



CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION AND NON-DISCRIMINATION IN MYANMAR'S TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

Khin San Wai

MAIDS, Faculty of Political Science,
Chulalongkorn University.

I. Introduction

1.1 A brief story of Myanmar and changes in Transitional Period

The Union of Myanmar is made up of over one hundred ethnicities speaking 135 dialects of which the eight major groups are Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin, Burman, Mon, Rakhine (Arakan) and Shan. The latest population by the Ministry of Information in 2002 shows that the estimated minority ethnic population numbers excluding the majority Burmese are more than 15 million out of 53 million total population of Myanmar today. The majority group is Burmans who comprise about two-thirds of the total population. The four major religions being hold by Myanmar citizens are Buddhism, Christian, Islam and Hinduism. While the majority populations approximately 89 percent hold the belief in Buddhism, only 4 percent of population is Muslims.¹

Myanmar has been under military control since 1962. As a result, all the people of Myanmar have suffered forced resettlement, deportation, forced labor, torture, arbitrary executions or arrests for decades in term of the repressive and abusive actions by the military government. Since the military overtook the country in 1962, various ethnic groups such as KNU, KIO have been fighting for autonomy. Through these decades of civil war and military oppression, Myanmar society has become extremely divided: relationships have been broken and hatred, prejudices, pervasive fear and insecurity have become deeply internalized. Deep mistrust and misunderstanding between the various ethnic and religious groups in the country are resulted. Since Myanmar independence, many forms of conflicts between majority and minority groups occurred around the country. These conflicts mainly based on discrimination on racial and religious. Muslims face a lot of discrimination and negative stereotypes. They are excluded

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myanmar#Demographics> (June, 2013)

from society and are limited access to education, jobs opportunity and health care services. As a result they have adopted many of the negative beliefs about their ethnicities and religion.²

In the period of transition and reform, conflicts among races and religions of minority and majority have been challenges for government and the country itself and became barriers on the way to democracy. Obviously, President Thein Sein has made major changes in Myanmar starting from 2011. Along with positive and visible changes, issues of discrimination on minority religion, race and ethnic are highly more common than before and they are widespread across country. Starting from 2010 until now, racial and religious conflicts and anti-Muslims violence (969 propaganda by Buddhists) are big challenges for the country under the ruling of President Thein Sein government. Tensions between races and religious intolerance occurring around the country have become threats to political stability of the country and obstacles towards Myanmar transition to Democracy. Conflicts among ethnic minority groups and religions are the main problem to be solved urgently if the government and people do not want to go back to the starting point.

While looking back to political situation of Myanmar from 2010 to the present, problems on discrimination especially on racial and religious are often occurred around the country. With given the recent examples of conflicts between minority races and riots of anti-Muslim, religious discrimination and racial prejudice are frequently to be seen. Tensions between Arakanese and Rohingya *so called Myanmar Ethnic*, which have been rooted in olden days have been increased and recent conflict was caused by hatred by Buddhists and Muslims. Recent outbreak of violence was started in Rakhine state in May, 2012 because three Muslims raped and murdered an ethnic Rakhine woman. They were arrested and sent them to jail. But Rakhine people were angry and in return, ten innocent Muslims people were killed. Then 30 people who had killed ten Muslims were arrested. In this way, the degree of violence has been increased. This conflict spread throughout Rakhine state as well as other part of country. The lives of people had been lost and their properties had been destroyed including houses, temples and mosques owned by Buddhists and Muslims. As a consequence of conflict, 659 Rohingya Muslims had been killed, 1200 were missing and more than 80000 had been displaced. In October 2012, violence between Muslim

² Angelene Naw wrote “AUNG SAN AND THE STRUGGLE FOR BURMESE INDEPENDENCE” (2001)



Rohingya and Buddhist Rakhine broke out again. In this time, nearly 100 people were killed, more than 20,000 people were displaced, and nearly 5000 houses were burnt down.³

Moreover, religious conflicts between Buddhists and Muslims have occurred again in Meikhtila, Mandalay Division with anti-Muslim attacks in March 2013. This violence was caused in term of argument between a Muslim shop owner and two Buddhist customers on 20 March. Then it was spread to several areas of the city in Mandalay Division and also eight townships in Pegu Division. On 21 March, a Muslim school was attacked and 32 students and 4 teachers had been killed in the attack. According to official figures, more than one thousands of houses of Muslims were destroyed. Because of this riot, 44 people were killed and 10 thousands of Muslims were displaced. Therefore, President Thein Sein declared central Myanmar as emergency state.⁴

In coping with the issues of non-discrimination concerning with religions and racial intolerance, civil society organizations play in the vital role and undertake the actions to be the victims of violence relieved. The outbreak of violence made the local people hardship in their livelihood. They lost their family, belongings and estates. Unfortunately, they became homeless and hopeless. These vulnerable people have been listed and gave humanitarian assistances by well-wishers, civil societies and the state. Generally, quick responses of civil society organizations relieved the pain of victims of violence and civil groups helped the affected households to settle down in temporary houses. The programs of temporary resettlement and reconstruction in the state have been carried out by local and international organizations and UN agencies. Furthermore, civil societies have planned and prepared for food security and addressed malnutrition of vulnerable children in affected areas. For example, civil society organizations which had respond to anti-Muslims violence and contributed aid to affected people are non-governmental organizations and inter-governmental organization. Among these organizations,

³ Burma's Façade: An Update on Conflicts, Displacement & Human Rights Violations (Article from ALTSEAN BURMA)

⁴ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/meikhtila-07112013181859.html> (June, 2013)

selected organizations specifically the 88 Generation Students Group and Paungku Consortium that will be explored as case study are included.⁵

The stability of politics, the growth of economic and the peaceful coexistence of citizens from diverse races holding diverse religions is a must in transitional period of Myanmar. Today, conflicts between diverse religions especially Buddhists and Muslims are very common around Myanmar and have made challenges of the country's transition to democracy. The competency of newly civilian government, the capability of political parties and the proficiency of civil society organizations are important in creating democratic society. Leading towards democracy, civil society organizations play a crucial role in promoting non-discrimination value in Myanmar context.

1.2 Research Questions and Structure of Paper

This paper aims to identify the cause and effect of religious violence and response of non-governmental organizations. In this paper, a brief of research methods is presented as another part of the body. Firstly, the paper describes about democratization and reforms in Myanmar and challenges of country. Secondly, the paper reviews the factors of causing religious violence and response of non-governmental organizations to its. Thirdly, the paper assesses value of non-discrimination in Myanmar and proposes implications of its value to policy maker and officials. In conclusion, the paper discusses profits and challenges of reforms on the way to democracy in creating democratic society involving diverse groups of people.

1.3 Methodologies

In this research, the researcher use qualitative research method. This research was conducted through a documentary approach and field work. It examines written documentary and also performs a field work in Yangon, Myanmar. Concerning with the documentary, this research assesses all primary and secondary data and reports. For the field work, in-depth

⁵ The report was commissioned by *The Inquiry Commission on the Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State: Executive Summary of the Final Report 23 April 2013*.

interviews and semi-structured interviews operates with key persons for this issue and other stakeholders in order to explore the attitudes of civil society organizations on discrimination issue on the way to democracy and the perceptions of other towards selected civil society groups in promoting values of democracy.

The researcher uses in-depth interviews and semi-structured interviews as technique and research tool for data collection. In term of in-depth interviews, the researcher can get important data and hear successful and tragedy stories of key persons. In addition, the activities and events of selected organizations which are not included in secondary data can be added in the research through in-depth interviews. Regarding with in-depth interviews, the leaders from the 88 generation students and Paungku consortium chooses. In-depth interviews makes with two leaders from the 88 Generation Group and one leader from Paungku Consortium. In term of in-depth interviews, the researcher receives more detail information as well as their personal opinion and attitudes related to the topic.

For semi-structured interviews, the researcher definitely conducts interviews with people from both groups of Muslims and Buddhists. In addition, semi-structured interviews are carried out with members of selected organizations. In my field work study, a number of participants for my research interview are altogether twenty-seven people from different organizations and diverse societies. Two of them are journalists from private media, two interviewees are from academic field and five people are members of the 88 Generation Group, four people are partners of Paungku Consortium. The rest of them are working in other non-governmental organizations as well as leaders and followers of Buddhists and Muslims societies.

To analyze the data through my research field work, the following stages are being undertaken;

- Gather data and information related to research topic through literature review, documentation, in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews and non-participants observation.
- Select data address the research questions and very relevant to my issue.
- Analyze data collecting concerning with the research framework and concept and guided theory.

- Present analyzed data in the forms of analysis review.

II. Democratization, Reforms and Challenges of Country

2.1 Democratization Process in Myanmar

Democratic process is a process in which everyone is equally involved and helps to make decisions. In other words, it is the way in which all people can participate in government through elections. Antony Wright (1996:9) states that democratization is the transition to a more democratic political regime. In Myanmar case, democratic process can be say that it is transition from a dictatorship to a democratic government. While looking back the history of Myanmar, democracy was terminated in 1962 when socialist government ruled the country and transformed all the systems of social, economic and political. Under this regime, 88 uprising known as pro-democracy demonstration against the socialist government occurred and spread through the country in 1988. However, the government demolished the protests by shooting the protesters including students, monks and civil servants. By doing so, a large number of protesters lost their lives in the demonstration. Moreover, thousands of people who participated in the uprising were arrested and kept in detention for long years.

In 1990, the first election was held by the military government in order to turn over the power to the representatives elected by all citizens. The government also established its own political party called Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA) later known as Union Solidarity Development Party (USDP). Alternatively, pro-democracy group formed a party named National League for Democracy (NLD) headed by democracy leader Daw Aung San Su Kyi. In the 1990 election, NLD won the 80 percent of seats but the military government ignored this election results and did not transfer the power as they promised before. Starting from this point, there had tension and conflict between NLD and the military junta.

In 1993, the government set up National Convention and drew a new constitution. The participants to attend the convention from majority and minority ethnic groups were selected by the government. Firstly, the NLD members attended the National Convention but later on, they withdrew from the assembly since this assembly was not look like the one as they expected.

Nevertheless, the government had laid down the seven-step road map to democracy in 1993.⁶ According to the seven steps road map, the government had completed up to the fifth steps. It is certain that 2010 election held in May, 2010 is the fifth step of the government's seven-step "roadmap" to a disciplined democracy and currently the country is on the track of the sixth step and seventh step towards democracy.

In the beginning of the democratization, there had a doubt and question whether changes were real or show off. However, the government has initiated a democratic process and many steps towards democratization have been made. There had a successive series of political dialogues between President Thein Sein and a democracy leader Daw Aung San Su Kyi. Then President met the leaders and members of other political parties and the media. Moreover, hundreds of prominent political prisoners were released from arrest in the regime of newly civilian government. The politicians who drove away from Myanmar after uprisings in different eras are able to return Myanmar and politicians inside the country travelled aboard. All citizens have rights to peaceful assembly and peaceful procession. Besides, new labor laws that allow labor unions and strikes have been entitled. Press and media censorship has been ended and an anti-corruption law has been on the process of making a draft. Nonetheless, there is still less doubt among citizens about Myanmar political situation. Today, no one can say that the democratization will proceed or not since it depends on the competence of the newly civilian government, the political parties and the people itself.

⁶ Seven Step Road Map: Reconvening of the National Convention that has been adjourned since 1996.

After the successful holding of the National Convention, step by step implementation of the process necessary for the emergence of a genuine and disciplined democratic system.

Drafting of a new constitution in accordance with detailed basic principles laid down by the National Convention.

Adoption of the constitution through a national referendum.

Holding of free and fair elections for pyithuhluttaw (legislative bodies) according to the new constitution.

Convening of hluttaws (assemblies) attended by hluttaw members in accordance to the new constitution.

Building a modern, developed and democratic nation by the state leaders elected by the hluttaw, and the government and other central organs formed by the hluttaw". (Source from News Light of Myanmar, 31 August 2003)

2.2 *Political Reforms*

Political reforms are one part of democratic reforms along with economic and administrative reforms. In Myanmar, the series of political reforms have been started since November 2010 when a military-backed civilian government took the place of dictatorship rulers. The main military backed party called the Union Solidary and Development Party (USDP) won the first election for 20 years. The leader of USDP, U Thein Sein has become a president in new civilian government when military juntas transferred full power to new government. In other words, this is a transition period of Myanmar political setting from military rule to civilian government. Five days later after holding the new general election on 7 November 2010, the leader of National League for Democracy (NLD), Aung San Su Kyi was released from house detention of more than 20 years. After her release, there had a series of consecutive and successive political dialogues with President Thein Sein. On May 2011, thousands of prisoners set free from arrest but there are only a few political prisoners among them. However, as second time on October, more than 200 political prisoners are freed under a general amnesty.

According to the election law, the ex-prisoners cannot be members of registered political parties. However, interestingly, the government erased the clause in a parliamentary section and amended political party registration law and election law on January 2012 as one of remarkable reforms. After the amendments, National League for Democracy led by Daw Aung Su Kyi has registered for the by-election. As another remarkable reform, the government released the most prominent political prisoners including the activists of 88 generation students and also those from ethnic groups and monks who participated in the 2007 saffron revolution. In the by-election held on April 2012, NLD won it in a landslide, winning 41 out of 44 of the contested seats. As consequences of the reforms, ASEAN has approved Burma's submission for the chairmanship in 2014; Japan has restarted sending aids ; the US- Myanmar retie the relationship at diplomatic level after visiting of US president and US secretary of States to Myanmar.

2.3 *Challenges of Country in Transitional Period*

The regime of newly civilian government has encountered many challenges in transitional period since two years when it was started to rule the country. Conflicts between majority and minority ethnic are being increased and a series of religious violence are being emerging around Myanmar. These make political unstable and hinder economic growth. Currently, religious issue especially Muslims versus Buddhist is the most important issue to be solved since this is the big challenge for Myanmar. Tensions between Muslims and Buddhists are likely to be greater than before in recent years. Religious tension and conflicts are definitely lead to violence in diverse society.

While looking back the origin of Muslims who arrived and settled down in Myanmar, it cannot be said that they just arrived a few years ago. Actually, Muslims had first arrived in Myanmar since the 13th century according to historians. They crossed sea and came to Myanmar to do business as traders and merchants but some of them are illegal migrants. At first they settled down in coastal regions of Myanmar. Later on, they loyally served under Kings of Myanmar as a bodyguard. As suggested by Myanmar and Foreign historians, for instance, “King Anawrahta (1014 –1077), the founder of Pagan Empire, had Muslim Indian units and bodyguards”⁷. Moreover, at the time of King Bayinnaung (1516-1581) had soldiers of Muslims in his army. Although he accepted Muslims to serve for the country, he did not encourage the religion of Muslims and forced them to listen to Buddhist sermons. Under King Mindon (1853-1878), he allowed Muslims to build mosques and his army was consisted of Muslims soldiers holding different administrative posts.

During the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824 to 1826), a large number of Indian Muslims migrated to Myanmar and settled down in southern Myanmar and Arakan State. Many Indian Muslims worked in Myanmar as soldiers, policemen, businessmen and so on. Later, they settled down in southern Myanmar but also in Yangon. A number of Muslims had increased year by year in main city of Myanmar. They started to build mosques and established Muslims associations across Myanmar. As a large number of Muslims migrated and settled down in Myanmar and promoted their Islamic religious activities, the riots of anti-Indians and anti-

⁷ <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/11039> (May,2013)

Muslims broke out in 1930s. The situation of the riots came to the worst in July 1938. Even Buddhist monks joined the riots and the violence spread across the country. As a consequence, a large number of Buddhists and Muslims were killed and a number of mosques were destroyed.

After independence, Muslims struggled to have dignity and find a place in Myanmar society. Under new government, they requested that Muslims have to be considered as a national minority and conferred them cultural and religious. Moreover, leaders of Muslims demanded a special department of Muslims affairs under U Nu's leadership but it was rejected. Under different regimes of Myanmar, Muslims assumed themselves as second-class citizens. They feel that they are not fully accepted in Myanmar society and under suspicion.

The long term hatred, earlier bitterness and tensions between two religious groups and suspicions one another and unequal opportunities for them probably lead to religious violence in society. Along with given recent examples of conflicts between Muslims and Buddhists, religious violence is very common and has not ended yet until now in Myanmar. One prominent religious conflict was took place in Arakan state, western Myanmar in June and October 2012. As a result, 192 people were killed, 265 got injured and over 8000 houses were destroyed and an estimate 100,000 people have been internally displaced people (IDPs).⁸

In March 2013, another anti-Muslim violence took place in Meiktila Township, Myanmar due to an argument at a good shop and killing of Buddhist monk in town. It was spread to Mandalay and Bago division. The Buddhist population set fire 1500 houses, more than a dozen of mosques were destroyed and more than 100 people from Muslims population were killed. The violence displaced more than 12,000 people and about 8,400 affected people by violence were still in camp until April 2013.⁹ Religious violence started from these areas has been spread to throughout the country in term of anti-Muslim propaganda by Buddhist monks and Buddhist population.

⁸ The Inquiry Commission on the Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State: Executive Summary of the Final Report 23 April 2013.

⁹ <http://www.burmapartnership.org/2013/05/massacre-in-central-burma-muslim-students-terrorized-and-killed-in-meiktila/> May 2013

III. Religious Violence and the Role of Civil Society

3.1 Cause and Effect of Religious Violence

Analysis on data and information through literature and research interviews, the researcher explores cause and effect of religious violence in Myanmar. With a number of interviews with key informants and stakeholders related to my research topic, the paper finds out following factors that caused religious violence.

Animosity: One of the causes to arise conflict, it is because of hatred and suspension inherited in the heart of minority group for ages. In colonial period, English intentionally used divide and rule in Myanmar so that majority and minority ethnic lived separately and no interaction between them. In World War II, English tried to defence Japan by recruiting some local people and Muslims immigrants who are from Bangladesh with arms and founded vanguard forces. In number 4 forces, most of them are Muslims because English have no much trust on Buddhists because they thought that Burmese would cooperate with Japan and fight back for English army. Meanwhile, Muslims forces not only helped for English army but also they drove out indigenous Rakhine and destroyed their belongings and buildings. On that time, Rakhine who lived on Myanmar borders moved to Sittwe. This animosity is still existence between Rakhine Buddhist and Muslims.

Discriminate to others minority group by Buddhist Government: In accordance with statement of interviewees, it can be analysed that there is some discrimination on other religions of Muslims and Christians in term of education and employment although no institutionalized discrimination is in country. For example, someone who holds the belief of Muslims and Christian are not easy to get identity card that is really needed for admission to university and getting jobs. Moreover, even though they are qualified enough for promoting in work place, they are left behind because of their religions. Particularly, discriminatory practice is the most visible in Myanmar army because ethnic minority and religion (Muslims and Christians) are unlikely to be high officials and always stop at the rank of General. It also shows that government has no trust upon minority ethnic and religious group and suspension whether they would pass high secret news of government to the opposition troupe.

Extremist Muslims and Buddhists: It would be in trouble if there is extreme point of view in religion. Religious tension in Myanmar is getting bigger because of some extremists of two religions. Some of Muslims who always wear their traditional outfits of white long shirt and small white cap seems to hold strong beliefs in their religion. In Buddhist society, some laymen and Buddhist monks are also so strong that they resist their religious point of view. They have tried to maintain Buddha' teachings and practices in an inappropriate way. For instance, they organized 969 propaganda campaigns to counteract Muslims society. Because of propagandists, tensions and conflicts between two societies lead to violence.

Weakness of Rule of Law: It is not enough law is just enacted by legislative body in parliament on paper; actually it is vital to practice it in ground. To be analysed why conflicts and violence are occurred in Myanmar, it is found out that rule of law is weak in immigration and preventing conflicts. People from neighbouring countries migrated to the western part of Myanmar, Arakan State, since long time ago and most of them are illegal immigrants. They paid under table money to government officials, so a number of illegal immigrants are getting increased. Later, they moved to outside Arakan illegally and settled down in capital cities like Yangon and Mandalay. Then, they had done smuggling and business unlawfully. In the perceptive of Burmese Buddhists, they are illegal immigrants and are not considered as citizens of Myanmar.

Abuse of Social Media: As press and media censorship under new government have been ended, news are published freely. Then, a high more percentage of population than before have access to internet and online media are popular nowadays. Because of this, current news and events around the country spread all over the world in a minute. Disappointedly, some abuse social media like facebook to just spread rumours so that hatred between Muslims and Buddhists is getting much and suspension on Muslims becomes multiply.

Human Insecurity and Vulnerability: Human security is not sure in the areas of conflict and violence and this clashes threat to human livelihood. In hardship time by violence, women, children and elderly are the most vulnerable victims since they are not as strong as men to resist. Conflicts and violence definitely lead to human insecurity because it impacts on human

livelihoods directly and indirectly. For instance, because of riots in particular Arakan and Meikhtila in Myanmar, people not only from these areas but around country do not feel safe and live with fears and anxieties. There is no trust and suspension is always existence within two societies. It indirectly impacts on their business and trading between diverse religions is almost ended. The impact of violence affects the victims physically and mentally.

3.2 *Responses of Non-governmental Organizations to Violence Victims*

Through observation and interview sessions, it is find out that civil society organizations including selected organizations specifically the 88 Generation Student Group and Paungku Consortium have provided humanitarian assistances as well as social supports to the victims of violence regardless of race and religions. As the activities done by the 88 group, food and materials had been distributed to a large number of households in conflict areas such as in Arakan and Meikhtila and so on. Furthermore, this organization helped to contribute materials donated by others well-wishers to the hands of victims of Muslims in Rakhine. Due to providing assistance to Muslims group, Buddhist society misunderstood and condemned the 88 Generation Students but the 88 Group kept going to give aids to both societies of religions and stood in the middle no matter who blamed them.

As Paungku has a wide network to community based organizations and self-help groups, it gives financial and technical supports to small groups so that they could organize anti-violence movements such as campaign and interfaith dialogues. According to data through interviews, a number of youths from Yangon did sticker and T-shirt campaigns supported by Paungku Consortium. They distributed stickers and T-shirts on which mentioned that “No more religious conflict and violence because of me” on the busy roads and crowded areas in Yangon. In addition, they arranged speech and interfaith dialogues participated by multi-race and multi-religions in where the participants can be shared their feelings straightforwardly.

IV. Promoting Non-Discrimination Value by Government and NGOs

4.1 Non-discriminatory Practices according to Treaties and Constitution

As Myanmar is a member of United Nations, it should respect Universal Declaration of Human Rights and practice articles in it. According to UDHR article 2 “ Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” (*UDHR, Act 2*). It is very obvious that any kind of discrimination should not be existed in any member country.

In Act 348 of 2008 Constitution, it officially mentioned that “The Union shall not discriminated any citizen of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, based on race, birth, religion, official position, status, culture, sex and wealth.” (*2008, Myanmar Constitution*). According to it, every citizen should have equal chance regardless of their race and religion and should not being discriminated on education and employment because of their identity.

With critical analysis upon the constitutional law and treaties ratified by Myanmar, law and regulation is still on the paper and not fully practiced in ground. For instance, citizens who are not Burmese Buddhist find it difficult to get high rank position in government body because of their identity though they are enough qualified for it. On the side of non-governmental organizations, they should also advocate government to amend and modified some laws concerning with discrimination.

4.2 Modified Education System

To lessen hatred and suspension that makes conflicts and violence, education is a key to solve any crises. Increasing animosity between diverse societies is lack of knowledge, awareness and tolerance. In fact, education system in Myanmar should be developed and encouraged. In government schools, there is no class session for sharing knowledge about other religions. Therefore, the basic of four main religions should be included in school curriculum so that all students have a chance to learn other religions at basic education level. Moreover, multi-culture and religions should also be taught to children in non-formal education and in monastic

education schools apart from government schools. Therefore, the basic and essence of other religions will be learnt since childhoods. As a consequence of it, relationship of diverse groups will be closed and suspension from each other will be eliminated.

4.3 Development Projects and People Participation by Multi-ethnics and Multi-religions

Non-governmental organizations have been implementing thousands of development projects from humanitarian aids to advocacy campaign in different target areas in Myanmar for many years. But in some projects particularly in minority ethnic areas of Arakan state, the project hired for one ethnic group and provided job opportunities. To the worst, more aids and assistance delivered to particular ethnic group. This makes other society unfair and grows disaffection amongst diverse societies. Instead, NGOs should organize diverse communities to participate and work together in implementation stage of development projects so that diverse groups will get sense of belongings, ownership and cooperation.

V. Conclusion: Benefits and Challenges of Reforms in Myanmar Transition to Democracy

Within two years, Myanmar has changed positively and a series of reforms done by newly civilian government are visible and noticeable. Democratic reforms seem to change regional and global perspective to Myanmar and lift sanctions to the country. This also draws their interests to do investment and business in Myanmar. Foreign investments obviously rise especially after setting free political prisoners including Aung San Su Kyi, leaders of National League for Democracy. Moreover, the government has placed loose constraints on media and press meaning that the government is likely to take consideration into transparency and accountability upon their decision and work.

Along with benefits because of reforms, challenges are emerging and make unstable political situation of Myanmar. In transitional period to Democracy unlike dictatorship regime, people who have been discriminated and suppressed by authoritarian are more freedom and rights to assembly and express feelings. Conflicts and violence between diverse societies seems growth.



In conclusion, there will be obstacles on the way to democracy and it might take longer time than expected to create democratic society in Myanmar if the government does not pay serious attention to the causes of violence and issues of discrimination identified above.

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