace in Burma. Peace funds are not a substitute for and should not undermine a comprehensive peace process. We believe that Peace Funds that are transparent, accountable, and have the informed participation of both local communities and community-based organisations working across a range of sectors can help advance our shared agenda for peace in Burma. The MPSI has, to date, failed to meet those standards. For example, failure to consult local communities has resulted in infrastructure development being targeted at areas villagers do not want to relocate, because they will be unable to access their agricultural land. CBO's were not given adequate information nor opportunity to be legitimately consulted regarding the MPSI. Given those problems, we ask MPSI and other proponents of donor-driven peace funds not to undermine our peace process, but rather to move to a more inclusive and transparent process. MPSI should not take shortcuts or sow division within our leadership and our community in a bid to rush the deployment of funds. We understand your sense of urgency, but this process is too fragile to easily survive major mistakes that can be avoided.

We call on the MPSI and other peace fund proponents to:

1. Stop their current activities for long enough to review their process and procedures for implementation.
2. Immediately release the fund design documents including the local languages translations. These documents should include sector targets, criteria, plans, etc.
3. Issue clear rationales for how each of the projects supported by the funds will contribute to conflict resolution.
4. Develop and release project risk analysis and mitigation, and ensure that accessible monitoring and accountability mechanisms are in place.
5. Develop and execute a robust consultation strategy both with local community members and with community-based organisations.

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