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Is Good Governance a Magic Bullet? Examining Good Governance Programmes in Myanmar

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Abstract

Following the democratisation and reforms in 2011, international development organisations started implementing good governance programmes in Myanmar. This paper analyses the factors influencing the outcomes of these programmes by using primary and secondary resources. Based on literature review, three factors, programme design, type of reform, and political context, are identified and their influence examined in Myanmar's case. This paper finds that in terms of programme design, advocacy efforts are weak in Myanmar while types of reform that seek structural changes are more challenging to implement. It is because good governance programmes in Myanmar are being carried out in spite of continued dominance of the military in politics. Political context of Myanmar not only shapes the programme design and types of reform they can implement but also impedes or even reverses progress despite rigorous efforts by development organisations.

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Acronyms

| | |
|--------|--|
| AAM | ActionAid Myanmar |
| ACB | Anti-Corruption Bureau |
| ADB | Asia Development Bank |
| ALRC | Asia Legal Resource Centre |
| CBO | Community-Based Organisation |
| CBN | Community-Based Network |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| EU | European Union |
| EU EOM | European Union Election Observation Mission |
| GAD | General Administration Department |
| GGP | Good Governance Programme |
| HRW | Human Rights Watch |
| ICG | International Crisis Group |
| IDEA | International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance |
| IDO | International Development Organisation |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| IFES | International Foundation for Electoral System |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| INGO | International Nongovernmental Organisation |
| LNGO | Local Nongovernmental Organisation |
| MIMU | Myanmar Information Management Unit |
| MOH | Ministry of Home Affairs |
| MPF | Myanmar Police Force |
| NAG | Network Activities Group |
| NDI | National Democratic Institute |
| NGO | Nongovernmental Organisation |
| NLD | National League for Democracy |
| PACE | People's Alliance for Credible Elections |
| PGP | Participatory Governance Programme |
| SAP | Structural Adjustment Programme |
| TA | Township Administrator |
| TAF | The Asia Foundation |
| UEC | Union Election Commission |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |

| | |
|-------|--|
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| VTA | Village Tract Administrator |
| WGI | World Governance Indicators |

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1 Introduction

Good governance programmes (GGPs) occupy centre stage in donors' agenda on development nowadays (Dervis, 2006; Mawdsley, Savage & Kim, 2014). Although GGPs have been implemented in many developing countries, particularly in Africa, for almost three decades, they are still new to Myanmar. A military dictatorship ruled the country for more than half a century, which attracted international economic sanctions and little foreign aid (Jolliffe, 2014). Civil society, which development donors attach great importance to, was also stifled. However, there was resurgence in the development of civil society and international aid agencies in Myanmar in 2008, after Cyclone Nargis struck and left vast areas of the delta region in devastation. Early programmes of NGOs revolved around service provision such as disaster relief, health, livelihood, etc., and reforming institutions was off their agenda. After 2010 elections, NGOs have become more active due to the opening of political space (ADB, 2015). The data from Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) show that before 2010, governance programmes are non-existent in Myanmar. In 2013, however, there were 18 local and international NGOs operating GGPs and by 2016, the number increased to 38 (personal communication, May 2, 2017).

It has been more than five years since governance and institutional reform programmes have been implemented in Myanmar. Even though individual organisations published annual reports on their programmes, few attempts have been made to critically evaluate these programmes. My dissertation is one such attempt, and it seeks to examine one central question, "What factors are the outcomes of GGPs contingent upon?"

Understanding under what conditions GGPs are effective in Myanmar is imperative for two reasons. Firstly, it can fill an existing gap in empirical literature. Many scholars have already conducted single-country and multiple-country studies to examine the impact of international aid and GGPs (see Goldfinch, Derouen & Pospieszna, 2013; Sebudubudu, 2010) and pointed out several factors that should be taken into consideration for the success of GGPs. Some argue that donor-led good governance approaches are not effective in changing the fundamental aspect of institutions because they do not take into account contextual constraints, which often are highly political rather than technical. For example, Andrews (2013) argues that under GGPs, laws and regulations are passed but they can hardly represent changes in informal institutions such as practice. Keeping in mind these criticisms, which I think are highly valid, GGPs in Myanmar shall be analysed.

Secondly, one cannot stress enough that development solutions for each country are highly context specific (Rodrik, 2009). As each country has its own unique set of characteristics, context specific challenges and limitations that organizations face need to be explored. How unique political institutions of Myanmar, particularly the entrenchment of the military in political arena and inefficient and corrupt government institutions carried over from the outgoing dictatorship, can pose challenges to IDOs crafting good institutions is worth exploring. Only when these challenges are exposed, better solutions that meet the local context could possibly emerge.

The rest of the dissertation is structured as follows: section 2 examines theoretical framework of good governance and institution reforms and general critiques on these programmes. Section 3 outlines the methodology and limitations. Section 4 analyses the empirical literature, and qualitative interviews to evaluate the governance programs in Myanmar, followed by Section 5, which summarises the findings, provides implications and offers some concluding remarks.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Development of Good Governance Concept

The notion of good governance emerged in development discourse more than two decades ago. In the 1980s, international financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF focused on Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), which limited the role of the state and liberalised the economy. However, in the late 80s, the Bank realised that institutions that made policies were equally important as adjustment policies (Kiely, 1998). In its 1989 report, the World Bank first introduced the term “good governance” (Doornbos, 2001), claiming that its policies failure in developing countries were because of poor institutions and countries needed to adopt good governance practices (Kiely, 1998). The emergence of the concept coincided with the end of cold war, which incentivised donors to expand their aid programmes in authoritarian regimes and fix their political problems (Doornbos, 2001; van Doeveren, 2011).

Nonetheless, the concept of governance itself is anything but new. Simply put, governance is “a government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not” (Fukuyama, 2013). As one can see from this definition, there is no value judgement on the term “governance” that it simply presents an action. However, the attachment of adjective ‘good’ denotes that there is a normative aspect in the way a country or an institution is governed (Doornbos, 2001). What is more debatable is who defines “good governance” and how to define it given that the normative term “good” means differently in different contexts.

Most scholars recognise that good governance is a slippery concept and the definition is subject to change depending on who defines it (Abdellatif, 2003; Riddell, 2007). For instance, OECD (2007) states that good governance consists of “participation, transparency, accountability, rule of law, effectiveness, equity, etc.”. UNDP (1997) definition focuses on mechanisms, processes and institutions which allow citizens’ participation and exercise of their rights in country’s affairs.

Since the World Bank spearheaded the notion of good governance, it is worth quoting the Bank’s definition. According to the World Bank (1994, p.vii), good governance is

“epitomized by predictable; open, and enlightened policymaking (that is, transparent processes); a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an

executive arm of government accountable for its actions, and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law.”

From these definitions, one can notice the broadness of the term. Governance encompasses regime type, how authority is exercised to manage economic and social affairs and capacity of government in policy formulation, design, and implementation and discharging functions. To unravel the modifier “good”, these definitions stress different elements such as citizens’ participation, democratic institutions, efficient bureaucracy, transparency, etc.

The ambitious objective to change institutions conceptually distinguishes the agenda of good governance from conventional development approaches such as the Washington Consensus. In other words, it moves away from earlier approach of getting the policies right for development to more structural transformation of getting the institutions right (Grindle, 2007). The concept of good governance covers both political and economic domains and claims that to achieve opulence and development, a country needs inclusive and pluralistic political institutions that can foster good economic institutions. Scholars and practitioners alike also emphasise the role of institutions in bringing development (see Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013; North, 1990).

However, good governance has been criticised as another attempt to keep maintaining neoliberalism after the failure of SAPs in 1970s (Demmers, Jilberto & Hogenboom, 2004). When analysed carefully, the concept of good governance is composed of, at least on paper, “liberal democracy, free enterprise, free trade, a minimalist state and free markets” (Smith, 2007, p.5). Neoliberal values of free trade, free market and human rights and democratic ideology of free and fair elections, multiparty system, free press, vibrant civil society, etc. are melded together and come under the disguise of good governance. That is why Leftwich (p.611) claims good governance as “a democratic capitalist regime, presided over by a minimal state which is also part of the wider governance of the New World Order”.

Despite different definitions and opinions, it cannot be denied that today good governance has become an indispensable component for international development organisations (IDOs) in designing their programmes (Dervis, 2006; Potter, 2000). It does not mean the donor-led definition is not problematic. The standards attached to good governance pave the way for the programmes and technical solutions that IDOs

implement in developing countries and these interventions often have limitations, as I will discuss below.

2.2 Operationalization of Good Governance Concept into Action

Nowadays, donors believe that good governance is the key to aid effectiveness and economic development (Riddell, 2007). Earmarked funding for GGPs in international aid programmes has been increased over the years (Smith, 2007). As good governance entails policy and institutional reform, its implications for IDOs are different from conventional aid programmes. Although, donor-led GGPs come with the agenda of interventionism (Doornbos, 2001), the usage of the word good governance is technocratic and it somehow depoliticises the political interference aspect of the programme (Demmers et al., 2004; Grindle, 2012a). Although GGPs prioritise providing technical fixes to the problems, inevitably, donors have reform agenda for political institutions and need to negotiate with political elites. That differentiates GGPs from other humanitarian programmes, which needs lower level of government cooperation.

With fuzziness of the definition, GGPs vary from one organisation to another depending on what they think is fundamental for good governance. For example, Agere (2000) lists GGPs of Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation as follows: institutional building for the parliament, ministries, and local governance, strengthening oversight institutions such as Ombudsman, Electoral Commission, Judiciary, etc., enhancing transparency and anti-corruption measures, and public sector reform. GGPs are designed in different ways for institutions to adopt practices that promote the key principles of good governance: transparency, accountability, rule of law, decentralisation, participation, and effectiveness and efficiency (Van Doeveren, 2011).

Smith (2007, p.6) grouped diverse categories under good governance into four types of reforms sought by aid agencies: constitutional, political, administrative and the content of public policy. Constitutional reforms entail accountability to the public, rule of law and decentralization while political pluralism, participation and anticorruption fall under political reforms. Administrative reforms include bureaucratic accountability and transparency, and effective public management. Lastly, for public policy dimension, donors advocate for pro-market and neo-liberal economic policies. Smith's categorisation of good governance reforms will be used as framework for analysis in this dissertation.

When these programme objectives are operationalized into concrete actions, they often come as a form of capacity building for bureaucrats and politicians, strengthening civil society organisations (CSOs), facilitating engagement meeting between community and authority, advocating and guiding government on developing or changing laws and regulations etc. In fact, these programmes introduce best practices of developed countries, which cannot be automatically grafted onto the specific context of the recipient country.

Actors in governance reforms are also noteworthy. Good governance definitions focus on the reforms on state apparatus, national and local governments, bureaucrats and elected officials. Nonetheless, several definitions (OECD and UNDP, for example) emphasise participation and highlight the role of civil society and general public. The most recent World Development Report by the World Bank (2017), for instance, claims that participation of political elites are not adequate in governance reforms because they might want to defend the existing status quo, which is beneficial to them. Citizens are also main driver of change and their participation must be sought when designing GGPs. However, it is not clear how and to what extent citizens can be empowered in a setting of repressive government. It brings up the question whether GGPs are feasible only when the political environment is right. It is an irony that GGPs are seeking to improve the political institutions in developing countries but they are viable only when significant political reforms have been ongoing. In essence, GGPs are ambitious attempt of IDOs to reform the institutions, thereby changing the political equilibrium. As such, their efforts can obviously be hampered by many factors as discussed in the next section.

2.3 Determining Factors behind the Outcomes of Governance Programmes

Having presented both the genealogy and the operationalization of good governance, I now proceed to assess what factors are critical in altering the institutions of developing countries. GGPs seek to change the institutions. Institutions are

“relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances” (March & Olsen, 2006, p.3).

According to this definition, institutions are persistent and not susceptible to change. In addition, institutions encompass formal laws, regulations and procedures as well as informal norms, culture and practices. Reforming institutions means fixing both of these and therefore, takes time. As such, many cast doubt on feasibility of GGPs implemented by IDOs (Andrews, 2013; Elahi, 2009; Pritchett & Woolcock, 2004). Three determining factors have been identified behind the failures of GGPs.

2.3.1 Programme Design

GGPs are ambitious attempt to change the persistent institutions and thus, meticulous planning is a requisite. Unfortunately, GGPs by IDOs are designed in a way to transform the institutions in developing countries to make them more like those of developed countries. As such, some scholars question the applicability of transplanting international best practices in developing countries' context (Andrews, Pritchett & Woolcock, 2017; Doornbos, 2001; Rodrik, 2008). Doornbos (2001) points out that good governance standards are set up based on the developed countries' perception on how institutions should operate. Therefore, these standards may not be applicable in developing country with different context, culture, beliefs and values. Normative aspect of good governance concept is contestable since what is considered good in one country may not be the same in another place.

International best practices are problematic also because some standards being unrealistic to be adopted in developing countries. Grindle (2017, p.19) denounces that GGPs promote "one best way" thinking and solutions to public administration problems. Even the World Bank (2000) recognises that sometimes, their introduction of "best practices" does not fit the local setting. Andrews (2013) provides a compelling example where African countries adopt international standards for accounting and auditing and many of them cannot fulfil high-content requirements of reform. Although new standards are introduced through GGPs, practitioners do not know how to apply them. Unless local context such as human capital, current practices, etc. is taken into consideration, GGPs are likely to be too demanding or worse, harm the poor in developing countries.

Secondly, according to Andrew (2013), GGPs can have impact in three areas: regulations, norms and practices. From the outlook, donor-led GGPs can produce prominent changes in laws and regulations. However, it does not guarantee meaningful

reform since these laws are usually not translated into practices (Andrews, 2013; Grindle, 2017). For instance, in Malawi, the government promulgated anti-corruption law and formed Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) for law enforcement. These laws are ineffective in reality. Transparency International corruption index (2016) indicates that Malawi performs badly in reducing the corruption, ranking the country at the position of 120 out of 176. ACB is underfunded and displays terrible performance (Andrews, 2013; Levy, 2004). Legal and regulatory reform can look impressive when copying from developed countries. Nevertheless, institutions in developed countries have evolved over time and new laws are formulated along with changes in norms and practices. Reforms in developing countries, on the other hand, are introduced by IDOs and changes are imposed abruptly (Doig, Watt & Williams, 2007). At a practical level, it would be preposterous to assume that a process which has taken so called developed countries decades if not centuries can be fast forwarded and socially engineered.

Finally, it is important to note that achieving significant outcomes from the reforms takes a long time. Grindle (2017) points out that civil service reforms take years or even decades to produce desirable outcomes. Sometimes, donors are not patient to wait for years to see the actual outcomes and impact of the reforms. World Bank (2000) recognises that one of the reasons for failure of their GGP is disbursement of short-term loans on condition of one-off adjustment in governance. This type of hit-and-run aid policy could only do more harm than good. Government passes laws but when there is no follow-up to fund the programme or train the bureaucrats, for instance, the reforms are doomed to fail. Therefore, the success of GGPs is contingent upon long-term commitment by the donors and programme design.

2.3.2 Type of Reform

Since GGPs aim to promote different practices as presented by Smith (2007), an interesting question is whether these different types of reform programmes bring different probabilities for success. There is not much literature on comparing different types of good governance reforms. Many scholars, however, highlight that some reforms are particularly more challenging. They analyse the success of reform from the aspect of elite support. Elite support on reforms changes with what type and to what extent reform seeks to alter the existing institutions (Phillips, 1969). Some reforms are more difficult than others especially when the reform poses a threat on interests of the elites. For instance, if the government is enjoying clientelism, civil service reform moving from patronage to meritocracy does not sound appealing for them (Grindle, 2012b). In this

situation, the government can respond to external pressure of reform by two means. They can carry out superficial reforms by changing some laws and regulations but there is no enforcement of laws to change actual practice. It is similar to the argument from previous section where law reforms do not get translated in practices because of IDO's poor programme design. That is why scholars warn that policy reforms are just rhetorical and cannot be equated with substantive improvement (Goldfinch et al., 2013).

Government can also resist donors' pressure altogether and completely avoid implementing the reform. Zambia, for instance, has long been defying donor's pressure in privatizing copper mines (Pleskovic & Stern, 2000). Even when there is donor's conditionality attached to aid, it does not usually work. Aid continues to flow despite government disregarding the conditionality and ignoring the pressure for reform (Kanbur, 2000). Sometimes, when governments are less trustworthy, aid funds do not channel directly to them and reforms are directly carried out by IDOs. In this situation, there is clearly no conditionality imposed by donors.

As IDOs have to show the donors that their programmes are successful and making a difference, they concentrate their GGPs on a particular type of reform with a higher chance of success. In countries where political space for IDOs is limited, IDOs need to find a niche where they can implement their programmes. Therefore, the hypothesis that "some types of reform are more feasible than others" is highly convincing.

2.3.3 Political Context

Last but not least, reforms are contingent on political context of a country. Reforms are delicate political processes which create new winner and losers (Bowornwathana, 2000). That is why Baland, Moene and Robinson (2010) contend that finding solutions to governance problems requires clear comprehension of political forces within the country. As presented in the previous section, powerful elites can defy pressures to reform or sabotage the implementation. Without changing the existing political equilibrium and threaten or replace the ruling elites, it is often difficult to achieve genuine reforms (Baland, et al., 2010; Grindle, 2017). Interestingly, GGPs are carried out in countries with nominal democracy or even in authoritarian regimes. It is questionable whether they can affect changes even when the government is less committed to reforms. Acemoglu and Robinson (2013) refer to turn of events that lead to development of new institutions such as revolutions as "critical juncture". Donor-led GGPs provide external pressures and solutions for internal hurdles of a country that

they can hardly be recognized as critical juncture. Assuming there's some validity to contention, one should remain sceptical of the power and ability of outside actors to engineer a significant change.

IDO's implement GGP's regardless of political situation in a country because the nature of reforms is assumed to be more technical and less political (de Garmont, 2014). Andrews (2013) claims that donors have oversimplified reforms and provided solutions to each problem. It allows them to bypass complicated political context of a country (Bowornwathana, 2000) and directly deal with particular type of governance problem. Nonetheless, Baland et al. argue that if political forces are not taken into account, direct governance reforms are less effective. Finding specific solutions to the problem is not enough. Political institutions and distribution of power have to be taken into account as well.

It is debatable whether genuine reforms are feasible with existing elites holding on to power. As Bowornwathana (2000) has argued, civil service reform in Thailand is less successful because bureaucrats have immense control over reform agenda and process. Although monitoring mechanisms such as ombudsman office, anti-corruption office, etc. were formed, former government officials took positions in these offices, which subsequently undermined the impartiality. In such a context, prefabricated reforms from outsiders fall short of being able to change deeply entrenched power dynamics. Hence, political context is a critical factor influencing the outcomes of governance programmes.

3 Methodology

3.1 Summary of Research Questions

This dissertation aims to find out the factors influencing GGPs' outcomes in Myanmar and hypotheses are developed based on the previous section. It explores whether three variables 1) programme design, 2) reform type and 3) political context can influence GGPs' outcomes in Myanmar.

The following table summarises the conditions that shape the outcomes of GGPs and how these factors are applicable in Myanmar case.

Table 1: Factors influencing the outcomes of governance programme and how they are applicable in Myanmar's case

| Conditions | Causes of reform failure | Myanmar case |
|----------------------|---|---|
| 1) Programme design | 1. Reforms are based on international best practices that do not fit local context. | 1. Do GGPs of IDOs in Myanmar encourage the implant of institutional models from developed countries? |
| | 2. Inadequately designed reform changes laws and regulations but not practices. | 2. Is there a case where new laws and regulations for governance reform are promulgated but not adequately implemented? |
| | 3. Donor fatigue | 3. Do donors have commitment to implement the long-term reform programmes in Myanmar? |
| 2) Policy area | 4. Some types of reform are more difficult than others. | 4. By comparing two different types of reform, is one form of reform more successful than the other? |
| 3) Political context | 5. Political context of a country is important for GGPs. | 5. Does political context of Myanmar generates barriers for GGPs? |

3.2 Research Methods and Limitations

The research design comprises of desk research and qualitative semi-structured interviews with 10 Burmese respondents from NGOs conducting GGPs (see Appendix 1 for the list of respondents). The samples were selected using snowball method and interviews were conducted from March to June via Skype. The interviews can provide in-depth information on how things work on the ground. All interviews were conducted in Burmese to have an open conversation. Since the answers potentially include criticisms to INGOs and government, all respondent remained anonymous. Some agreed to have their organisations name mentioned. Verbal consent was taken before each interview. The primary data used in this dissertation does not purport to be representing the whole population as the sample size was small and non-random sampling method was used (Kelly, 2016). Nonetheless, the interviews supplemented the wider academic literature and provided first-hand insights into my case study.

Although six questions were formulated from literature review, only three of them will be examined. Question 1, despite its high relevance, cannot be analysed unless the researcher has access to confidential and detailed information of GGPs by a particular IDO. Also, the interviewees are currently working in IDOs and it is difficult for them to badmouth their organisations' practices. Secondly, question 3 is eliminated from analysis because GGPs are quite recent in Myanmar and donor fatigue argument is too early to be applicable. Hence, this paper will examine the remaining three questions.

3.3 Choosing Two Dimensions of Good Governance

There are different types of GGPs designed to improve transparency, accountability, efficiency and participation aspects as presented in Smith's (2007) categorisation, however, this paper prioritises detailed analysis over scope and therefore, only two types have been selected. In particular, this study chooses reforms aiming to improve **bureaucratic efficiency** and **public participation** for both practical and theoretical purposes.

The following table was developed using 2015 MIMU data (personal communication, May 2, 2017) on countrywide GGPs in Myanmar, from state/regional level to village level.

Table 2: GGP subsectors and number of projects for each subsector

| Type of GGP | Number of projects |
|--|--------------------|
| Access to justice | 51 |
| Economic and development policy/planning | 133 |
| Elections | 33 |
| Housing, property and land reform | 10 |
| Human rights monitoring | 27 |
| Human rights promotion and advocacy | 124 |
| Institutional strengthening and public administration reform | 675 |
| Legislative reform | 9 |
| Media and flow of information | 16 |
| Monitoring & reporting mechanism on grave child rights violation | 16 |
| Public sector financial management | 116 |
| Rule of law | 26 |
| Strengthening civil society | 2244 |
| Transparency/Accountability | 128 |
| Unclassified | 7 |
| Total | 3615 |

From the table, it can be seen that the most common type of GGP in Myanmar is civil society strengthening followed by institutional and public administration reform. Reflecting on this data, bureaucratic efficiency and participation are chosen as main dimensions for analysis.

3.3.1 Bureaucratic Efficiency

Scholars and practitioners assume that capable and well-functioning states are prerequisite for economic and social development (Fukuyama, 2005; Pritchett, Woolcock & Andrews, 2013). As such, GGPs pay particular attention to bureaucratic efficiency by providing trainings and introducing new practices to civil servants. However, the fundamental question is bureaucrats are inefficient because they have low capability or they choose to do so to for some other reasons such as getting bribe. Andrews, et al. (2017, p.83) contend that bureaucracy is ineffective when they cannot

“equip their agents with the capacity, resources and motivation to take actions”. Trainings by IDOs are, then, less meaningful because they can only address the capacity aspect of bureaucratic efficiency. Sometimes, it is organisation’s setting that discourages the civil servants (Andrews, et al. 2017). For instance, if the salary is low, bureaucrats might want to take bribe by creating more barriers for public in accessing services from the state. When inefficiency stems from structure of the organisation rather than capacity of individual, it needs more than trainings from IDOs to fix that problem. Public administration reforms are proved to be particularly difficult in developing countries (Shepherd, 2003). As presented above, enhancing bureaucratic efficiency requires extensive reform and often involves changing the structure of the organisation. Transforming the structure can fail because of poor programme design and interference from elites (Smith, 2007). It would, therefore, be interesting to use such highly challenging type of reform to answer question 4 and 5.

3.3.2 Participatory Governance

The World Bank (2017) recognizes that citizens are one of the key drivers in good governance when elites are reluctant for genuine change. Excluding citizens from analysis would not provide well-rounded picture for the thesis. Participation is the dimension promoting citizen’s involvement in governance and thus, chosen for analysis here. Furthermore, citizen engagement in policymaking and service delivery is considered as both desirable ends and means (United Nations, 2007). Not only participation, per se, is critical, it is also regarded as a tool that can “kill two birds with one stone”. The underlying assumption is that participation of beneficiaries in policymaking and implementation can enhance the project’s effectiveness when local views and suggestions are incorporated (Blair, 2000; Smith, 2007). By allowing people to engage with bureaucracies through participatory governance, it also improves bureaucratic accountability. In other words, citizen participation means achieving both democracy and efficiency –the holy grail in development. Nevertheless, Gavanta (2004) rightly points out that participatory governance needs to work on both government and citizen side. For government to adopt consultation and deliberative practices, there should be changes in institutional design and policies. In other words, ensuring the government is receptive to voice is as important as empowering citizens to voice their opinion. Like other types of reform, structural transformation on the side of government can bring resistance from elites. Much relevant but not the main focus of this thesis is how meaningful participation the authorities allow. It can merely be consultation with participants having little influence on the results (Fung, 2015). This paper will not judge

the level of participation achieved by IDOs' programmes in Myanmar but will critically review what impacts they have. It is also worth noting the costs that participation imposes on citizens, which are considerable regardless of whether it is a developed or developing context. Unless the costs are made manageable for the poor and those generally disadvantaged, participation would end up aggravating the problem it is supposed to solve. It would be participation of local elites, which would marginalise the voices and concerns of the poor.

4 GGPs in Myanmar: The Analysis

4.1 Background of Institutions and Governance Reforms in Myanmar

From 1962 to 2010, Myanmar was ruled by military junta. There had been popular uprisings and ethnic insurgencies around the country but they all failed to democratise the authoritarian government. The military government drafted the current constitution, which guarantees the privileged role of military in politics. It was endorsed by the nationwide referendum in 2008. Although everyone knew the result was a sham, it has set the legal framework for the country's ongoing reform and democratisation process (Farrelly & Win, 2016). The General Elections were held in 2010 and they were far from free and fair. The party peopled by former military generals, Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) won landslide and the civilian government led by President Thein Sein was formed. To the surprise of many observers, a series of reforms and policy changes were launched by Thein Sein including substantial political freedom such as censorship relaxation, release of political prisoners and economic liberalisation reforms (Skidmore & Wilson, 2012). Some were sceptical of the reforms. For instance, Huang (2013, p.248) pointed out that the reforms were just the evolving strategy of the army to institutionalise their influence over government. Nonetheless, international community applauded the reforms and subsequently, sanctions were revoked and aid flowed in.

When reforms started in 2011, Myanmar was already at the bottom of the ranking table for most governance indicators. It scored 0 and 2 for voice and accountability and government effectiveness respectively in the Worldwide Governance Indicator (WGI) in 2010. After five decades of military rule, the country deteriorated in all possible development indicators. Participation and bureaucratic efficiency were not spared either. Under military regime where even basic political rights such as elections and right to protests were absent, public participation or consultation in policymaking was unheard of (Mutebi, 2005). Englehart (2005) observed that state apparatus, other than the military, was appalling, could not carry out basic functions and posed a serious threat to democratisation in Myanmar.

When quasi-civilian government relieved political and economic restrictions, IDOs started operating in the area of governance reform. Aforementioned Table 2 summarises the type of reforms sought by IDOs. The party of major opposition leader Aung San Suu

Kyi, National League for Democracy (NLD), won landslide in 2015 elections, and more foreign aid began to flow to the country with higher portion of aid earmarked for governance reforms. For example, the expressed purpose of organisations like DFID (n.d.) and USAID (2015) is to promote good governance in Myanmar as a top priority.

4.2 Reforming Laws or Practices?

One of the most common critiques of GGP is that their effect can be observed at the level of formal institutions, i.e. reforming laws and regulations, but not at the level of informal institutions, i.e. changing practices of individuals. Aid conditionality allows donors to pressure the governments to promulgate new laws and regulations but these laws are hardly practised in reality. However, the situation is different in Myanmar. Most GGPs are implemented directly by IDOs. Despite welcoming signs from Thein Sein's government, donors were reluctant to fully cooperate with the government. For instance, DFID (2015) states that they do not provide aid through central government but instead, work with UN organisations, INGOs and LNGOs. Organisations like World Bank and ADB started operating in Myanmar only in late 2012 and disbursed loans in 2013 (Rieffel & Fox, 2013). This practice is the continuation of the way IDOs operate under the military regime where they maintain arm's-length relationship with the government when it comes to managing aid funding (Ware, 2012). As such, foreign aid in Myanmar has increased but donors often bypass the state and distribute aid to local and international NGOs for project implementation (Saha, 2011).

Because of such practices, unlike in some African countries, donors have less influence on Myanmar government for policy reforms. IDOs do not give direct pressure on the government but rather have to advocate the legislators for law reforms. Policy advocacy proves to be arduous in Myanmar and therefore, many IDOs do not prioritise that kind of project. Table 2 also indicates that out of 3615 governance projects, there were only 9 projects with the aim of legislative reform. That leaves most GGPs as changing the practices of people on the ground. It is also proven by the respondents from semi-structured interviews. Adopting Andrews' (2013) framework, respondents were asked if their GGPs intended to change laws and regulations, norms, practices or more than one of them. Surprisingly, all respondents answered that their programmes were mainly to improve the existing practices. Respondents from Oxfam and ActionAid Myanmar (AAM), for instance, claimed that their programmes intended to change the decision-making practices of local governments by empowering people to make claims for what

they needed. Respondent from The Asia Foundation (TAF) also explained that their programmes were to improve the budgeting practices of state/regional governments.

Whilst scholars highlight the pitfalls of good governance reforms that change the laws but not the practices, type of reform that IDOs are seeking to achieve in Myanmar is also problematic. Organisations like AAM and Oxfam, for instance, give trainings, form community-based networks (CBNs), empower people and facilitate meetings between authorities, usually, village tract administrator (VTA) and sometimes, township administrator (TA), and leaders of CBNs to foster participatory governance practices at local level. Their projects display considerable success. For instance, AAM's initiated community led village development plans in some regions of Myanmar (AAM, 2014a). Notwithstanding the success, many respondents think that the biggest challenge to their programme is not being able to institutionalise the changes they have achieved so far.

“We have achieved many things such as participatory governance practice in Ayeyarwaddy Region. But we cannot institutionalise these changes. If there is a change in VTA, he may not continue the existing participatory practices because there is no written law or regulation for such practice.” (Respondent 2, March 2, 2017).

“The biggest weakness of our programme is that there is no linkage between advocacy projects and participatory governance projects. So, good practices developed in participatory governance programmes (PGPs) cannot be converted into legal reforms.” (Respondent 5, April 16, 2017)

These quotes indicate that institutional reforms need to go in parallel, both at the formal and informal institution levels. Ware (2012, p.190) also observes in his research that IDOs in Myanmar recognises the limitation of their village-by-village intervention approach and the need for major policy shift but they are reluctant to engage in large-scale advocacy programmes.

Another challenge posed by bereft of legal reform is that IDOs have to look for reform champions at the local level to implement their programmes. Since there is no law imposing participatory practice, not every VTA/TA wants to adopt that practice. In this situation, as de Gramont (2014) suggests, IDOs look for individual reform champions at township and village tract levels and work with them to implement their PGPs. Even at the national level, relying on individual leaders to circumvent impediments to reforms

has several shortcomings. de Gramont (2014) rightly points out that reform champions are often unable to push the policy changes when there are other equally strong leaders who oppose the reforms. In the case of Myanmar, VTAs are at the lowest stratum of bureaucracy and less significant for bringing legal reforms.

Andrews (2013) stresses the importance of broad-based engagement with agents from different levels of institutions. IDOs in Myanmar have difficulty in establishing links at higher levels. Therefore, their reform attempts are often undermined. According to Respondent 6 from Network Activities Group (NAG), the main partner of DFID, for the sustainability of the programme, their approach of working with reform champions at local level is not adequate and recognises the need to cooperate with policymakers and ministers to institutionalise the changes. Given that VTAs are indirectly elected every five-year (Kempel & Tun, 2016), there is no guarantee that reform champions will always be in the same position to sustain the practice. Even now, respondent from AAM underscores that they are facing ambiguity in implementation following the election of new government in 2015.

Of course, legal reforms are not totally excluded from IDO's projects. IDOs usually collect data from the ground and advocate for policy change at the national level. Organisations like Oxfam, Pyoe Pin (DFID initiated INGO in Myanmar), etc. also empower people at village level to form issue-based network and engage in advocacy. For instance, in 2012, delta region networks developed a set of recommendations for national level land laws and sent it to the parliament. Nevertheless, Wells and Aung (2014) find that their advocacy efforts have limited impact because the government failed to incorporate important recommendations in their final policy bill. Ware (2012) explains that advocacy can be successful only when it does not harm the core interest of the military, national security or budgetary allocation. There is no international organisation that has significant influence on the government of Myanmar in policymaking process. It is clearly a good sign since Myanmar government can assert ownership of their development policies and agenda (Rieffel & Fox, 2013). On the other hand, it is also a great loss when organisations can foster good governance practices at lower level but fail to institutionalise these practices at formal institution level. IDOs in Myanmar need to balance their efforts on reforming formal and informal institutions. Advocating for new laws should go hand in hand with developing good practices at the grassroots level. It seems like advocacy in Myanmar is less feasible also because of its existing political context.

4.3 Participation vs. Efficiency Enhancing Reform

Since GGPs have different objectives from enhancing participation and accountability to promoting efficiency and anticorruption, the question of whether some of these programmes are more successful than others in Myanmar is an important one to examine. To test this hypothesis, two types of programmes, PGPs and efficiency enhancing reform programmes, are compared.

4.3.1 Why are PGPs Prevalent in Myanmar?

From Table 2, it can be seen that strengthening civil society, i.e., empowering local people to form CBNs and participate in local governance process, is the most prevailing form of GGP in Myanmar. Strategic plan of AAM, for example, is to empower people for change through community-based organisations (CBOs) and facilitate participatory planning process at local government level (AAM, 2012). In fact, many well-known IDOs in the field of governance, including AAM, Oxfam, and Pyoe Pin, are all working on participatory local governance by building networks at village/village tract level, which allow people to get involved in decision-making process of local authorities and policy deliberation. The idea behind forming local networks and adopting participatory approach is to build social capital (Putnam, 1994) as well as political capital to facilitate democratisation process (Booth & Unsworth, 2014; Ware, 2012). Interestingly, many of these GGPs focus on participatory local governance at village level, the lowest level of subnational governance in Myanmar.

Local governance programmes in Myanmar are always presented as success story by IDOs and scholars (AAM, 2014b; Booth & Unsworth, 2014). Wells and Aung (2014), for instance, praise that NGOs empower people, who were once passive victims, to express their opinions and concerns and challenge the local authorities. Respondent 5 from AAM also claimed that his biggest achievement was forming CBNs and transforming villagers who did not even have courage to speak to the authority into those who could demand what they needed in their village. Pyoe Pin's initiation of issue-based networks at local level to engage in policy advocacy is also praised by Booth and Unsworth (2014).

Other than these success stories, there still is another reason why there are so many local governance programmes implementing in Myanmar. Forming CBNs and empowering people for participatory development processes has long been fulfilled by IDOs (Pedersen, 2012). Ware (2012, p.149) also found in his interview with IDOs that

even under the military regime, community empowerment projects were fairly easy and flexible to implement. He also noted that bottom-up, community-based approaches were the most feasible programmes for NGOs in restrictive environment like Myanmar. The trend continues in democratisation epoch. Community development projects, which were once confined at community level, are now upgraded to PGPs, where participants can engage with local authorities, who are usually VTA or TA. Respondent from AAM also confirmed this assumption.

“Even before 2010 elections, AAM had conducted community empowerment projects and formed CBNs in Ayeyarwaddy region. When nascent democratisation took shape in 2011, we accelerated our programme and started local governance reforms because it was the most feasible programme at that time. We were not sure if we could achieve reforms at ministry level or parliamentary level. So, we started from the most achievable level.”

Local authorities, who are open to collaborate with NGOs as long as the programmes are apolitical (Ware, 2012), might be oblivious to the impacts of PGP or perhaps underestimate the consequences of the programme such as fostering democratic practices since they are less explicit. After all, IDOs are choosing the type of programme that has high potential of success and that is why local governance programmes are so prevalent in Myanmar.

4.3.2 Building Capacity without Addressing the Core Problem

On the other hand, when Thein Sein's government opened up for reform, some IDOs started operating in the area of bureaucratic efficiency enhancing reform. Common type of reform programme in this sector is capacity building of civil servants. Such type of project was not feasible under military regime due to strict restrictions and sanctions by donor countries as well as suspicion of government officials (Ware, 2012). Capacity building usually comes in the form of trainings and workshops where international standards and best practices are disseminated to the participants. Hope Sr (2009) contends that lack of capacity is a serious issue in developing countries and so, capacity development is the most critical part of good governance. Also in Myanmar, many IDOs and scholars like Pedersen (2012) identify capacity building as one of the key priorities for donors to improve governance capacity. Given that efficiency enhancing reform for civil servants is taking place in various ministries and government levels including the

legislators, this paper will pinpoint one particular group as an example, the Union Election Commission (UEC).

The duties of the UEC are remarkable, ranging from holding and administering elections to compiling voter lists and forming elections tribunals to resolve electoral disputes. Elections had been absent from Myanmar since 1990s and international community criticised 2010 General Elections as a sham, with widespread electoral frauds and intimidation (Turnell, 2011). IDOs would quickly recognise this incidence as the incompetence of the UEC. As such, in preparation for 2015 General Elections, the UEC received so much support from IDOs. The UEC signed official cooperation agreement with International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES) and International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). The UEC members from national and state/regional level to poll workers received various workshops and capacity building trainings from IFES and IDEA. In particular, IFES gave technical support to the UEC on preparing voter list while IDEA assisted the UEC with electoral risk mapping and managing electoral observation applications. With all the support from IDOs, 2015 elections were relatively smooth, especially the voting process (EU EOM, 2016).

Despite that, the UEC faced criticisms for their work. For instance, regardless of technical support from IFES in voter list compilation, the process turned out to be a huge disaster. The media and political parties complained cases of incorrect voter lists, missing voters, repetition of names, etc. (PACE, 2016, p.40). IFES created digitised and centralised database for voter list but at the sub-commission level, where they administered voter list display and amendment, staff did not know how to use the database and instead used the Excel spreadsheets for voter list compilation (PACE, 2016). These technical problems highlight capacity building type of reform cannot be accomplished within a short period of time. IFES only started giving assistance to the UEC in 2013 and it is not easy to achieve efficiency enhancing reform in within three years.

There are more structural problems in enhancing the UEC capacity. According to the constitution, the chairperson and member of the UEC are appointed by the president. Therefore, local and international observers questioned the independence of the UEC (EU EOM, 2016; PACE, 2016). Indeed, the former UEC chair, who was in charge of 2015 elections, was a former general and there had been accusations from international organisations and media on the UEC for favouring ruling party, USDP (HRW, 2015; The

Irrawaddy, 2015). Capacity building and technocratic approach cannot address such kind of structural problem. In fact, respondent 8 from IDEA, claimed that IDOs assisting the UEC were like service providers and fundamental decision-making lay with the UEC.

The comparison of two types of reform indicates that efficiency enhancing reform is more difficult to achieve than PGPs. The nature of the reform itself can result in different outcomes. Bureaucratic efficiency enhancing reforms usually require changing the existing bureaucratic structure and therefore, proves to be more challenging. Clapp (2016, p.11) asserts that in Myanmar “efforts to retrain and build capacity of civil servants will fail until the government itself is fundamentally restructured”. She points out that current centralized decision-making structure of government, for instance, does not give a chance to middle and lower levels of bureaucracy to participate actively in policymaking and implementation (p.10). On the other hand, participatory governance reforms do not need structural changes at the government side. Encouraging people’s participation in development planning is more of a change in practices rather than a change in bureaucratic structure and therefore, poses less challenge.

If participatory reforms are trying to change the structure of local governance, it can be challenging as well. Before presenting this argument, subnational governance structure in Myanmar needs to be explained first. In Myanmar, there is no elected local government. Instead, General Administration Department (GAD) is responsible for local governance. GAD offices span across the country, from state/regional level to district level, township level and ward/village tract level. Among them, only Ward/VTAs are indirectly elected while the rest are appointed. GAD is one of the departments under Ministry of Home Affairs (MOH), one of the key ministries controlled by the military. Local governance programmes by IDOs are taking place at township and village tract level. According to the structure of GAD, VTAs are at the lowest level of administration structure who just act under the supervision of TAs (Saw & Arnold, 2014). In fact, Arnold (2016) opines that the whole structure of GAD is flawed because there is little community representation in this whole structure. What IDOs are trying to change through participatory governance project and public consultation meetings is, in fact, taking place at tip of the iceberg. These projects might be successful because they are not addressing the structural problem.

4.4 Governance and Political Context of Myanmar

In countries where democracy has just begun the process of consolidation, achieving good governance is anything but easy. Without addressing the fundamental issues of politics and democracy, GGPs will be ineffectual (Santiso, 2001). Myanmar, in particular, faces formidable challenges in this aspect. There are two main political problems that need to be addressed in order to make good governance work in Myanmar.

4.4.1 Good Governance in Military Dominant Setting

Myanmar's 2008 Constitution reserved 25% of the seats to military personnel in the parliament and granted significant power to commander-in-chief, including the direct control of three key ministries, defence, home affairs and border affairs. Earlier on, Steinberg (1999, p.51) had remarked that Burmese military is "a state within a state", and his point remains valid today. Although all other institutions deteriorated under the authoritarian government, the military keeps fortifying its dominance with increasing personnel and power (Farrelly & Win, 2016). Myanmar under authoritarian government was characterised by pervasive and entrenched influence of military in economic, social and political arenas and it continues up to the present. Military dominance in politics has been highly visible throughout the years of Thein Sein government and even today with the NLD government. Hence, Egretau (2014) claims that international community must not ignore military in reform process and try to include them in the process. Yet, it is easier said than done. Respondent from National Democratic Institute (NDI) explained that military representatives from the parliament never attended their trainings and receptions nor came to their resource centre regardless of constant invitation and approach from the organisation. In fact, IDOs' reform programmes in Myanmar cannot engage with the military.

Not only active participation from military in GGPs of IDOs cannot be expected but also deterrence can occur in many instances, such as when efficiency enhancing trainings are launched towards civil servants from military-controlled ministry. Myanmar Police Force (MPF) under MOH was and continues to be corrupt, inefficient and consistently overshadowed by the military (ALRC, 2009). The strong link between military and MPF can be easily observed. Being an entity that can use force to retain order, MPF has long been intruded by military personnel who usually take the senior positions (Selth, 2012). The official website of MPF even stated themselves as younger brother of Myanmar

Armed Forces. Selth (2014) opines that one of the biggest hurdles for police reform in Myanmar is its relations with the army.

Two prominent incidents during Thein Sein's government where the police used forces to suppress protestors of Letpadaung copper mine project and failed to stop anti-Muslim riot in Meiktila triggered international attention on MPF and subsequently in 2013, European Union (EU) implemented a 10-million-euro project to offer crowd management trainings to MPF to facilitate police reform and enhance the standards (Win, 2013). MPF inaction and abuse stems from its relations with the military, who can effectively give them order. From the viewpoint of donors, however, MPF is incompetent and does not know the international norms and standards. Police reform and trainings can, therefore, be a solution to this problem. EU Ambassador stated that their trainings could "improve the human rights performance" of MPF and "initiate the development of a police service that respects and protects democratic rights of citizens" (EU Delegation to Myanmar, 2014).

Despite ambitious reform agenda and trainings from international experts, in 2015, police force again beat up student protesters, journalists and monks to crack down the peaceful demonstration against the proposed education bill (Tun, 2015). EU was heavily criticised for its cooperation with the police. This case indicates that IDOs can conduct successful trainings but there is no guarantee that participants can change the reality once they are out of the training room (Eade, 2007). As Selth (2014) argues, MPF needs to be autonomous from the military if they want to be accountable to the public. Without addressing the underlying political issues or changing the power dynamics, providing technical solutions will not solve the problem. Unfortunately in Myanmar, the continued dominance of the military in politics can undermine the effectiveness of reform programmes.

4.4.2 When Ethnic Conflicts Stand in the Way

In addition to the military, there is another political obstacle in carrying out comprehensive reforms in Myanmar. Myanmar has the longest running civil war in the world and it cannot be left out when discussing prospects for governance reforms in Myanmar. Scholars and researchers identify ethnic conflict as the most important and formidable hurdle to overcome if the country wants to be developed and fully democratised (Holliday, 2010; ICG, 2003).

Myanmar has seven states and regions with one capital Naypyitaw as union territory. Seven major ethnic groups of Myanmar live in states while Burmans (the largest ethnic group in Myanmar) occupy the regions. Poverty and underdevelopment is more severe in the states where ethnic minorities live. Government's capacity to deliver services is also uneven and especially weak in regions affected by conflicts (Cox, Orsborn & Sisk, n.d.). Good governance is obviously needed more in ethnic minority areas. However, with ongoing conflicts, it is not viable to implement projects in some parts of Myanmar. Table 3, was developed using 2015 MIMU data (personal communication, May 2, 2017).

Table 3: Governance projects in each state and region

| | Number of GGPs | Number of Township in state/region |
|---------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Ethnic States | | |
| Mon | 90 | 10 |
| Chin | 167 | 9 |
| Kachin | 41 | 18 |
| Kayah | 129 | 7 |
| Kayin | 165 | 7 |
| Rakhine | 58 | 17 |
| Shan | 241 | 55 |
| Regions | | |
| Tanintharyi | 172 | 10 |
| Yangon | 96 | 45 |
| Ayeyarwaddy | 558 | 26 |
| Bago | 57 | 28 |
| Magway | 1108 | 25 |
| Mandalay | 393 | 31 |
| Sagaing | 321 | 37 |
| Naypyitaw Union Territory | 6 | 8 |
| Countrywide | 13 | - |
| Total | 3615 | 333 |

From Table 3, it can be found that number of governance projects was disproportionately higher in some regions, notably in Magway and Ayeyarwaddy. On the other hand, in Bago, Kachin, Rakhine, Shan and Yangon, the number of projects was far

smaller. Among them, Kachin, Rakhine and Shan are conflict-ridden areas. As presented above, IDOs claim that they are striving for government officials and community to adopt good governance practices. Nonetheless, Table 3 indicates that their efforts are concentrated in certain regions. A respondent explained their choice of project area as follow.

“Ayeyarwaddy was the first choice for our programme because we already implemented other projects in that area since Cyclone Nargis struck the region. We, then, expanded our programme to the regions where authorities were flexible and willing to cooperate with us.”

It is understandable why IDOs have fewer operations in conflict-affected areas as they have to take care of the security of their staff. With limited coverage, it would be an overstatement to claim GGPs are of great success in Myanmar, however. Even if IDOs risk themselves to implement GGPs in those areas, the government is not the only legitimate actor for service provision because ethnic armed groups are also providing social services to the people in the area. IDOs find themselves in a tight corner under such circumstances. On the one hand, they cannot engage with service providers which are also armed groups. On the other hand, supporting the government can upset the trust between two parties. IDOs’ support to the government can be perceived as encouraging state control in conflict-ridden areas (Jolliffe, 2014). IDOs’ effort to bring good governance in those regions might do more harm than good.

It is difficult to achieve good governance without addressing the peace issue. As long as conflicts continue, those regions will remain less developed. For internally displaced persons (IDPs), good governance is just a technical jargon with no actual meaning because it is simply not achievable. Since 2011, there have been remarkable changes and reforms taken place in Myanmar. Nevertheless, as Walton (2013) claims, reforms in Myanmar are only benefitting Burmans while ethnic minorities remain as victims of violence and repression. Good governance reforms initiated by IDOs including all the community empowerment efforts are also benefitting people from certain regions while IDPs and people affected by the civil war remain hopeless about the future.

In short, democratic consolidation is still a long way off for Myanmar. Military still has a stronghold in the parliament and politics whilst violent conflicts continue across the country. Political context of Myanmar poses several challenges to IDOs in implementing their good governance agenda. Will GGPs of IDOs bring sustainable outcomes? Can they

be a solution to the fundamental political problems of continued military dominance and civil war? Unless good governance standards and ethos can be disseminated among the military personnel, the answer is likely to be negative.

In this chapter, three conditions important for the outcomes of GGPs in Myanmar were analysed. Interestingly, these three conditions are interrelated. First, in terms of programme design, IDOs fall short of conducting advocacy programmes. Even though PGP cultivates grassroots associations as well as participatory decision making practices at village tract and township levels, without legal reform to institutionalise the changes, they might not be sustainable. Advocacy efforts of IDOs have been hampered by existing political context, that is, dominance of the military in politics. Secondly, type of reform matters for the success of the programme because in country like Myanmar where the military has secured their position in politics, it is not easy to carry out certain type of reform. Participatory reforms are more successful and prevalent in Myanmar because they are targeting at local governance and most organisations are operating in places where they already have established their presence since the period of military regime. Efficiency enhancing reforms were underway only after 2011 and thus, face more hurdles. Both types of reform, however, can be regarded as less successful when it comes to bringing structural transformation. In addition, armed conflicts remain as a major stumbling block to achieving good governance, especially in regions where ethnic minorities reside. Without addressing the political issues, IDOs' approach of providing technocratic solutions to improve governance in Myanmar will not achieve its intended objectives.

5 Conclusion

This paper has examined three conditions that affect the outcomes of IDO's GGP. How programme design, type of reform and political context can affect the GGPs in Myanmar has been explored through various empirical examples and theoretical approaches. In particular, two types of reforms, participatory governance reforms and efficiency enhancing reforms are used for the analysis. With an upsurge of the amount of aid funding, number of IDOs and GGPs in Myanmar, it is worth investigating whether these programmes are actually contributing to development of good governance practices in Myanmar.

The analysis of three conditions has revealed that IDOs are focusing more on bringing the good governance practices at the grassroots level. Despite the critique in academic literature regarding GGPs reforming the laws but not the practices, the reverse situation in Myanmar is not appealing either. Lack of legal reform can affect the sustainability of the outcomes and uniform application of good practices nationally. PGP is the pioneer of GGPs in Myanmar but today, with more relaxing political environment, donors conduct efficiency enhancing reforms for civil servants. Comparison of participatory governance reform and efficiency enhancing reform indicates that the former is more prevalent and well established while the latter is quite new and much difficult to implement. On the other hand, political context argument of Baland, et al. (2010) remains true in the case of Myanmar as well. Myanmar is one of those countries where IDOs decide to implement GGPs prematurely. Political problems are fundamental and especially the influence of military in politics has impact on other factors, weak advocacy effort and feasibility of some reforms, thereby reducing the effectiveness of GGPs.

The implications of these findings are for IDOs to perhaps reconsider their approach in Myanmar. First, instead of putting all their efforts on PGPs at local government level, they should also be working on policy advocacy to institutionalise these practices through laws. Furthermore, IDOs should also think about diversifying the type of reform programmes and places where they are implementing their programme. They should also keep in mind that there is a need to fix more fundamental political problems to achieve good governance in Myanmar.

This research only looks at two types of reform. Other good governance reforms such as anticorruption, rule of law, etc. were excluded from the analysis. These programmes should also be analysed to find out if there are similar obstacles present in affecting their

outcomes. Better access to the documents and programme details of IDOs would allow us much more detailed analysis and to find out whether they simply implant Western standards of good governance or develop context-specific programmes for Myanmar. These topics should be investigated in the future. It was pointed out in the beginning that there is a good deal of fuzziness surrounding the definitions of good governance, which makes it hard to evaluate GGP with objectivity.

Good governance is not a magic bullet to address all the problems in a developing country. It is especially true for countries like Myanmar where deep-seated political problems persist. Without addressing the fundamental political issues, the efforts of IDOs might not be able to penetrate the wall shielding all the bad practices and institutions. Governance reforms are multifaceted and often take time to achieve. In such politically challenging, those hoping for quick fixes and fast results will be in for disappointment.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

List of Respondents

| Respondent Number | Organisation |
|--------------------------|---|
| Respondent 1 | Oxfam |
| Respondent 2 | Freelance Consultant (Former AAM staff) |
| Respondent 3 | NDI |
| Respondent 4 | NAG |
| Respondent 5 | AAM |
| Respondent 6 | NAG |
| Respondent 7 | Requested not to disclose |
| Respondent 8 | TAF |
| Respondent 9 | IDEA |
| Respondent 10 | Westminster Foundation for Democracy |

Appendix 2

Interview Questions

1. What are the GGPs implemented by your organisation?
2. There are different aspects of good governance (probe: public administration reform, accountability, participation, legal reform). Which aspect does/do your program(s) focus on?
3. What type of institutions do your programmes intend to change? (Probe: Laws, norms, practices?)
4. Why did your organisation choose to work on that particular type of governance programme?
5. Which states and regions are your programmes in?
6. Why did your organisation choose that particular state/region for GGPs?
7. If you could point out one example of success what would that be?
8. What do you think are the limitations to your program to achieve your program objectives?
9. What are the limitations in the context of Myanmar that hampers your program success?
10. What opportunities and challenges do you face with the previous and new government?