

CHAPTER V

THE CASE STUDY OF SHALOM FOUNDATION

Introduction

This chapter intends to study Shalom Foundation as one type of civil society organizations existing in the country. Shalom Foundation is a local NGO which focuses on peace education, mediation, conflict resolution, and dialogue training in ethnic areas. The study will explore how Shalom Foundation exists, develops and functions under the military-ruled Burma. The study is also concerned with the relationship between the government and the NGO. It will examine the space Shalom Foundation has in its operational environment. The main argument of this chapter is that NGOs like Shalom Foundation has certain space and use an incremental approach to democratization under the authoritarian regime. The findings in this chapter go against popular claims that NGOs in Burma can function only providing humanitarian aid but are severely limited or even eliminated when attempting to carry out activities which seek to promote democratization. Finally, it will analyze the strengths and weaknesses of Shalom Foundation.

History of Shalom Foundation

Some local NGOs, which work for peace and reconciliation, have been allowed to register legally with the authorities. One of the independent local NGOs permitted is Shalom Foundation. Shalom Foundation was founded in 2001 by the Reverend Dr Saboi Jum, a mediator in the ceasefire process between the government and Kachin Independent Organization (KIO). It seeks to the resolution of problems between the Burman and Kachin communities, and between Buddhists and Christians. It employs 21 full-time staffs in the current, and gives training on peace, mediation, dialogue, conflict resolution issues, and capacity building. Originally focusing on Christian Kachin

communities, the foundation has begun expanding to other ethnic areas and has focused on peace, conflict resolution and sustainable community based projects and skills trainings. Unlike international NGOs, which are restricted to work in ethnic area, Shalom Foundation works in more remote areas. It is likely that the government sees allowing development projects in Kachin and other ethnic states as one way to limit the possibility that the ethnic armed organizations will call off their ceasefires.

Shalom Foundation's ideology

Shalom as Peace organization designs its program based on the definition of peace. According to Shalom Foundation, peace is the physical and material wellbeing of the individuals; it is the good and just relationship in structure, procedure, policies and/ between different groups; it has the moral sense such as dignity, honesty and straight forwardness. Based upon this definition, Shalom designs the integrated strategies in order to reach to the kind of peace that it believes.

Shalom Foundation is often viewed as a success story, which other local NGOs might emulate. However Shalom Foundation is not a countrywide institution or a membership group. But it often acts as a facilitator for a longer-established association.

Vision, Goals and Objectives of Shalom Foundation

The vision of Shalom Foundation is to encourage and support the process of building a stable and just society based on mutual understanding and respect of diverse religions, cultures, customs and traditions. It believes that only fairness and mutual respect could lead to sustained peace and development among communities and throughout the nation as a whole. The goals of Shalom Foundation are to support individuals to become agents of positive change in their communities, to teach them to be socially responsible people and thus to fulfill their human dignity. Shalom Foundation

supports individuals in working together to establish trust between all levels of society within diverse groups and to cooperate in developing progressive societies.

The objectives of Shalom Foundation are to resolve conflict with peaceful means and to encourage others to do so. Shalom Foundation aims to help and support community leaders, key persons and mediators in their efforts to established peace. In addition, Shalom Foundation supports and helps the development of grassroots society of both urban and country communities. Shalom Foundation also focuses on enhancing mutual understanding and respect of diverse culture, customs and traditions. Ja Nan, the assistant director of Shalom Foundation said that

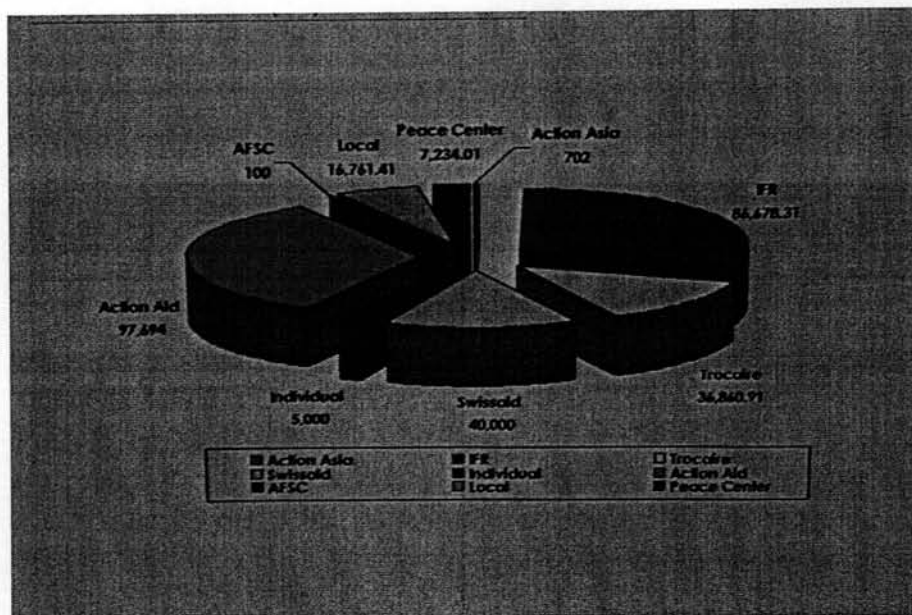
“The Shalom Centre is for all people. We invite everybody, also the government ... There are four things we need to achieve: (1) Trust between the government, the armed groups, and the people. (2) Trust between the different ethnic groups. (3) We need to educate people about the law so they can negotiate with the government and perhaps reach some compromises. (4) First we didn't focus on development, but there is such a big need for health and education and broader community development” (Personal communication, November, 2007).

Programs, Target groups and Funding of Shalom Foundation

Shalom Foundation is now working in five main programs: Peace education, mediation, development, Trauma healing, and Partnership program. The target groups of Shalom Foundation are local community leaders, religious leaders, ethnic mediators, ethnic armed groups, youth and women, community social and development workers, teachers and those who are actively involved in peace and development works.

Shalom Foundation started its program since 2000 October with assistance from Swissaid and Trocaire. Later, as program extended in terms of regions and type of projects, its partnership expanded with organizations such as Misereor, German Embassy in Myanmar, Japanese Embassy in Myanmar, British Embassy in Myanmar, International Fellowship of Reconciliation (German Branch), Actionaid, ActionAsia, EED, People in

Need, Fredskorpset (Norway), DFID, Oxfam (GB), and individuals from international and local. The following table is the total fund received of Shalom Foundation in 2006.



Total Fund received in 2006 (\$)

Activities of Shalom Foundation

Shalom Foundation focus on training such as peace building, mediation, religious, cultural and social dialogue, trust building and conflict resolution in ethnic areas. Conflict between ethnic nationalities has been prolong and destroyed the democratic system in Burma. These activities are aimed to reconcile between ethnic nationalities and Burman and help to rebuild democratic society in Burma. Thus we can argue that Shalom Foundation tries to politicize the humanitarian space through non-political way.

Peace Building Training

Shalom Foundation could conduct Peace Building Training for youth, pastors, Laities, Women, Community leaders, and University students. Training created opportunities to develop effective and positive interpersonal skills, creative thinking and cooperative problem solving skills. Additionally, it promotes an environment of trust and cooperation, a sense of community, and cultural awareness among the diverse groups. Training encouraged full participation, cooperation and having dialogue among each member of the society in order to develop healthy community.

Usually, peace building trainings were given when community-based organizations in ethnic areas and some institutions such as Myanmar Baptist Convention, Young Women Christian Association, and Capacity Building Initiative requested for trainings. Quantitatively, Shalom Foundation has conducted 28 trainings in 2006. There were 885 participants from different ethnic nationalities from different area. Below is a table showing trainings in States and Divisions conducted by Shalom Foundation during 2005 and 2006.

No.	State/Division	No. of Participants
1	Kachine State	867
2	Chin State	232
3	Mon State	74
4	Kayar State	55
5	Shan State	243
6	Sagaing Division	216
7	Yangon Division	25
	Total	885

As outcomes of these training, participants becomes fully aware the need of Local Peace Committee for their community and many peace committee are formed in their villages. In these Peace Committee Buddhists and Christians work together more and more for community affairs and try to implement development project by aiming sustainable peace. Peace building training creates a space for problem-solving on a particular issue that the participants are facing in their community or institution. Participants were given a chance to look at the conflict they are currently facing. For example, training coordinator need to analyze their conflict situation. In one of the cases, there was a conflict between the Pastor and the members of Executive Committee. Participants thought that the conflict was really big. But later on they found out that it was because of lack of negotiation between the two parties in trying to meet their respective needs. Hence, they tried to negotiate during the training and both parties' needs were met.

Mediation Activities

Shalom Foundation was involved in the practical mediation and after mediation process. according to the needs of the mediators and the mediation process of the armed groups and the government. In 2002 May, Shalom Foundation organized a workshop for acting mediators from Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin and Mon for experience sharing and networking among them. In that workshop, all the mediators agreed to form a network for ethnic mediators for sharing, learning, networking and cooperation purpose. All the groups agreed to send representatives to the Fellowship first workshop in August 2002. In that workshop the participants/representatives from Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin and Mon decided to be called the group as Ethnic Nationalities Mediators Fellowship (ENMF). ENMF agreed to pursue the proposal of Chin, KBC and Kayar Mediators Committee to assist their mediation process between respective armed groups and the government. Shalom Foundation's involvement in the mediation process (present/after) is through the Ethnic Nationalities Mediators' Fellowship (ENMF). Shalom Foundation's

director, Chairman of ENMF and vice-chairman took the role to materialize on behalf of ENMF. Shalom Foundation provides skill trainings for the ethnic mediations, consultation for the mediation process and space for them to support each other.

Dialogue training

During 2006, two dialogue sessions on Constitution Making Process were organized for the Kachin Community leaders and Young professional in Myintkyina, Kachin State. The sessions were led by visiting Professor from Rutger University-USA. Moreover, dialogue sessions were organized for the ethnic youth from Shalom Foundation partners in Yangon which were led by visiting professors from NUS. The dialogue topics include the relationship of economic and politics, the relationship of ASEAN and Burma, the history of Burma, HIV/AIDS and social relationship, and the West policies (Sanction) on Burma.

Religious, Cultural and Social dialogue

In February 2006, Shalom Foundation could help to form a group called Interfaith Peace-building with 11 members from four major faiths in Burma, namely, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. In July 2006, Interfaith Peace-building Conference could be organized. Key persons from four faith traditions and potential youth leaders from each faith participated. It aimed for building peaceful co-existence and cooperation in the communities regardless of the differences in religion and ethnic background. The ultimate goal was developing practical action plans for interfaith cooperation at different levels in the communities for building culture of peace in Burma. The Group agreed to focus on youth at the community level with the aim of cooperation rather than analyzing the teachings of each religion. These youth met and discussed future plan under Shalom umbrella. In October 2006, there was a flood in Mandalay division and Karen State. The youth group responded the situation by collecting clothes, groceries, and other food items

and cash donations to support the affected communities. They are organizing 2 Interfaith Youth camps in 2007: one in Yangon and one in upper Burma with expectation to expand youth members and do more activities to the best of their capacity.

Peace Making Training

Shalom Foundation could organize peace making training with international trainers. The training was given by Mr Kurt Sudmersen and Mrs Cornelia Timm from Germany. This training particular aims to enhance the mediation skill of practitioners (ethnic mediators) and religious leaders from the religious organizations and institutions. Training conducted and number of participants attended the trainings are described in the following chart.

Type	of	Participants	Participants	Total	Target
PMT	Male	Female			Group
PMT I A	14	8	22	Religious Leaders (RL)	
PMT I B	11	10	21	RL and Businessman	
PMT I C	10	6	16	RL and Shalom Foundation staff	
PMT II A	10	6	16	RL	
PMT II B	9	10	19	RL	
PMT II C	10	5	15	RL	
PMT III	14	6	20	ENMF and Shalom Foundation staff	

Special Peace Making Training for Young Buddhist Monks was conducted with the local partner, Sedana Foundation (led by Mon State Young Buddhist Monk Union) in Mawlamyine. Twelve young Buddhist Monks participated in the training.

The peace making training could really contribute the democratic foundation of communities. As evidence, there has been the division among the villagers because of disagreement on village's name. As a result, there are two Buddhist Monasteries instead of one in the village. A young monk who had attended this Peace Making Training initiated the mediation together with a young fellow who also attended the same training. The first initiative failed because there was not collaboration from the villagers. Then a youth group from one side of the village attended the Peace Building Training and they came to realize that they should participate in the dialogue meeting between the two villager groups. As a result of mediation, two groups of young people in said village have come to an agreement on the village name and cooperation and collaboration in community welfare and development.

Trust building and conflict resolution training

Shalom Foundation also operates its program together with International Organizations such as Action Asia and Action Aid. Action Asia is a network of peace-builders from Asia region. Action Asia Myanmar program is developed with the ideas and plans from the peace-builders inside the country. Action Asia Myanmar Program mainly focused on trust building and relationship building between or among different organizations who are involved in peace related activities. Another partnership program is with Metta Foundation and Action Aid. The program is called MAS because it is a partnership program between Metta Foundation (M), Action Aid (A) and Shalom (S). The program focused in Kachin State and Kayah State with the purposes to build the capacity of community actors to support the people's initiatives and to mobilize marginalized communities around the priority issues of peace education, conflict

resolution, and dialogue training. In this program, MAS first give round one training to 30 participants for two months. Then MAS sent back the participants to their communities for two months. Then MAS give round two training for 6 weeks and sent the participants back to the communities for 6 months. Then MAS recollected them to make discussion for a week and give certificate. At the end of 2007, the second batch of MAS fellows were beginning and expanding the area of focus to Kayah state. There are now 20 fellows participants from Kayah state chosen by partners in Kayah State.

In conclusion, we can argue that Shalom Foundation is using humanitarian space for peace and reconciliation. Trying to solve ethnic conflicts, maintaining peace and setting democratic values are important for Burmese democracy and it can be considered as democratization process in Burma.

Reaction of the government on Shalom Foundation

Shalom Foundation always tries to maintain communication with government officials. For the last five years, Shalom Foundation had organized “Kachin Traditional Harvest Dinner” with the support from local business groups in Kachin State. This “Traditional Harvest Dinner” was attended by both government officials and ethnic leaders. The dinner was intended not only to express the identity of ethnic nationality but to show the respect to the leaders (both SPDC and ethnic leaders) and to create a space for ongoing trust building and relationship building among high level leaders from SPDC, Ethnic Ceasefire group, community leaders such as mediators, and religious leaders. According to Shalom Foundation, the “Traditional Harvest Dinner” is important because Shalom Foundation used it as a floor to give presentation on the peace and conflict resolution to key actors. Thus, Shalom Foundation gains the trust from the government and as long as it does not try to radical political change and carefully manages its relations with authorities at various levels, it seems to be able to operate fairly independently.

Limitations on programs

The changes of government leaders have not stopped the programs of Shalom Foundation but they threatened independence and effectiveness of Shalom Foundation. For example, Shalom Foundation sometimes faces direct restrictions; including program postponing, travel limitations, stricter regulations and longer delays in getting permissions. Shalom Foundation has been restricted to bring donors to see the projects funded by donors. The Ministry of Home Affairs announced in July 2005 that international staff could no longer stay up-country for more than a week, which became the catalyst for withdrawal of the Global Fund. However, the situation improved at the beginning of 2007 and foreign donors are allowed to see projects in remote areas. But Shalom Foundation had to stop all its training programs for a few months when monks and people protested in September 2007. Now Shalom Foundation is restarting all its programs and claims that it has not experienced significant disruptions to their activities by the government after 2007 social movements.

Opportunities and Threats of Shalom Foundation

Opportunities and threats of Shalom Foundation depends on the policy of the government on NGOs, the implementation of these policies, the level trust between the government and NGOs, and the understanding of government officials in local areas.

Changing relationship with Shalom Foundation and Authorities

The move to Naypyidaw, the new capital, has increased the psychological as well as physical distance between the government and Shalom Foundation. It is a long journey to go to the new capital and it overstretches transport and accommodation facilities. All these things need to take much more time and cost more since it is required to get

permissions to travel to projects and require personal meetings with government officials. Less access to decision-makers, more intrusive intelligence surveillance and greater pressure on agencies to work with government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) have made Shalom Foundation's relations with the government more difficult, and complicate day-to-day management of programs.

Compared to General Khin Nyunt (the former, now detained prime minister), the remaining top leaders are reclusive and generally unresponsive to both foreigners and their own staff. Although many working-level officials remain supportive of aid efforts, they are wary of openly pushing new initiatives and less able to do so as their positions have weakened.

Government officials' understanding of Shalom Foundation

The majority of the government officials do not have a clear understanding of NGOs as providers of emergency and humanitarian assistance. As they are brought up and educated in an authoritarian society, in their perception the non-governmental concept sounds somehow strange and even suspicious. The majority of them think that the NGOs are in fact some kind of government agencies of capitalist countries. Being rarely exposed to the international community, it is understandably difficult for them to realize that these NGOs do not represent any government and their assistance comes mainly from donations. It is therefore difficult to expect the government officers to understand correctly NGO philosophy, approach, ideology, strategy and requirements. In the case of Shalom Foundation, it tries to explain local authorities the nature and objectives of NGOs in developing country. According to Aung Kyaw Thein, a project coordinator from Shalom Foundation, government officers have begun to have a better understanding of Shalom Foundation as peace building and conflict resolution organization. This growing understanding of Shalom Foundation is an opportunity to enlarge the space of the operational environment of democratic space in Burma.

Implementation of new guidelines on Shalom Foundation

Throughout 2005, there are some changes in the operational environment of NGOs. In 2006, the government issued its first formal guidelines for UN Agencies, International Organizations and INGOs/LNGOs. These guidelines were announced after a special cabinet meeting in January, 2005 when all ministries were requested to report on difficulties with NGO organizations. The purpose of the "Guidelines" is to reassure the military regime that NGO activities do not threaten its political agenda. It is a try to rein in the behavior of some human rights agencies such as ICRC, and ILO.

However, there are two versions of the guidelines- an English text and a more restrictive Myanmar version. The main differences are conditions in the Burmese version, absent in the English, that: (1) national staff of international agencies must be hired from a list provided by the relevant ministry; (2) all incoming project funds must be channeled through the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank; and (3) conducting and distributing surveys is not permitted unless approved in the project document. According to a planning ministry official, the Burmese version was not intended for publication, only to help inform local authorities.

None of these requirements are truly new but they have never been stringently implemented. The issues of registration and hiring processes have mainly affected local organization and the promoting of civil society. However, many NGO workers says that they have not been pressured to follow the new guidelines. In the case of Shalom Foundation, it can still work its projects without anymore difficulties although the guidelines are announced.

Counterparts

One of the most decisive factors for democratic space for NGOs has little to do with the agencies or programs, but rather who they work with. NGO policy directions from the top generals are rarely very specific or closely followed up. There is significant scope for interpretation and initiative by ministers, regional commanders and other officials at the implementation level. Therefore, how different agencies are affected depends on their counterpart in the government. ICRC, for example, may have been hit particularly hard not just because of the nature of its programs, but also because it traditionally has been under the Ministry of Home Affairs, which since 2004 has undergone enormous change under new leadership. The former minister of home affairs, Colonel Tin Hlaing, was a supporter of Khin Nyunt's open door policy towards aid agencies and had collected under him an array of sensitive programs. The current minister, Maj. General Maung Oo, does not want to work with foreign agencies. By contrast, some agencies such as Shalom Foundation and Metta Foundation continue to receive full support from their counterparts.

The importance of personalities is reflected also at the local level, where some commanders block aid activities even if they are permitted by Yangon, while others are openly supportive and may promote activities that lack official sanction. In other words, the system is sufficiently fragmented to allow officials at different levels to act to some degree according to their own values, interests and fears. The biases of key officials for or against NGOs matter, as does how secure and influential each official feels within the military hierarchy.

Level of Trust

Another decisive factor of the democratic space of NGOs is the government trust in the organization. Some NGOs have more space depends on inter-personal relations and

trust by the government. Although SPDC is quite authoritarian and xenophobic, sometimes it allows even sensitive programs to go ahead if it trusts the agency. The case study of Shalom Foundation showed that trust is based on personal relations with resident representatives, the agency's history of cooperation with the government. Shalom Foundation could do its projects more freely because the director of Shalom Foundation, Dr Sa Boi Jan agreed to attend the National Convention of the government. The importance of trust is not new but has become more of an issue since 2004 because many current officials have had little prior experience with foreign organizations. Indeed, previous close association with Khin Nyunt now seems to count against organizations.

Opportunity for Advocacy

NGOs working in Burma cannot do advocacy as those in Thailand and overseas; however, the presence of humanitarian personnel in conflict affected areas can help to create a space in which to engage in behind-the-scenes advocacy. The presence of NGOs can constrain local power-holders' opportunities for abuse, because authorities worry that information regarding violations will be communicated to the international community. The presence of a witness shames local authorities into adopting better behavior. This is the indirect way of advocacy. There is an area in which UN agencies have made some progress in conflict and displacement the past few years. Confidential advocacy with national, state and local authorities has helped to build a more protective environment, especially in the fields of harm reduction and HIV/AIDS issues, human trafficking and child rights. For example, the government agreed to form an interagency-government committee to stop recruitment and facilitate demobilization of child soldiers. UNICEF and UNHCR also provide training programs for police and other government employees. The advocacy activities of the ICRC also give some influence to progressive elements within the government and state agencies, who wish to establish better practice in their fields.

Some UN agencies have specific protection mandates. For example, UNICEF has made progress in a number of protection sectors, with the government recognizing child protection concerns and implementing new initiatives. Indeed, UNICEF has been able to persuade the government that more strategic approaches are required to reach the minority people. NGOs like Shalom Foundation's protective presence in areas of continuing armed conflict has also been quite effective. CBOs in rural areas could pass on human rights information to their local and international counterparts in Yangon or Thailand. There is evidence that the existence of such protection and advocacy networks have served to reduce the incidence of human rights abuses in some parts of Karen and Karenni States.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Shalom Foundation

The greatest strength of Shalom Foundation is that it can successfully operate its projects with certain accountability and transparency that international donors can accept. The decisive factor of this is that it could manage to get the long-term trust from the government. Since it performed as a bridge between the government and KIO cease fire, it could gain a certain trust by both organizations. Because of this trust, Shalom Foundation could operate its projects in ethnic regions. So building a good relationship with the government officials is the decisive factor of how Shalom Foundation can operate fairly independently under the authoritarian rule.

The fact that Shalom Foundation is a Christian affiliated organization is also strength since it gets financial, technical and moral support from international Christian organizations such as Vatican Church. It can also use Churches, which are abundance in ethnic region, as training centers and it gains support from local Christian organizations. Shalom Foundation is very careful in their training program not to propagate of Christian religion. Most importantly, because of Shalom Foundation's training, many people get awareness to form community based organizations in their respective villages and skills

for mediation, dialogue and peace building. Most of all, the approach of Shalom Foundation is flexible and incremental, acceptable by the government, and meet with the requirement of local populations.

As weaknesses, Shalom Foundation can be criticized that it stays far away from the central area of Burma and politics. Shalom Foundation has few contacts with other civil society organizations in Yangon, the biggest and former capital of Burma. In addition, Shalom Foundation also doesn't have any relationship with political party like NLD. So Shalom Foundation is not likely to be able to play a role as a negotiator between the government and NLD in the future. Since Shalom Foundation has been founded by a Christian affiliated group, it uses Christian religious building like churches as training places. Because of this, Shalom Foundation chooses their working areas based on where Christian churches exist. So, the beneficiaries of Shalom Foundation become Christian population. In addition, Shalom Foundation prioritizes on their own region which is in Kachin State rather than working in other ethnic areas. So the major weakness of Shalom Foundation is its geographical limitation. For Shalom Foundation the following challenges continue to obtain:

- The creating of space to build links between key people and local people
- Lessened opportunities to build the capacity of individuals and to move from individual level to the socio-political level.
- Building long-term trustful relationships between the key people from different groups
- Building a strong relationship between more people across different groups

Conclusion

This study found that Shalom Foundation has a democratic space to work for peace building training in the country. Shalom Foundation claims that it did not experience any significant disruptions to their activities by the government following the

introduction of new guidelines. As the study shows, the most substantial constraint on the space of civil society in Burma is government distrust. Shalom Foundation was able to gain the trust of the government by playing a mediation role between the government and ethnic insurgent group such as the KIO. Thus Shalom Foundation is able to deliver trainings which aim to build local capacities, solve conflicts, strengthen protection, encourage the formation of CBOs, make peace community and contribute towards longer-term democratization. However, the activities of Shalom Foundation are not sufficient to bring about national-level political transition. Nevertheless, peace building and conflict resolutions are essential first steps towards addressing the needs of rural communities, and building local participation and democracy from bottom up. In the current political climate, with no democratic space for national-level transition, civil society networks represent an important vehicle for long-term, bottom-up democratization in Burma. The case study of Shalom Foundation showed that there is humanitarian space for NGOs to work its projects but the space need to be politicized to support democratization process in the country.

Shalom Foundation tries to use democratic space to implement its projects on social and political conflict in ethnic areas. Community leaders, religious leaders, ethnic leaders, members of ethnic armed groups and community development workers participated in Shalom Foundation's projects. These projects aimed to raise democratic values among people in conflicted areas and tried to solve conflict between minority ethnic people and majority Burman. Trying to solve ethnic conflicts, maintaining peace and setting democratic values are important for Burmese politics and it can be considered as democratization process in Burma. The public space Shalom Foundation used for its activities is not the space that the government allows to ethnic people before. The government has already made war with ethnic minority people for many decades. So the space Shalom Foundation used for its activities is a negotiated space created by making ceasefire between the government and ethnic insurgent groups. The trainings of Shalom Foundation provide space for multiple voices of ethnic people, building trust, maintaining peace, empowering and networking among ethnic people. All these kinds of activities are

an essential first step towards local participation and democracy from below. Since the activities of Shalom Foundation are the necessary foundation for a democratic system in Burma, it can be considered that Shalom Foundation is making democratic space in the country.