

# **Midterm Review of the Myanmar Joint Peace Fund (JPF)**

**Final Report**

**October 2018**

**Nordic Consulting Group A/S**



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## Acknowledgments

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) team would like to acknowledge the kind support of many people who contributed to this report through their time, ideas, information, and other assistance.

In particular, we would like to thank JPF team who actively supported the review in all aspects throughout its duration and within a tight schedule. This involved speedy responses to requests for detailed information not readily to hand (above and beyond the call of duty at times) and facilitation of interviews and meetings with senior stakeholders who are all themselves very busy. The Team Leader especially wishes to acknowledge the multiple times that key JPF respondents were prepared to give to him (while on their vacation, during other work pressures, on weekends and outside of work hours), to answer his impertinent questions as he tried to understand the whole picture.

Many other interviewees were very helpful in meeting with us and sharing their views, ideas, and perspectives. This included the Fund Board (FB) members who were kind enough to meet, often well out of office hours, allow the team to observe the FB work during sensitive meetings, as well as assist in facilitating meetings with government through their good offices. Thanks also go to senior Ethnic Armed Organization (EAO) leaders, civil society organizations (CSOs), advisors, and experts as well as all the partners that gave their time and energy to making the process successful. Without their active participation and honest, deep engagement with the issues and the team, this report would not have been possible. All of them added value.

This MTR was conducted by Simon Richards (Team Leader), Mathias Kjaer, Khin Maung Lwin and Cherry Ohn of Nordic Consulting Group (NCG). Irena Grizelj provided valuable support to ensure that gender and youth inclusion aspects were considered and analyzed throughout the review.

## Acronyms

AA	Arakan Army	MNDAA	Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
BGF	Border Guard Force	MNSP	Mon National State Party
CFCN	Call For Concept Notes	MTR	Mid-Term Review
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration	NCA	Nation-wide Ceasefire Agreement
DOA	Description of Action	NCCT	Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organisation	NDAA	National Democratic Alliance Army
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
FPNCC	Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee	NIS	Nordic International Support Foundation
GOM	Government of Myanmar	NLD	National League for Democracy
HLC	High-Level Committee	NRPC	National Reconciliation and Peace Centre
IMS	Information Management System	PSF	Peace Support Fund
IPSG	International Peace Support Group	PSG	Peace Support Group
JCB	Joint Coordination Body	SSPP	Shan State Progressive Party
JMC	Joint Monitoring Committee (NCA)	SSR	Security Sector Reform
JPF	Joint Peace Fund	TCM	Trustee and Contract Manager
KIA	Kachin Independence Army	TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
KII	Key Informant Interview	TOC	Theory of Change
KNPP	Karen National Progressive Party	TS	Technical Secretariat
KNU	Karen National Union	UN	United Nations
LDU	Lahu Democratic Union	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation	UNFC	United Nationalities Federal Council
MDF	Multi-Donor Fund	UPWC	Union Peace Working Committee
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	UWSA	United Wa State Army
MPC	Myanmar Peace Center		
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services		
UPC	Union Peace Conference		
UPDJC	Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee		

## Map of Areas Visited

*[Map removed as too big to email]*

# Executive Summary

## Overview of the Joint Peace Fund

JPF was established as a six-year (2016-2021), multi-donor fund (MDF) to help support a nationally-owned, inclusive, and sustainable Myanmar peace process.<sup>1</sup>

To respond to Myanmar's shifting peace process, JPF underwent a significant restructuring in 2018 updating its overarching goal to "Inclusive peace is reached through agreements and strengthened stakeholders, institutions, and processes" with three outcomes:

- **Outcome 1: Conflict Management Mechanisms**—Formal and informal conflict management mechanisms are strengthened to amicably resolve and/or prevent conflict.
- **Outcome 2: Dialogues and Negotiations**—Peace process stakeholders' capacity is enhanced to participate in formal and informal consultations, dialogues and negotiations.
- **Outcome 3: Participation**—Civic engagement, public awareness, and confidence in the peace process are increased at the national and sub-national levels.

## Overview of the Mid-Term Review

The **purpose** of the MTR is to provide an independent assessment of JPF's progress towards its revised goals and objectives and recommend ways it can improve its performance in the next three years. The **scope** of the MTR covered all Fund activities between 2015 and 2018.

**Methodology.** The MTR followed a qualitatively-dominant design utilizing rapid appraisal techniques. 69 key informant interviews, 36 small group discussions, and a direct observation of the August 2018 FB meeting were conducted. Qualitative data was complemented with quantitative data mined from JPF monitoring and evaluation (M&E) documents and periodic reports, as well as data available from secondary sources. Field data collection occurred between August 6-28, 2018. Respondents were interviewed in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, Hpa'an, Mawlamyine, Taunggyi, Lashio, Chang Mai, and remotely by Skype. In all, 164 individuals (74 female, 90 male) were consulted.

## Overarching Conclusions

Overall, despite early challenges and setbacks, JPF has made significant progress from a difficult start and has worked hard to adapt to its current situation where it is well placed to make an increasingly strong contribution in its support to the Myanmar Peace Process. Under new leadership, and in close collaboration with its FB members, JPF has undertaken an extensive process of reflection to develop a new strategy and structure better aligned to the new realities it faces while still retaining its original core principles of supporting a nationally-led and inclusive peace process.

**Relevance.** Myanmar is a complex country with multiple ongoing conflicts and a fractured peace process occurring simultaneously. JPF was developed in the backdrop of a momentous transition to a civilian government after almost five decades of military dictatorship. This was expected to provide the foundation for increased positive change which did not occur along the lines expected. JPF has worked hard to reposition, reframe itself, and ensure its ongoing relevance with programming based

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<sup>1</sup> JPF is funded by 11 donors, including Australia, Canada, Denmark, European Union, Finland, Italy, Japan, Norway, Switzerland, UK, and the US.

on rolling analysis and partner research increasingly applied in its interventions. JPF has demonstrated its ability to adapt to political change, through and within grant-making, although also constrained by some administratively-heavily grant-making processes, which have since been improved.

JPF is adhering to its guiding principles and working on the right issues given its mandate. There is, however, an opportunity to deepen the articulation and common understanding of its strategy and in particular review the Fund's breadth and balance in emphasis between outcomes.

Differing stakeholder willingness to engage with JPF has resulted in varying strengths of relations with key stakeholders such as government and the Tatmadaw. JPF is actively working to improve in this area. The complexity of resource allocation politics, differing perceptions of needs, the complex interactions between and within stakeholder groups also makes meeting differing needs across EAOs challenging. This picture is further complicated by an overlay of donor politics and risk tolerance.

**Effectiveness.** A combination of external and internal factors constrained JPF's initial performance and legacies from these issues still affect perceptions of JPF today. Many of these factors have since been resolved or improved, and JPF is in a much stronger position to capitalize on its position moving forward. Data and comprehensive evidence though are still patchy due to the need to align M&E frameworks with foundational documents that have been in process. This has resulted in inevitable gaps in data availability, particularly at outcome level, although it should be noted that many grants have only just started and so it is too early to expect to see evidence of this type of change.

There are tensions between the political reality of peace processes and the demands of aid systems used to implement support. Coupled with a range of unrealistic stakeholder expectations this has impacted on perceptions of JPF's effectiveness. Donor expectations, in particular, need aligning with the reality of peace process timeframes and JPF's work. Stakeholders, in general, do not fully understand what JPF is doing or funding. This is partly a function of its intentional low visibility in the public arena, which is appropriate and important to maintain. However, greater investment in key stakeholder and partner consultation and understanding (on an individual bilateral basis) would increase confidence in JPF and a feeling of partnership. JPF has recently considerably increased its efforts in communicating JPF achievements to FB members but this was occurring during MTR and its effectiveness cannot be judged from the data collected.

JPF is successfully targeting Myanmar organizations as fund recipients, with over 90% of partners being Myanmar-led, although it is less clear whether they are sustained in taking ownership of the peace process. This is complemented by the relative successful positioning to provide technical advice to stakeholders within broader contextual constraints. JPF is working on improving and deepening this work given the need for a long-term perspective around capacity enhancement and the development of second tier leadership across many stakeholders.

**Efficiency.** Current governance structures do not facilitate effective and efficient fund management. The original Description of Action (DOA) intentions are aspirational and not appropriate for the current political context. Thus, current arrangements should be confirmed as the formal, practical arrangements governing JPF, with the FB as the highest governance structure. However, this has implications for the FB role which should be raised to a strategic level of oversight and accountability with the more functional tasks taken on by the Working Group. Streamlining working procedures is required to ensure the two bodies are differentiated to avoid duplication, ensure accountability and FB engagement while empowering the TS and TCM to advance programming.

Efficiency is also constrained by insufficient coordination, both internally with bilateral programs and externally with other actors. This requires more attention to maximize effective use of funds, reduce competition within JPF donor family, and create broader complementarities within the sector.

Grant-making processes have improved over time, and while there is ongoing work to improve further, this area warrants more scrutiny to consider additional efficiency gains.

Staffing levels are low for the peace sector given partner capacity, support needs and JPF intent to fund national organizations. The balance of skills, experience, and types of staff is appropriate, although consistency of interactions with partners still needs attention and a greater degree of empathy for some partner situations is required. Following JPF staffing and structure review, JPF has been addressing these issues although staffing levels in the Strategy and Advisory Support Team warrant further scrutiny to assess its adequacy.

The pipeline and fund expenditure is being managed as well as possible given systemic aid architecture factors, with the majority being out of the Trustee and Contract Manager's (TCM's) control. The level of uncommitted funds is appropriate given the Fund's remaining timeframe and the potential need for surge capacity over the remainder of the Fund's life.

**Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL).** JPF has invested a huge amount of work in its MEL to overcome inherent challenges assessing peace processes; structural changes associated with the development of a new Strategy and Results Framework; and the realignment of partner grants to match the new structure. At the time of the MTR, JPF had completed its revised Results Framework and the migration of JPF indicators which will allow implementing partners (IPs) to report against relevant JPF indicators. JPF does not have a VFM framework at present and the MTR did not find evidence that that JPF would benefit from developing one at this stage of its Fund life.

## Recommendations

### Fund Board

- *Governance Structures:* Formalize the current governance structures to replace the original articulated structures, unless the political context and situation warrants a further review and adjustment. Adjust the FB role to reflect a higher-level strategic oversight role while the FB Working Group (FBWG) takes on more practical strategy engagement.

### Fund Board and JPF

- *JPF Focus:* Review JPF's breadth and consider adjusting the balance between outcomes. This could include increasing JPF's focus on Outcomes 1 and 2 and reducing its emphasis on Outcome 3 where JPF could instead focus on ensuring greater linkages with the higher-level peace process.
- *Strategy Document:* Deepen the current strategy document to better articulate and reflect assumptions, approaches, and theories of change implicitly informing programming decisions, as well as ensuring vertical linkages between the grassroots and higher levels are better expressed. Employ an incremental approach to the strategy enhancement involving FBWG members that are interested and ideally completing the exercise by the end of 2018.
- *Bilateral Coordination and Collaboration:* Improve transparency of direct bilateral peace support activities with JPF where possible. Look for synergies in support, assessments, etc. to better ensure complementarity and synergies (e.g. through scale-up, seeding, and use of comparative advantage) between bilateral peace programs and JPF activities to reduce competition and better coordinate efforts across JPF, bilateral programs, and other initiatives such as the "Lek 5."

## Technical Secretariat

- *Analysis Gaps:* The TS should invest in filling analysis gaps to inform its future work. This could include investigating commonalities and differences between bilateral ceasefire agreements and implications for leveraging better peace outcomes; how the existing peace process accommodates Rakhine and other diverse macro issues; or how to make use of the upcoming USAID/DFID funded analysis of the peace process itself. The TS should also continue efforts for greater analysis and disaggregation of differing key stakeholder needs, particularly between the different EAOs.
- *Increased National Voice in Strategy Formulation:* Explore different ways to increase broader national voice more explicitly in strategy formulation by taking forward the planned convening of a variety of stakeholder groups (e.g. research institutes, security sector, etc.) that can feed into strategy dimensions as well as stimulate discussion in the broader community for the public good.
- *Informal Space:* JPF should continue the testing, development, and support of a neutral informal space where specific issues and barriers (e.g. secession clauses) can be explored by parties informally with accepted facilitators.
- *Deepening Negotiation Skills:* Given EAO needs for more support on negotiation, further extend ongoing work to develop a comprehensive mini-strategy integrating a range of support. This could include, for example, exploring the possibility, viability, and provision of an ongoing experiential negotiation skills programme for EAOs that wish to take part. This should include women, civil society, and political party members.
- *Provision of Technical Assistance (TA):* Continue to explore options to strengthen TA on how to draw on potential diaspora advisors, particularly women, to deepen EAO negotiation teams. Explore the possibility for a more substantive, integrated approach and development of a mentoring program for a cadre of second-tier leaders, particularly women and youth. Improve coordination and mutual support across TA, particularly if working on similar issues (e.g. JMC, security, natural resources etc.).
- *Communications Strategy:* Encourage JPF reporting and communications to also include partial success/failure to provide a more complete picture of JPF's experience to stimulate reflection and examples for other peace support processes to learn from. Further the planned development of a comprehensive communications strategy articulating the different audiences, their information and communication needs, and how JPF will meet them.

## TCM and TS

- *Grant-making:* Conducting a joint analysis of the factors constraining efficiency and how they might improve performance. TCM and TS should continue to broaden the range of contracts, types of agreement, and grant-making tools at its disposal to improve adaptability both within existing grants as well as with new partners aiming to reduce administrative burdens on partners as well as JPF teams.
- *Partner Interactions:* Continue working on improving partner interactions by strengthening internal coordination between teams for consistency of approach, common accountability expectations, and to reduce administrative burdens.
- *MEL:* Continue efforts to streamline and integrate data collection, learning, and adaptive programming to reduce partner burdens. JPF should also explore the potential use of "outcome harvesting" or other similar qualitative methodologies better suited for capturing nuances in process-focused peace work.

## Introduction and Background

This MTR took place during a strategic time for JPF, which has faced both a complex and rapidly evolving context as well as its own internal challenges, evolution, and maturing. The work of JPF has been complicated by the broad number of issues and actors involved in Myanmar's peacebuilding process, in a large part due to the myriad of conflicts faced within the country. This has created challenges for external stakeholders to identify ways to engage in and support national processes constructively and holistically. The complexity of the context has been compounded by the opacity and varying levels of information available from different protagonists, which led to analyses informing interventions of varying quality and subtlety.

However, despite these challenges and setbacks, there has been room for optimism. Under new leadership, and in close collaboration with its FB members, JPF has undertaken an extensive process of reflection to develop a new strategy and structure better aligned to the new realities it faces while still retaining its original core principles supporting a nationally-led, inclusive peace process. This MTR provides a critical reflection point to help independently assess JPF and provide suggestions for how it can improve its management, governance, and ability to deliver on tangible results. The review is formative in nature and has not attempted to assess impact or sustainability at this early stage. Instead, it has endeavored to provide a series of recommendations and options on how to improve JPF going forward for the TS, TCM, and FB to deliberate based on its findings.

### Overview of the Joint Peace Fund

JPF was established as a six-year (2016-2021) multi-donor fund to help support Myanmar's nationally-led peacebuilding process. Designed in consultation with the Government of the Union of Myanmar (GOM) and EAO representatives to "respond to the needs of the Myanmar/Burmese peace process, as agreed between the Parties, with the broad participation of organizations in Myanmar/Burmese society".<sup>2</sup> It was also designed to "take into account international best practice for conflict sensitivity and risk management and mitigation," acknowledging the "imperative of 'doing no harm' during its implementation."

### *Shift in the Context for Peace*

JPF has witnessed a dramatic shift in the peace context since its inception. Myanmar's peace process has faltered, and at times regressed, over the past three years with a significant increase in armed conflict in both the west and north of the country. The military crackdown in Rakhine not only shifted national and international attention away from the ongoing peace process but also raised significant concerns and questions about the direction of future support in many of JPF donors' capitals. Meanwhile, fighting in the north has intensified and seen the emergence of new alliances accounting for up to "70 percent of Ethnic Armed Organization (EAO) combatants outside of the formal peace process."<sup>3</sup> There have also been growing numbers of reported ceasefire violations between the Tatmadaw (Myanmar army) and NCA signatories as well as NCA signatories themselves. Likewise, the government's highly anticipated "1<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong-Union Peace Conferences (UPCs) have thus far failed to live up to expectations for catalyzing and progressing change,

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<sup>2</sup> JPF Description of Action.

<sup>3</sup> NIS, "Joint Peace Fund: Annual Report 2017," (February 28, 2018).

particularly following the second UPC, and have been side-tracked by procedural issues around who can participate, stalling on key questions such as the right to secession, with little progress on substantive agreements. As JPF itself reports, “the Government’s focus centered on the formal peace process, leaving established informal channels of negotiation—previously central to the negotiation—unused.”<sup>4</sup> These shifts in context have had significant repercussions on the direction and of Myanmar’s peace process as well as the type and extent of activities that JPF could support.

### ***Theory of Change***

JPF was established as a demand-driven MDF to support a nationally-owned, inclusive, and sustainable Myanmar peace process.<sup>5</sup> The Fund was intended to have a “holistic focus” supporting “a broad range of actors in the peace process from the negotiation of the top level leadership to community leaders working in villages in remote parts of the country.”<sup>6</sup> Formally established near the end of 2015 it did not become operational until 2016 and is expected to run to the end of 2021.

JPF was originally designed around three pillars of activity: **(1) Peace Architecture** supporting national actors and institutions engaged in the formal peace process; **(2) Peacebuilding** focused more on informal processes of trust and relationship-building among the broader public and to support a more inclusive peace process; and **(3) Research and Innovation** to help stakeholders better understand key conflict dynamics, issues, and needs to help build a sustainable peace. These broad goals were envisioned to result from the achievement of four specific objectives, including:

1. Sustainable peace agreements are reached by strengthened actors, institutions and processes;
2. Improved trust at the subnational level builds durable peace;
3. Public knowledge, understanding, and support for the peace process creates an enabling environment; and
4. JPF’s enhanced technical (and financial) assistance for national efforts contribute to a sustainable peace.

Responding in part to growing pressure from JPF’s donors to start programming, JPF launched a “Call For Concept Notes” (CFCN) in late 2016. This resulted in 129 applications, including an additional 69 applications outside the original deadline. As mentioned in JPF quarterly reports, the vast majority of applications were of insufficient quality and varied extensively in their focus.

However, due to a combination of both wanting to respond to Myanmar’s shifting peace process and growing concern among JPF FB Members that funding decisions did not appear to be well-aligned to JPF’s overarching strategy, JPF underwent a significant restructuring in 2018. The overarching goal of the Fund was updated to be that an “Inclusive peace is reached through agreements and strengthened stakeholders, institutions, and processes.” JPF also abandoned its previous three pillars and instead focused on three new outcomes:

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

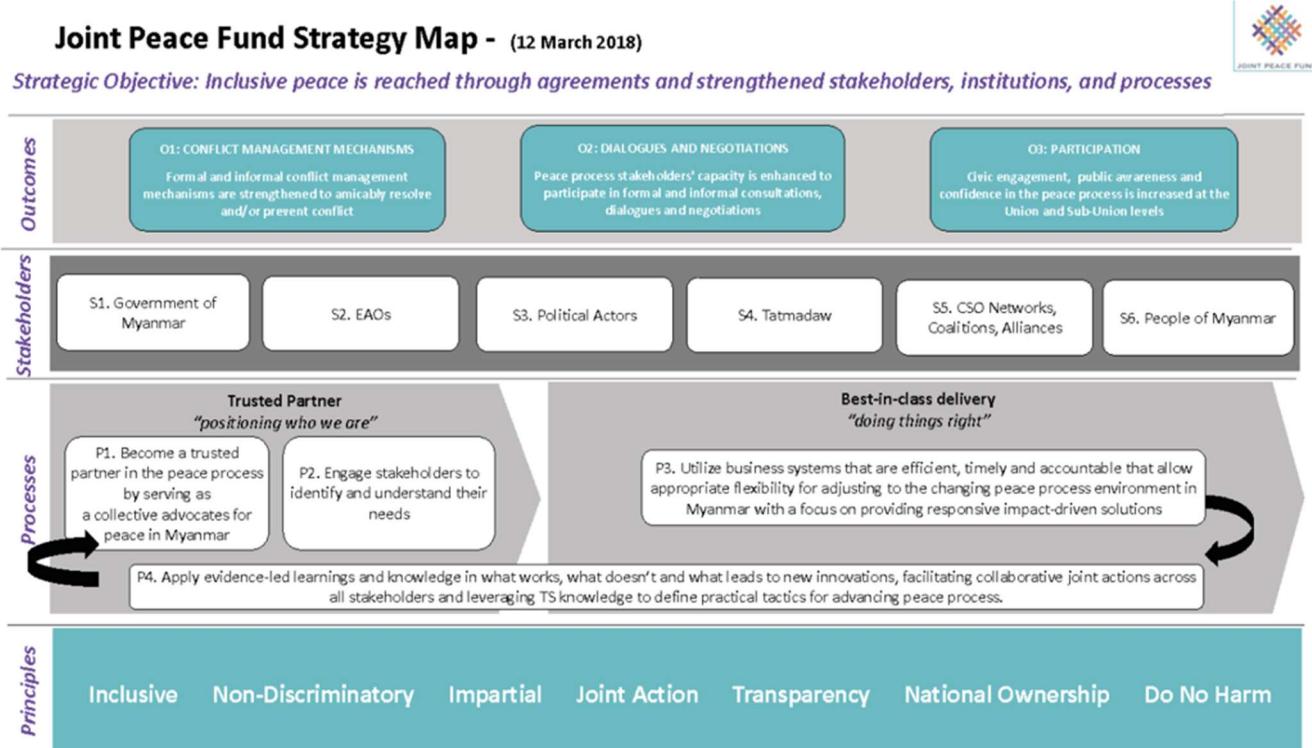
<sup>5</sup> JPF is funded by 11 donors, including Australia, Canada, Denmark, European Union, Finland, Italy, Japan, Norway, Switzerland, UK, and the US.

<sup>6</sup> NIS.

- **Outcome 1: Conflict Management Mechanisms**—Formal and informal conflict management mechanisms are strengthened to amicably resolve and/or prevent conflict.
- **Outcome 2: Dialogues and Negotiations**—Peace process stakeholders' capacity is enhanced to participate in formal and informal consultations, dialogues and negotiations.
- **Outcome 3: Participation**—Civic engagement, public awareness, and confidence in the peace process are increased at the national and sub-national levels.

JPF retained its original “core principles” of inclusiveness, non-discrimination, impartiality, joint action, transparency, national and local ownership, “Do No Harm,” and strengthening the participation of women and youth in the overall peace process.

According to the latest available quarterly report, the new strategy was designed to account for the fluidity in Myanmar’s peace process and support the “ongoing process in a broad variety of ways, while ensuring that every project is an investment in the longer-term capacity of Myanmar’s peace actors – at community/township, state and Union level - to make peace. By investing in individuals, alliances, and organizations that are sustaining and strengthening the political space for peace; and by investing in their relationship with one another, the Joint Peace Fund will have contributed towards sustaining the peace process and, in the longer term, improved the chances of lasting peace being achieved.”<sup>7</sup> As part of the new strategy, JPF created a “strategy map” or results hierarchy to help visually depict the Fund’s new Theory of Change (**below**).



**Source:** March 2018 “Strategy Map” PowerPoint presentation.

<sup>7</sup> Nordic International Support Foundation, "Joint Peace Fund: Quarter 1 Report 2018," (May 14, 2018).

# Overview of the MTR

## Purpose, Objectives, and Scope

The **purpose** of the MTR is to provide an independent assessment of JPF's progress towards its revised goals and objectives and recommend ways that JPF can improve its performance over the next three years. This will be achieved through the following specific objectives:

1. Identifying results achieved and expected;
2. Analyzing the performance of the Fund's governance and management structures;
3. Considering how the shifting political context influences JPF's ability to deliver results; and
4. Distilling lessons learned and action-oriented recommendations to help improve JPF's performance going forward.

The **scope** of the MTR will cover all activities of the Fund between 2015 and 2018.

## Intended Users and Use

The MTR will be presented to JPF FB in advance of their October 2018 meeting and will be used to assist JPF FB and JPF managing bodies' decision-making to improve governance, management efficiency, Fund relevance, and effectiveness, and potentially determine future contributions to the Fund. The primary intended users, therefore, include JPF FB and JPF managing bodies (TCM and TS).

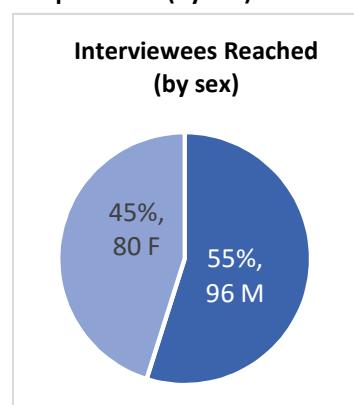
## Methodology

The MTR followed a qualitatively-dominant design utilizing a variety of rapid appraisal techniques. These included conducting 69 key informant interviews, 36 small group discussions (SGD), and a direct observation of the August 2018 FB meeting. Qualitative data was then complemented and analyzed alongside quantitative data mined from JPF monitoring and evaluation (M&E) documents and periodic reports, as well as data available from publicly available secondary studies.

Field data collection occurred between August 6-28, 2018. Respondents were interviewed in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, Hpa'an, Mawlamyine, Taunggyi, Lashio, Chang Mai, and remotely by Skype. In all 176 individuals (80 female, 96 male) were consulted (see **Figure 1** for breakdown by sex).

Please see **Annex B** for a more detailed explanation of the methodology employed and important limitations and threats to the validity of the study.

**Figure 1: Breakdown of Respondents (by sex)**



# Findings

## Relevance

### *To what extent is the design of JPF relevant to the Myanmar peacebuilding context and the results hoped to be achieved?*

**Relevant but overly ambitious.** JPF was set up in late 2015 and, in hindsight, appears to have been overly ambitious. Apparent progress towards peace, the opening up of the economy under U Thein Sein's government, and the optimism of National League for Democracy's (NLD's) success in the 2015 elections fueled this confidence. The original DOA and establishment scenarios suggest an assumption of positive progress and does not sufficiently explore the situation of a semi-signed ceasefire and partly formed peace process in a fragile context with severe ongoing conflict. For instance, the design of the governance structures with its High-Level Committee involving EAOs, government, and donors seems vulnerable; not least as such a structure risks reflecting conflict dynamics as well as capture from the government, which turn out to have nearly happened. The suggestion of the need for State-level committees also supposes more positive progress than seemed probable even at that time. The expected use of the Fund as a form of peace dividend reveals the same optimism reflected in the way some donors committed and transferred large amounts of funds to it early on despite it not yet being in a position to use them effectively.

Overall, the combination of the uncertainties of the context, the structural arrangements of JPF, the pressures of delivery from donors, coupled with senior political leaders' attitudes created huge tensions and challenges to start-up and successful early delivery.

**Underpinning analysis.** While there is not a single formal analysis underpinning JPF programming work aside from the DOA, this absence does not mean it is now "floating" without basis.<sup>8</sup> Specific pieces of analysis have been commissioned (see **Figure 2**) and there is evidence of significant informal, ongoing analysis reflected in Board updates, presentations, and staff ability to respond to review questions explaining rationales underpinning programme components and decisions. Partners and expert stakeholders both reported discussions and sharing of sensitive analysis of political context evolution with JPF staff occurring on a regular basis, although the degree of systematization is not clear. For instance, JPF is not regularly meeting with some

**Figure 2: Examples of JPF Use of Commissioned Research and Analysis**

**Security Sector Working Group:** In response to a request from UPDJC political parties for technical support on security sector working group issues, JPF worked with Tagaung Institute to develop an advisory support project providing technical advice, thematic appears, and coaching and mentoring on security issues to party negotiators.

**Peace Process Monitoring by Political Parties:** Following the incarceration of Bayda institute's Director and the collapse of its research program, JPF worked with NLD's research institute staff to rebuild capacity and conduct systematic peace process monitoring and reporting, providing vital analysis and information to political parties.

**Interim Arrangements:** As Interim Arrangements emerged as a negotiation topic between parties, and signatory EAOs created an Interim Arrangements Task Force in anticipation of a joint UPDJC committee, JPF worked with a group of experienced researchers to develop a proposal "Exploring Interim Arrangements in the Myanmar Peace Process" conducting wide-ranging consultations and field research and a baseline assessment on Interim Arrangements.

<sup>8</sup> TCM noted that this was an intentional decision by the FB *not* to undertake such an analysis.

significant actors, such as government and the military, although this observation is caveated by the fact there appears little interest in engagement from their side. Both formal (public) and informal (confidential and sensitive) written analyses from research partners are also incorporated into JPF's thinking and the work of partner, Envisage, on data collection and its visual representation could be used more effectively in strategy when it is applied. There are also clear examples of how JPF analysis and its evolution is adaptively applied and transferred into programming.

**Relevance and strategy.**<sup>9</sup> JPF has a new strategy, approved in March 2018. All JPF staff and FB member respondents noted it is a considerable improvement on the past and has enabled them to better cluster grants meaningfully and reframe the M&E system. While practical programming, particularly at higher levels of peace process support, does have an intentionality and rationale behind it, the strategy currently does not articulate assumptions, theories of change, and specific approaches in each area, but instead concentrates on principles. It does not link the themes and outcomes together in a cohesive, integrated fashion. The absence of this articulation makes it harder for JPF to explain decision-making and direction to FB members and others. Thus, while the Strategy is relevant to the context FB respondents noted it still needs further refinement.

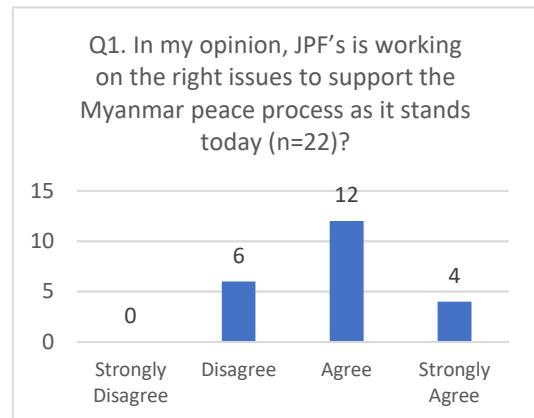
It is also not entirely clear how JPF's shifts in strategy have affected the grants portfolio. Some grantees noted they altered their log frames to better reflect new perspectives, but the new Strategy has not made a significant difference to the grants funded or new ones issued based on it, with at least one grantee expressing their puzzlement at how their proposal fits into the Strategy. This is exacerbated by the way that the JPF Program team does not appear to be clear on the current strategy or decision-making which makes it harder to engage with partners.

### *Is the intervention working on the right issues in this context at this time?*

Both international and national external respondents (i.e. not JPF or FB) at Union and field level found this hard to assess as many were not fully aware of JPF activities and partners and so were unable to express an opinion. However, those who felt able to respond *did* think it is working on the right issues. Respondents from 16 of 22 civil society organizations (CSOs) consulted during the review either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that JPF was working on the right issues given Myanmar's current peacebuilding context (see **Figure 3**).

At the Union level, CSO and research institute partners were concerned with peace process shortcomings and speculated how improvements could be introduced, or how it could be influenced positively to encourage alternative discourses without putting the process at risk of collapse without an alternative in place. An important observation from a senior national respondent closely involved with EAOs highlighted that JPF has not yet sufficiently analyzed how best to leverage the different bilateral ceasefire agreements. They argued clauses embedded in these agreements could be better supported by JPF, which could then inform other

**Figure 3: Mini-Survey Responses on the Relevance of JPF**



<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this discussion, a strategy is very simply defined as a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim that explains why and how activities are undertaken to achieve that aim.

ceasefire situations or agreements positively. Such an approach could provide an alternative avenue to pursue in the advent of continued stagnation in the main NCA and political dialogue process.

CSO respondents in Kayin, Mon and Shan thought JPF should work more at community-level and focus on issues related to civil society participation in peace process activities, federalism, drugs, and basic livelihoods.<sup>10</sup> They felt that JPF should adopt a more holistic understanding of conflict affecting basic community development so everyday citizens have the space to engage in the peace process (i.e. if you are struggling for day-to-day survival, there is little energy for understanding peace process). They also suggested there is a need to better understand local/community-level situations and perspectives e.g. the legitimacy of the KNU to represent the community.

These findings raise the question of whether JPF should invest more in public transparency in their activities, given the strong desire to understand how funds are spent (see visibility in **Effectiveness**).

Some FB respondents also suggested, given the apparent lack of progress in the peace process at Union level, greater emphasis should be given to grass-roots activities through Outcome 3 particularly given the current need to maintain space for civil society to operate. Others strongly considered it important to maintain higher-level peace process support and to resist this temptation (see also **Effectiveness**). FB members also noted they felt there had been an insufficient discussion of the relative balance across the current grants portfolio, which contrasts with JPF perceptions.

#### ***Are the stated goal and objective relevant to issues that are central to the situation of conflict?***

**JPF is firmly addressing central issues but its goals and objectives reflect the same shortcomings of the peace process itself.** According to the original DOA, JPF has “...the purpose of *supporting national efforts to negotiate and implement the Myanmar peace process* (Italics added) and to achieve a final and lasting settlement to ethnic armed conflict. This may include sustaining and expanding existing bilateral ceasefire agreements and other processes, or instruments signed by the Parties in the future with the purpose of bringing an end to ethnic armed conflict. Further, the Fund will support the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, signed on 15 October 2015 between the Government and eight Ethnic Armed Organisations and witnessed by members of the international community.”<sup>11</sup> The focus on the peace process rather than conflict is an important distinction as JPF is not attempting to address and directly transform structural causes of conflict, consideration of war economies, or other important geopolitical and institutional factors.

All national and international respondents at Union level considered current elements of the peace process inadequate to deal with Myanmar’s conflict issues. Nevertheless, they also recognized the NCA agreement (and to a lesser extent bilateral ceasefires) do reflect formal negotiations and signed commitments between key actors. In fact, they are the only concrete elements that can be built upon at this point in time. Secondly, these respondents recognized that without the NCA, the situation could be far worse.

**Scope of the Fund.** An important consideration was raised by one FB respondent who asked whether JPF is the “right-size” for its purpose. This speaks to a number of issues raised by a range of FB respondents, including: Fund focus, broader coherence, strategy, portfolio balance, effectiveness and impact, as well as touching on other questions directly such as the size of the Fund

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<sup>10</sup> They reported being informed by bilateral donors to go to JPF for this type of funding and so were disappointed.

<sup>11</sup> Taken from DOA P.10. Now 10 EAO signatories as NMSP and LDU have also signed in 2017.

and disbursement rates, and the TS/TCM duality. It also reflects the contrasting FB respondent views on future directions noted earlier and whether to emphasize Outcome 3 more in the absence of high-level peace process progress.

***To what extent has JPF been flexible and responsive to the changing political environment, as well as to diverse unpredictable events? How can JPF retain or increase its flexibility and responsiveness?***

**JPF adaptability and macro changes context.** The timeline in **Figure 4** outlines a few of the significant contextual changes and parallels them with the evolution of JPF. While not a detailed analysis, it serves to identify a few features that show a mixed record in this regard. Firstly, although JPF was able to draw on existing Paung Sie Facility/Peace Support Fund (PSF) experience and existing relationships with key partners, there were instances where this was not as effective as expected. For instance, a well-positioned external respondent and some JPF staff noted that various recommendations for grants and transfers at the beginning of the inception period did not appear to be funded quickly, there were also issues with system development (e.g. grant application forms, procedures, grant management systems, etc.). Given the choice of UNOPS who were already running two large MDFs in the country, and NIS also running the PSF, a rapid efficient hand over could have been possible, suggesting other possible inadequacies, e.g. in the approval mechanism (i.e. the operation of the FB) to get the first grants approved. The request noted earlier by State Counsellor to postpone grants until after the Panglong Conference was also a factor early on here, followed by the introduction of the Joint Coordination Body (JCB) shortly afterward, but this alone is insufficient to account for all the delays.

**Figure 4: Timeline of JPF/Peace Process Developments**

	The Peace Process		The Joint Peace Fund	
<b>2015</b>				
<b>October</b>	8 Groups Sign the NCA	EU Chair		
<b>November</b>	NLD win Landslide Victory			
<b>December</b>			Agreement for JPF is signed between UNOPS and initial members (incl. DFID and EU) Inception team established EA temporary TS director	
<b>2016</b>				
<b>June</b>		EU Chair	KF and SD join	
<b>July</b>			EM and HM join	
<b>August</b>	Circa 16 August Govt announces UPC on 31 August – and it was held from 31 August to 4 <sup>th</sup> September		TS Director David Haeri starts JPF issues its first grant to NRPC for the UPC Small grant issued to Nyein for engagement in the UPC.	
<b>October</b>			TS prepare Guidance Note to open the Call, including funding criteria for each pillar.	
<b>November</b>	Daw ASSK asks Canada, Japan, and Norway to join JPF.		2 November Call for Concept Notes Launched on JPF and UNOPS pages and Website	
<b>December</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> JCB Meeting China decides to fund JMC directly USD.5m, though' UN JMC platform set up		JPF presents grant proposals (NRPC and Nyein) to the JCB with mention of the ENAC grant JPF hold a reception to mark the launch	
<b>2017</b>				
<b>January</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> JCB Meeting	Australia Chair	UNDP presents JMC proposal to JCB and it is approved	
<b>February</b>	JCB work on grant budgets; JPF issues them.			

Inception period

	A new Wa-led alliance starts in the North	<b>In the absence of a Director, SMG runs TS March-July.</b>	
<b>March</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> and final JCB Meeting to date		David Haeri took seriously ill and medivacked to BKK. NRPC large Grant Signed
<b>April</b>	KIO, TNLA & MNDAA join FPNCC, effectively collapsing the UNFC		11 April – JPF closes the Call for Concept Notes with 129 Applications. Programme teams overwhelmed, esp. Peace Building who received the vast majority of grants, Nyein Large Grant for EAO Signatories Signed
<b>May</b>	24 May 2 <sup>nd</sup> UPC is held under the ASSK Government. 37 points agreed but differences over the right to secede, sour subsequent months.		David Haeri resigns not returning to Yangon. FB approve the return of small grant control to TS Grant procedure is streamlined FB agrees in principle to fund JMC via UNDP for one year and directly after that FB approves the Strategy.
<b>June</b>			Aware how slow and cumbersome procedures are, TS Initiate an external review of the CFC Notes and funding procedures, to assess stakeholder experience and opinion.
<b>July</b>	UNFC in doubt as KIO move to FPNCC and more closely aligned to the Wa and China		TCM Director, Jutta Bulling dies suddenly, Denis de Poerck becomes acting TCM director. ENAC Large Grant for non-sigs signed (conf.)
<b>August</b>			Nigel Roberts starts as interim TS Director
<b>September</b>			External Review of Call for Concept Notes recommends increased streamlining of procedures. Staffing and structure review initiated. FB formally approve JMC funding via UNDP for one year UK announces withdrawal 16.88m USD from funding commitments leading to a dramatic revision of the TS pipeline. Over 22m USD is removed from the pipeline.
<b>October</b>	Government-allied individuals tell JPF the JCB is being revived. But JPF learns from EAOs this was not a formal government-led initiative.		JPF inform the government that until such time as the peace process mechanism has the parties both voluntarily engaging, it will continue running projects as before.
<b>November</b>	Government/Tatmadaw allow some EAOs to hold political dialogues.		TS issue 6 small grants in response to decision for Political Dialogues. FB reject TS' 2018 budget due to 2017 underspend. FBWG (which has barely met since June) meet intensively to review budget issues. Staffing and structure review recommend reforming the internal set up of the TS. TS/TCM hold a two-day retreat to reflect on review recommendations and to team build. Chair meets JMC-U to discuss direct funding.
<b>December</b>	3 KNPP soldiers killed by the Tatmadaw leading to tensions in Kayah receding hopes of an NCA signing.		TS, having provided options, FB approve direct funding to the JMC in the next tranche of funding.
<b>2018</b>			
<b>January</b>	Tatmadaw start work on a strategic road in KNU controlled Hpa Pun area straining relations	<b>Italy Chair</b>	Paul Randolph starts as TS Director 11-13 Jan Ambassador's Retreat where FB commit to a more active advocacy role on behalf of JPF - and seek ways to engage with the northeast
<b>February</b>	NMSP & LDU sign the NCA bringing signatories to ten		JPF begins discussing a new mode of funding for the new NCA signatories possibly through Nyein grant.
<b>March</b>			FB approve new Strategy. FB approve a six-month no-cost extension of JMC grant via UNDP platform and start direct negotiation after that TS Director briefs FB on new staffing and structure of TS which follows many recommendations from the External review of November 2017

April			Chair and Vice-Chair ask to meet Commander in Chief (CiC) to convey advocacy messages. 2018 Workplan approved.
May	High-level talks b/w CiC and KNU result in Tat withdrawal from Hpa Pun and resumption of 5+5 talks that ceased in 2015. 22 May 3 <sup>rd</sup> UPC produces 14 points on "soft" issues.		Chair and deputy Chair meet the CiC. TS agreement to prepare a set of common messages for our donors, to be conveyed bilaterally.
June			FB approve Strategy Narrative
July	Government informally meet KIO to initiate dialogue.	Norway Chair	Youth Circle receives a grant for negotiation documentation project, allowing coverage of UPC3.
August	TAT/KIO meet for discussion		

Secondly, JPF internal challenges and attempts to adapt are clearly reflected in the right-hand column. While simplistic to attribute too many of the teething issues to JPF design, it did pose delays and complications. For instance, the formation of the JCB appears to have been directly influenced by the original intent of the High-Level Committee.<sup>12</sup> National and International respondents at Union level (partners, donors, external experts) noted JPF compromised its independence by providing too much detail on intended projects and implicitly, in the early stages, acknowledging the possibility for a greater degree of decision-making and approval than ideal.<sup>13</sup> While JCB has not met in approximately 14 months, respondents still have perceptions regarding its influence over JPF and there is a legacy of suspicion, disappointment, and caution toward JPF as a result.

Thirdly, broader contextual aspects severely impacted on JPF ability to function at all, e.g. the 2015 election had a huge impact on the progress in the peace process overall through aspects such as:

- The dissolution of existing peace infrastructure, e.g. the Myanmar Peace Center (MPC);
- Loss of social and political capital from the consequential broken relationships disrupted trust and communications;
- Lack of investment (human and financial) to replace deconstructed past approaches;
- Change in strategy and approach to Panglong conferences with an apparent lack of clear direction; and
- The split in cohesion and functionality of government with the military and civilian divide.

The sum of the above, in addition to the introduction of the JCB, meant a significant loss of momentum and confidence in JPF ability to support the peace process. However, despite this and the constraints imposed by the external context during this period, JPF was still able to play an important role in funding the peace process as seen in the timeline.

The loss of leadership through the serious illness of the TS Director resulting in his resignation and the untimely death of the TCM Director created a long period of interim leadership initially managed by senior JPF staff working together, until the appointment of the interim director prior to the current incumbent. During this period JPF worked hard to adjust to the changed conditions for supporting the peace process addressing the structural disjunct between this and JPF strategy and structure. It also included streamlining grant procedures, revisiting the strategy, results framework

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<sup>12</sup> This view is also confirmed from an internal analysis and note on the JCB by Nigel Roberts to the FB January 2018.

<sup>13</sup> This was a decision reportedly taken by the FB in December 2016

and reviewing the CFC and staffing structures, as well as conducting a significant retreat with the FB, all of which resulted in the creation of the foundations for its current strong position.

**Adaptability and type of grant.** The TCM interviewees conveyed an impression that grant content and activities are very flexible but some partners perceive it quite differently. As noted by TS there is a difference between perceptions from partners that are part of coalitions whose members have to ask the grant holder for permission that has resulted in delays. For IPs reporting directly to TS or TCM the responses to change requests were reported as being easier. The trend in JPF flexibility is particularly visible in relationships with key grantees (e.g. senior CSOs supporting EAOs, NPPRC, and JMC) who reported positively on their JPF relationship, being generally happy with their interactions now. Nevertheless, grantees (both national and international) also reported many small frustrations in their interactions with JPF, tending to revisit past disagreements related to the initial grant approval process. There still appear to be differing perceptions from JPF and grantees over several smaller issues and their resolution, particularly around reporting, levels of bureaucracy, types of contract and the degree to which conditions may have been imposed or not. However, some of the examples cited by grantees suggest a greater set of tools and different types of contract for different types of situation and activity are still required to increase flexibility and reduce bureaucracy (e.g. production of receipts, etc.) although it is acknowledged that this is an ongoing process as some of these issues are being addressed.<sup>14</sup>

**Adaptability within grants.** The ability of JPF to accommodate change within grants was also explored in interviews. For instance, partners needing to alter or supplement activities in the light of political change. A mixed picture emerged, with some being able to change easily and others suggesting challenges associated with the deep projectization of grants and timebound, relatively-fixed workplans.<sup>15</sup> One partner noted JPF has twice assisted them directly by funding meetings, not within their work plan. On the one hand, this illustrates an ability to respond to emerging needs and on the other a short-coming. This should be addressed by formalizing JPF's and TS's ability to undertake this type of activity as needed and secondly by introducing flexibility in grants to scale-up or alter activities. This could be done through greater provision of budget line change more than the normal 10% (but also depending on the size and nature of the grant) or the development and introduction of a "rapid-response modification process" that allows a top-up of funds for increased expenditure for new activities, or the introduction of "micro-grants" suggested by the TS.

#### *To what extent has JPF considered and responded to the unique needs of key stakeholders in Myanmar's peace process?*

**Addressing the behavior of key driving constituencies of the conflict.** Being demand-driven, the extent that JPF is able to engage with and respond to the unique needs of key stakeholders is fundamentally shaped by different stakeholder levels of political will to engage and whether their needs can, in fact, be addressed by JPF (or their perceptions of this). The ability of the intervention to address the *behavior*<sup>16</sup> of key driving, constituencies are also limited as interventions are indirect

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<sup>14</sup> The new JPF TS Director is well-placed to help in this regard given his experience with OTI and other grant-making mechanisms. It would also be worthwhile for TCM and TS to confer with other grant-making institutions that are trying to speed processes up (e.g. DAI, and rapid response mechanisms in HARP and MHF).

<sup>15</sup> While this may not be the intent, the huge investment and work expected around budgeting and activity planning create the impression of "hard" workplans.

<sup>16</sup> The focus on behavior change emerges from the MTR ToR in the questions to be considered.

and not necessarily aimed at behavior change. The question is better phrased in terms of the extent to which JPF is able to address behavior change, what types of behavior, at which level, and if the needs identified by stakeholders themselves are relevant to this aspect. For instance, JPF does not attempt to address Myanmar military behaviors in terms of its prosecuting conflict or violence. It does, however, support the JMC as a mechanism aimed at addressing the behavior of EAOs and military on the ground and to this extent it is able to attempt to exert some limited influence on it.

An example of JPF relevance to the unique needs of stakeholders is through their support to EAOs and others (e.g. political parties) at the negotiating table (through improved content, knowledge and the development of their negotiating positions). However, as this is also an indirect process, it is difficult for JPF to be accountable for direct results. Respondents requested more support in this regard from two aspects which JPF has plans to provide, being:

1. Technical assistance in negotiation skills to develop improved strategies; and
2. The development of larger, deeper negotiation teams given the increasing number of negotiation arenas and committees in action under the NCA agreement.

The needs of some stakeholders, though, are not currently being completely met through indirect mechanisms. Support to EAOs or CSOs through an organization (e.g. Nyein, CCPR, or Swe Tha Har) may dilute the possibility for effective support.<sup>17</sup> One respondent, from an intermediary organization, noted that if an EAO has direct funding from JPF (there is an inherited case from PSF) incentives for joint action with other EAOs may be reduced. Conversely, other EAOs wanted to request direct funding from JPF to meet their specific needs, noting that flexibility, the politics of resource allocation and comparative needs are not easily addressed through a single intermediary or an umbrella organization.

There is also a difference in how key stakeholders see their needs and how others do. The signatories (KNU, CNF, RCSS) say they need more resources but there are several aspects to this. Firstly, they are underspent on their existing grant. Secondly, although legitimate needs were expressed, (e.g. they would like more competent “national” researchers), some senior stakeholders suggested that they are not well-utilized. For instance, if these national researchers challenge leaders of groups they are then removed. Another aspect was reported to be the perceived need for groups to receive resources on the basis of “equality” rather than a “needs” basis.

**Adherence to its principles of inclusive, impartial, transparent, joint action, and national ownership.** Interview responses clearly showed that JPF is perceived as adhering to its principles (see **Figures 5 and 6** next page). However, given respondents have a low level of understanding, the significance of the findings below should be taken with caution. They reflect perceptions rather than accuracy. A few caveats on the terms used, include:

- *Inclusive:* This depends on how “inclusive” is interpreted (e.g. support to signatory and non-signatory groups or inclusion of voices of women, youth etc.) but at the national level, people felt JPF was inclusive contrasting with strong disagreement at the local level.
- *Impartial:* At Union level respondents broadly considered JPF to be impartial while local level respondents perceived it biased towards the government. This may be due to their thinking institutions like UPDJC and JMC are “government” when looking at funding levels. There are also different interpretations of partiality, especially when considering equity or additional

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<sup>17</sup> For instance, the grant may not be able to accommodate specific requests in areas that are important to the EAO.

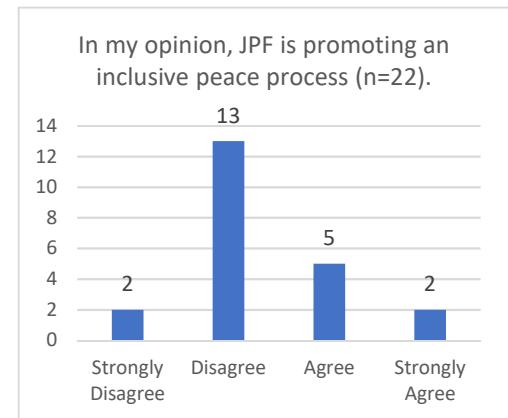
support to some stakeholders and this may be interpreted as being partial. It is important that objective rationales for such interventions are well documented justifying the actions.

- *Transparency:* Mixed responses were found at the national level while local perceptions were that JPF is not transparent.
- *Joint Action:* Limited data was collected on this, although challenges to joint action across EAOs is discussed above and people noted significant issues in the JMC. Some respondents pointed to joint action preparing thematic positions to be presented to the UPC.
- *Nationally-owned.* Union level stakeholders as well as local level stakeholder reported feeling JPF supports nationally-led processes. Although local level actors said they would prefer internationals take a greater role being considered to be “more neutral” compared to national actors. Internal to JPF, concerns were raised by staff on the lack of national voice in strategy formulation and decision-making on funding, particularly since the restructuring. There is a perception that senior expatriate staff meets and make decisions which are then relayed to national staff with little participation compared to past practices.<sup>18</sup>

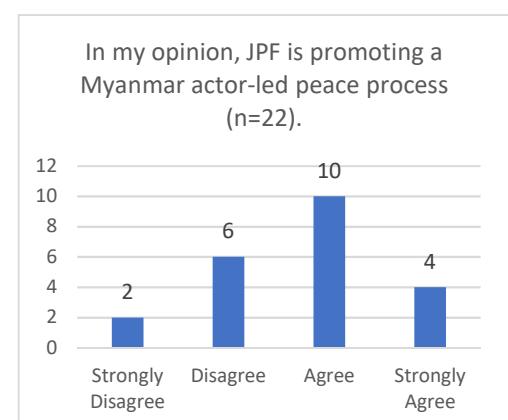
**National Voice in JPF Strategy.** Respondents in research institutes reported feeling siloed and isolated wanting to know more about JPF and what others are researching in order to exchange ideas and share analysis. This is a clear opportunity for JPF to forward plans to convene regular meetings, encourage the development of a broader intellectual community and forum around the peace process starting with partners, and potentially expanding participation.

**Relations and coherence with key leaders, notably national and State/Regional authorities (executive and legislative).** Both FB and JPF staff are conscious of the lack of strong relations with government and the military—key stakeholders to the peace process. JPF is working on this and reports a positive trend in their relationship with the NPPC. At present, there is a potential disjunct created if embassies manufacture opportunities to meet (e.g. with the Commander-in-Chief of the military) but the purpose past an initial briefing is not yet clear and what may come out of these meetings.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 5: Perceptions on JPF Supporting an Inclusive Peace Process**



**Figure 6: Perceptions of JPF Supporting Nationally-Led Peace Process**



<sup>18</sup> One staff member suggested that they feel they are now only ‘packing staff’ on the assembly line, told which grants to “package.”

<sup>19</sup> Some embassies have good relationships with the military and have a long-term perspective (for instance the Japanese explained they have good access and relationships with the military – also noting their staff also speak fluent Myanmar).

## Effectiveness

*To what extent is JPF successfully progressing towards its expected outcomes, indicators and current targets as stated in its results framework?*

**Observations on general progress.** A combination of factors, some avoidable and some beyond JPF control have meant JPF did not move forward as significantly as stakeholders would have liked in its first year and a half. This was in part also due to the State Counsellor's request not to make any grants until the first UPC conference had taken place.<sup>20</sup> While there are still significant challenges moving forward, JPF programming has now issued 45 grants and is far better placed to be even more effective in its support to the peace process.

A full picture of JPF's progress towards its stated outcomes is not available given the current lack of M&E data capturing outcome level results. However, output level results suggest caveated results in some areas; e.g. the importance of JPF support to capacity building, provision of office space, analysis, and policy papers. Respondents reported progress and types of positive change not being captured by M&E. While discussed fully in the efficiency section, it is important to note that there has also been significant progress in JPF functionality over the past year, primarily due to political will from staff, but FB and staff changes have also contributed to JPF being more effective in its work.<sup>21</sup>

**Hindrances to Progress - Legacies of JPF History.** Despite the intent to set up a "best practice" structure to support the Myanmar peace process, a few factors were identified to have prevented this realization. These include:

- Siloed management systems preventing program cohesion or addressing the context holistically;
- The poor management of the Call for Concept Notes (CFCN), exacerbated by FB pressures and the absence of a strong strategy informing it,<sup>22</sup> and
- Governance mechanisms are not fit for purpose in a context where original aspirations had not materialized due to political contextual changes.

As a result, JPF has experienced the following consequences:

(a) *Reputation:* JPF's public profile is mixed across CSO respondents, although it did take time to reach out to unsuccessful applicants.<sup>23</sup> Perceptions are partly driven by whether respondents

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<sup>20</sup> This reportedly occurred in a face-to-face meeting with JPF donor ambassadors and the TS Director.

<sup>21</sup> For instance, one telling comment was the observation by a respondent that JPF senior staff are 'now allowed to talk and address the board directly', which previously was not the case.

<sup>22</sup> The DOA provided the main basis for decision-making and the CFCN guidance notes but it is normal practice when undertaking such a call to have a much clearer and narrower scope aligned with a clear programme strategy. Usually, it is undertaken in a phased fashion (e.g. two or three calls) to ensure a more manageable workload and learn from and rectify any mistakes inadvertently made rather than one broad call that covers all of your programme pillars. This ensures greater clarity of expectations for those who wish to pursue the opportunity. In this case, it was noted that efforts to reduce the scope were reportedly resisted by some FB members. Also, to note that JPF followed LIFT's practice, to explore the sector (interest, ideas, resources) in the absence of a strategy.

<sup>23</sup> Sadly, the reported positive appreciation (L. Barry, Sept 2017) for JPF efforts to engage has dissipated now and respondents mostly remember the less positive aspects of the process.

received funding or not. JPF was widely reported as being inefficient with a long, bureaucratic funding process and management of grants (confirmed by L. Barry's CFCN review in 2017). The CFCN raised huge expectations across the sector, often fueled by other bilateral donors.

(b) *Opportunity Costs:* The most significant CFCN consequence has been the opportunity cost and loss of potential work being undertaken. Funding has been diverted from other sources to cover shortfalls or bridge gaps resulting from long processing times. For those not funded, it also tied up huge amounts of time, energy and resources, particularly if they thought they were going to receive funding.<sup>24</sup> For instance, one organization estimated their JPF process cost approximately US\$30,000 over 14 months with other secondary reputational damage as well as energy and resources mobilizing their board and raising cost-share funding was also expended. While this is an extreme example it was by no means the only such experience related, and the same impact has also been significant in the less visible realm of national organizations with fewer resources to hand and quieter voices.

While it could be argued this is an inevitable cost of "doing business" and part of the lottery of funding applications, two factors differentiate it; firstly, the lack of a substantive JPF strategy in place,<sup>25</sup> in conjunction with the inadvisably broad nature of the call.<sup>26</sup> Secondly the withdrawal of a large amount of donor funding from JPF in the middle of this process (one senior respondent considered this bordering on irresponsible behavior), when verbal commitments to applicants had been made or implied. In some cases, shortfalls before funding commenced were covered by bilateral sources, minimizing potential damage. However, a typically illustrative example was relayed by a senior national respondent that did *not* have access to other funding, who noted that the long processing time and delays (over a year) prevented their being able to influence or be involved in two UPCs.

(c) *Positive unanticipated consequences* have been that expectations of JPF are now low, allowing it to operate under the radar. It also allowed JPF to scope out the civil society sector nationally.

### ***Is JPF on track for achieving its future targets? If not, what changes should be made?***

**Short-Term, Long-Term Perspectives for Peace and JPF.** Respondents are strongly aware the peace process is a long-term endeavor, likely to take more than ten years to achieve. Despite this recognition, there is still a gap in FB understanding of what this means for the type of activity, as well as the time-scale required for significant change. This is exacerbated by a tendency for stakeholders to equate and conflate JPF results into peace process results. JPF success is subconsciously tied to peace process success: no progress in the peace process equals no progress for JPF.

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<sup>24</sup> This was because potential grantees were given a green light and given this understanding by JPF staff.

<sup>25</sup> Aside from the DOA the first JPF strategy was outlined in May 2017.

<sup>26</sup> The 'rights and wrongs' of how this came about during this period are inevitably murky and multi-faceted, depending on who is relating the story. However, from an external perspective it is clear that *all* JPF stakeholders bear a degree of responsibility; the combination of (i) apparent donor pressure to start funding and get money 'out of the door', (b) to keep the call broad to signal that 'we are open for business', (c) the failures of firm united strategic leadership from within the TS and TCM, (d) the siloed nature of the programming structure (e) the apparently insufficiently firm strategy and many other human and technical factors brought this about. However, on the other hand, there was sufficient depth of experience across the stakeholders that should have been able to manage this better and meet compromised expectations from all parties without initiating such a damaging event.

**Peace Process Activities and Expectations of Change.** Some FB members reflecting on their JPF membership expressed frustration at the lack of evidence of apparent progress and the potential of having funded "a whole load of workshops and meetings" over the next few years with nothing to show for it. Unfortunately, these activities are exactly what is required for successful support to a peace process. These are the fundamental building blocks of peace negotiations and FB expectations need to be aligned with this reality. A more reasonable set of frustrations to articulate is how to ensure these activities do not become an incentive for maintaining the status quo or supporting meetings "to decide on the next meeting." As one respondent noted, there is a danger that "warlords become workshop-lords." This is where JPF needs to articulate more clearly the parameters of what is achievable in its timeframe, as well as capture change to ensure FB members expectations are realistic. It also speaks to JPF role. As one senior FB member correctly pointed out; "Even maintaining the current situation (i.e. preventing peace process collapse ) in the next few years is a huge achievement." This resonates with senior EAO perspectives that whatever happens, they *have* advanced significantly when viewed from the bigger picture; "We are all talking in public and airing issues at UPCs with the Tatmadaw, the Government. While seeing tangible results may not be ideal, this was not possible just a few years ago."

Respondents are also concerned at the lack of JMC functionality and success, considered critical despite continuing ceasefire violations and issues experienced at the local level. This apparent failure has become a symbol of the stagnation of the peace process for some and also illustrates both the conflation and lack of understanding of how long change takes. A respondent close to the JMC noted that, while there have been technical issues involved in sequencing JMC work contributing to slowness, it is important to highlight the deeply sensitive and political aspects of the JMC as it touches on the most contentious fundamentals of conflicts such as demarcation. Solutions are extremely difficult to find and take a long time. Secondly, they noted JMC experience in similar, but less complex environments where they took five to seven years to become functional. When considered in this light, the Myanmar JMC is not failing to the extent it seems from a non-expert perspective. This highlights the disjunct between expectations and realities of peace processes.

#### ***How effectively has JPF positioned itself to provide on-demand direct technical advice to peace stakeholders in Myanmar?***

**Mixed But Growing Success.** Provision of TA reflects levels of trust and JPF relationship with peace stakeholders, as well as the extent to which it has been able to position itself. It also reflects stakeholder institutional cultures and behaviors and their level of will to engage. For instance, provision of TA to EAOs has been more successful than with other stakeholders because EAOs openly acknowledge their technical limitations (also reflecting part of their narrative of marginalization and exclusion). Secondly, EAOs have a comparatively long history of exposure to external ideas and people compared with the Myanmar military and Government. This is due to their border experience, refugees and diaspora. Thirdly, they have long-term trusted advisers working with them, whom JPF has been able to pick up to continue their support.

On the other hand, and given JPF is demand-driven, the GOM has not been so open, possibly due to concerns of external influence.<sup>27</sup> Recently the GOM requested a technical expert on political dialogue to assist in the review and framing of potential changes to the political dialogue processes.

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<sup>27</sup> One can speculate that they also feel that they have sufficient in-house expertise, whether they do or not.

The TS was able to respond on short notice, a significant achievement in its own right. The request is a positive change worth noting, but difficult to judge its significance in how GOM views JPF. It may only reflect increasing pressure to demonstrate change coming up to elections, or that they have no resources to hand. At a minimum though, JPF has demonstrated responsiveness and assuming it has been a positive experience it may open doors to a more constructive relationship providing later opportunities. A less positive experience is within the JMC; an area where JPF would like greater influence. The JMC Secretariat felt JPF was trying to impose an advisor on them. They were clear they do not want someone based in the office, although they are ok with an arrangement like UNDP in an office nearby or like the AVIs who come 3-4 times a week.<sup>28</sup>

The Tatmadaw is naturally very closed and has its own internal resources to draw on. Nevertheless, whether they need additional support or not, JPF is not yet sufficiently close to knowing their situation and or ways to better understand and engage constructively with them, although in the context of the UN FFM report this may be even harder now.

**Risks Associated with the Provision of Technical Advice.** There are various risks associated with the provision of external technical advice emerging from the experience to date.

- *Trust, Confidentiality, and Quality.* The political context is such that, respondents close to EAOs noted huge issues of caution, trust, and suspicion associated with allowing outsiders access to information, discussions, and sensitive deliberations with security, military, intelligence, and negotiation implications. These characteristics are shaped by the long ongoing experience of conflict and betrayal.
- *Inappropriate Normative Frameworks.* An important concern was raised by an external advisor close to all stakeholders across conflict divides. They observed a real danger of inadvertently imposing Western or external normative frameworks onto Myanmar that may not be appropriate and may create future issues. This is particularly for security sector reform (SSR); disarmament, demobilization (DDR); and federalism. The natural inclination is to leap to potential solutions and personal experiences as models (e.g. Sri Lanka, Nepal etc.) to be applied rather than using these experiences to stimulate original solutions to Myanmar's challenges.
- *Insufficient Coordination Between Technical Advisors.* The JMC example and other respondent observations pointed to a need for better coordination between advisors to maximize progress. This is sensitive due to trust and confidentiality issues and needs to be approached carefully and incrementally where it is appropriate.
- *Diaspora Technical Advisors.* EAOs recognize that educated ethnic diaspora TA is an important resource and are requesting JPF support to mobilize them. A number are already playing vital roles by leading CSOs or providing TA to EAOs and CSOs and there are undoubtedly others who could be useful if enticed to return and work for their communities.
- *Shifting Strategy in the provision of Technical Advice.* Two international respondents noted (in different ways) a shift in JPF plans to provide TA, moving to in-house support in key themes e.g. Land and Natural Resources and the security sector. Their view is this may jeopardize the independence of advice as the TA also reports to JPF. JPF's perspective was that it is not only

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<sup>28</sup> One AVI has very senior military experience and is helping develop JMC SOPs (although interestingly this was criticized by other TAs as reading like a military manual rather than one geared for all parties. This critic noted that how to actually go and monitor ceasefire violations should have been the starting point but the JMC is only getting to this now.)

available to all stakeholders, if requested, but there is an important role ensuring JPF inputs or research are informed by global best practice. JPF also noted that it is mindful of concerns and that the approach does not negate the possibility for the provision of completely independent TA to a client if that is warranted.

#### ***How effectively is JPF communicating its objectives and achievements to stakeholders? Are JPF's overall visibility and the visibility of its individual donors appropriate?***

**Communicating JPF Objectives.** The knowledge and understanding of JPF objectives vary in the donor community. The overarching aim in support of the peace process is clear with some FB members articulating this knowledgeably in terms of diffusion of higher liberal, Western values in the global arena. However, at a more practical, strategic level, there is less clarity, and many said they do not fully understand what JPF is doing nor why. Some noted JPF "have deliberated deeply on individual projects" but do not understand the whole picture. They reflected on the absence of substantive strategic discussions on portfolio balance, geographic spread, linkages between projects and the specifics of strategy, approach, and ways of working and how this is reflected in grants which are not clear to them. FB Members also mentioned on numerous occasions the limitations of the current strategy document, while acknowledging it is a significant step forward compared to the last one. A sense of weariness from them pervaded discussions at the thought of replicating the same experiences that may be needed to address inadequacies.

Donors not directly involved (three were consulted) appear to have even less understanding of JPF activities and objectives with not all visiting the website, depending on their level of interest.

Government and EAO stakeholders consulted also did not know much about the objectives and details of JPF but had different expectations, aligning in their preference to know about and approve *all* projects, with the JCB leading the process. The EAOs also wanted more information, more consultations, and briefings. At the grassroots level, there is little familiarity with JPF, whom they fund, and what they have achieved.

According to JPF staff, visibility is intentionally low, despite varying pressures from FB members to be more visible around activities they are funding.

While some CSO or Research Institute respondents wanted greater JPF visibility this desire appeared to come from three main sources: (1) The need to balance the perceived imbalance and geopolitics of the peace process. Some respondents noted the heavy presence of the Chinese at the UPC and felt it important that the broader international community had a higher profile; (2) They considered a greater participation and involvement in peace process activities by external stakeholders, better. These respondents felt this creates pressure on key protagonists to behave better with onlookers ('keep people honest'); and (3) Grass-roots respondents wanted to understand what JPF is funding and why in the interests of transparency and to improve clarity on how they can apply for funding.

**Communication of Achievements.** The MTR did not collect sufficient data to be able to judge this. Aside from internal accountability to donors and future funding interests in conveying successes, it is not entirely clear why JPF needs to communicate its achievements to anybody, especially given the intent to support a nationally-led process and in conjunction with the inherent difficulties attributing success to JPF interventions (as opposed to contribution). It implies a slight contradiction in concepts (nationally-led versus JPF achievements and attribution). Getting the balance right is difficult and the recent UPC report by JPF communications department may be helpful for donors.

While positive achievements are important, it would be far more interesting if JPF and the FB were braver and invested in a more mature, holistic, and accurate picture of the important work that they are undertaking rather than simply emphasizing appealing stories with nice pictures. For instance, documentation of interesting failures, partial successes, lessons learned and how the perception of these aspects evolves and changes as time goes on would be interesting.<sup>29</sup>

More significantly there are sound conflict sensitivity reasons and political sensitivities for not broadcasting JPF contributions to a broad audience. Communications protocols (e.g. media and visibility guidelines for IPs, communications and social media guidelines for JPF staff and JPF story writing protocol and guidance) do mention conflict sensitivity but practical examples of issues and would be helpful. There is an impressive range of JPF documents guiding content and a draft communications strategy as well as a stakeholder outreach strategy referenced within it.

#### *Are national organizations sufficiently targeted as funds recipients and sustained in taking ownership of the peace process?*

JPF is performing well in this regard. According to the strategy narrative and JPF presentation to the CSSF, 90% of the projects are run by Myanmar organizations (pg. 1. and slide 5.) which includes the government. Grant length varies though depending on the type of activity, so it is difficult to make a judgment about the extent to which these organizations are sustained.

**The Peace Funding “Ecosystem.”** Respondents noted that JPF has consolidated and pooled available donor funding, limiting funding options for local organizations who would have applied to multiple bilateral funds before its creation. Their view is it has reduced the range of possible peacebuilding activities due to potentially narrower funding criteria.<sup>30</sup> This is in contrast to the dominant donor narrative in the literature, that MDFs increase the effectiveness of support to the sector (there is insufficient evidence to judge whether this is the case here).

Community-level civil society respondents observed that, aside from not knowing the types of activity funded, JPF policies, procedures, and requirements were very complex and acted as a barrier that has prevented some organizations from applying—even though JPF website and Facebook sites are available in Myanmar language and applications in Myanmar language are accepted by JPF. There were also perceptions from nationals that the majority of research funded by JPF is being undertaken by internationals rather than nationals, begging the question of the extent to which capacity is being intentionally and actively developed through the fund. It should be noted in this regard that the largest two grants around analysis and research (Covenant and Envisage) both reported approaches that emphasize national capacity building and ownership within their institutions. In addition, the small grants window has been used to support local research organizations and local researcher such as ISP, Tagaung, EMRef, etc.

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<sup>29</sup> For instance, if you ask people about the success of a peace conference, perceptions of success vary according to time. Immediately afterward people are buoyed by its success. A few months later they may be more disillusioned as agreements fail to be adhered to. This may later change again depending on conditions and relative progress.

<sup>30</sup> TS noted the close positive coordination with PSF in 2017 and 2018 in funding activities at the sub-national level, although it is not clear how this coordination influences the range of possible activities that may be funded which is the concern of the respondents.

## Efficiency

### *Are the governance structure and arrangements effective and efficient?*

The original structures outlined in the DOA reflect a more optimistic period of the peace process. The intention in having a High-Level Committee and an Advisory Board with eminent persons and representatives from civil society, academia, and private sector (DOA, p.31) have not materialized as envisaged and this has had implications for the current role of the FB.

**The High-Level Committee and Executive Working Committee.** Intended to encourage joint action, accountability, and key stakeholder involvement (government, EAOs and donors), it has never been formed (and is not yet appropriate), though there are echoes in the JCB; a bilateral structure involving government and EAOs without donor presence. Both government and EAO respondents raised the JCB and wanted JPF to use it. On the other hand, when challenged, EAO signatories adjusted their position noting it had been overly controlled by the government. But they did want to be more like partners, know more about JPF activities and have a greater degree of consultation.

**The National Society Advisory Panel.** The original design recognized civil society, academia, and the private sector should have the opportunity for input and representation into JPF in some form. This was formulated through this panel with eight eminent persons. This body has also never been formed but the intent to ensure greater national input into JPF strategy should still be met.

**State Level Working Committees.** There is also provision for state-level working committees, but the peace process has not yet progressed sufficiently to warrant their formation. If interim arrangements evolve or are tested, it may be worth considering their formation in some areas (e.g. if the upcoming Covenant research suggests practical initiatives), but this would require a commitment to significant funding and activities.

**The Fund Board and The Fund Board Working Group.** Made up of representatives from the 11 JPF donors contributing the minimum US\$ 1 million per year to qualify, though donors may contribute lesser amounts without obtaining a seat on the board. The FB is *de facto* the highest level of governance with an original intent, according to respondents involved in the design and the early stages, to be a technical body considering and approving projects. It was not anticipated JPF would attract so many members, nor those representatives would be high-level heads of mission or ambassadors. At this stage of JPF evolution, members of the FB interviewed, unanimously considered it is not operating effectively or efficiently enough (although there were differing perspectives on why this is so). Issues of FB functionality that emerged from the interviews are outlined in **Figure 7**.

**Figure 7: Constraints to Fund Board Effectiveness and Efficiency**

FB Raised	Additional TCM/TS perspectives	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic level issues affecting JPF performance are not discussed</li> <li>Meetings are too detail-oriented, and FB too deeply involved in project management minutiae</li> <li>FB meetings are too frequent</li> <li>Insufficient time or opportunity for FB engagement in sensitive projects in the process before decision-making expected.</li> <li>Information on high-risk, political or sensitive projects is insufficient until proposals are highly developed.</li> <li>While currently being addressed, TS/TCM are insufficiently prepared before meetings, e.g. sometimes last-minute receipt of agendas and documents and so insufficient time to absorb them.</li> <li>The quality of documents and responses to questions on risk management and other aspects, provided to FB is mixed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreed FB procedures are not always adhered to</li> <li>Little consistency in FB expectations around levels of detail required for projects and so getting the balance of information required is very difficult. Whichever way you go is inadequate with some members requiring a lot of information and detail and others suggesting it is too much.</li> <li>Preparation for FB meetings to meet expectations is time-consuming and burdensome</li> <li>The FB is discussing issues that should have been dealt with by the Working Group before they get to the FB and then the same issues are discussed again</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delayed approvals with potentially negative consequences</li> <li>Disturbed relationships with partners and grantees</li> <li>Frustration on all sides affecting internal dynamics between FB, TCM, and TS</li> <li>Proliferation of work for all stakeholders that prevents other potentially more important work from being undertaken</li> <li>Lack of mutual confidence between FB, TS, and TCM</li> <li>Resolution of technical differences becomes a battleground that ‘flows over’ into other aspects of the relationships</li> <li>Lack of oversight and guidance on higher level strategic areas affecting JPF</li> </ul>

*Are FB members sufficiently informed about JPF's current portfolio of projects and implementing partners within each thematic programme and able to judge if they are appropriate for achieving JPF's stated purpose and expected outcomes?*

**FB members do not feel sufficiently informed on key issues.** FB members reported feeling too caught up in project detail and that they have not had the right information to judge the efficacy of the portfolio. This also resonates with issues raised on the strategy which does not appear to reflect change or how it is achieved, rather than describing principles and areas being funded. In this respect, FB members are conflicted as they want to improve it but are loath to revisit it again given time and effort already expended.

There is already significant thinking and investment from TS in strategic thinking in each area (although it varies across them) and many aspects of the strategy are there implicitly with thinking, diagrams, and presentations already in existence. However, these parts require developing, clarification, being brought together and presented so stakeholders have a better common understanding of JPF work and how it is approached. A critical dimension of this is to develop clearer guidance that links JPF strategy and project selection and support. While this is already in place as approvals require a justification of selection and fit with the strategy, strengthening the visualization of this linkage for all stakeholders (JPF and the FB) would assist construction of useful discussion away from the legitimacy of projects and increase confidence between FB and JPF.

**National Voice in Governance and Strategy.** The opportunities for formal, national voice in JPF governance and strategy are limited at the moment if the fund is to retain its independence and maximize its flexibility and responsiveness. However, there is an opportunity to increase informal inputs into JPF practical strategies through the convening and use of informal sectoral forums and exploration of a broader advisory forum.

**FB Working Group.** This shift also leads into the equally important discussion on a more constructive division of labor between the FB and the working group. It is important that with the raising of the FB to higher level functions, that participants chosen to be members of the Working Group are willing to be active, political and participate with an appreciative attitude to foster increasing confidence between donors and JPF. As one FB member noted, the key is flexibility. An example of this being the new innovation harnessing FB working group expertise and interest in areas of strategic importance such as engagement with EAOs. This is an opportune move that should ensure greater effectiveness and efficiency in activity approvals from increased agreement and understanding of strategy. A similar approach could be adopted considering sensitive strategic aspects such as how JPF might support the infusion of Rakhine considerations into the national peace process. The further introduction of appropriate new working structures linking the FB and JPF management bodies will also allow JPF to be a more relevant meeting place for donors – the place to go to be informed about the peace process.

**FB Working Group Meetings.** Should be at monthly intervals, or when called on by JPF to clarify or inform them on issues of relevance, pipeline, budgets, or events. The meetings are opportunities to clarify any confusion/questions regarding JPF support so that the working group can convey assurance to their respective FB representatives. They could be made up of two parts; firstly, the successful and appreciated monthly updates on the peace process. This is considered very useful by many FB members, so could be separated out and conducted at JPF either linked or independent to the WG meeting so FB members can participate. Secondly, explore and resolve any important (i.e. strategic) issues surrounding grants in progress to remove the need for FB discussions. By the time a project gets to the board, it should only require rubber-stamping and not discussion. However, it is recognized not all projects are the same and the process should accommodate the following types to avoid a default minimum 2-3-month approval process. So the TS needs to identify and notify the board of upcoming:

- Politically sensitive projects that may require a different level of FB engagement
- Timebound projects that require a quick turnaround for their political relevance
- Cost extensions – that should require no additional approval unless significantly changed
- Extension or evolutions of projects involving ongoing trusted partners
- Updates on the Peace process and specific areas of analysis

For politically sensitive projects it is clear a more holistic view of the grant-making process is required to avoid past problems whereby partners and staff invest in a process that then results in a later rejection or delays. This type of outcome is not appropriate given the importance of relationships needed for peace work, the political nature of the work and to ensure projects are at an appropriate quality. These characteristics are important and different to 'normal' development type grants.

**Figure 8: Experience with Sensitive Grant X Approval**

<b>Sensitive Grant X Experience</b>
<p>Grant X presents an interesting case to reflect on FB functionality, and the extent to which SOPs, Roles, and procedures are currently 'fit for purpose'. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, this sensitive proposal was brought to the FB for approval. Its sensitivity revolves around funding an institution that is involved with a non-signatory EAO, the mechanism and potential dynamics with other EAOs. The FB was in unanimous agreement in principle that it should go forward. However, the devil is in the detail and final approval was not agreed at this meeting.</p> <p>The proceedings highlighted the following FB issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is a range of appetite across FB members to be involved in and grapple with project details – technical, political risk and conflict sensitivity dimensions.</li><li>• Levels of understanding and tolerance for risks: JPF intention is to 'share risk' and enable riskier projects to be undertaken rather than through bilateral channels. One interpretation of this experience suggests, that rather than increasing levels of tolerance it might be the lowest common denominator, or lowest tolerance for risk, that determines actions.</li><li>• Differing expectations concerning the role of the FB</li><li>• A lack of sufficient differentiation between FB and FB working group roles.</li><li>• Differing levels of satisfaction with current procedures to develop and approve projects. As a result, adherence to procedure versus flexibility became a prominent dispute.</li><li>• Confidence in the TS capacity, levels of scrutiny of the project, risk and conflict sensitivity.</li></ul>

***Is the current management set-up (TCM and TS) effective and efficient for reaching JPF's objectives?***

**The TCM and TS.** The original rationale for the dual mechanism incorporating NIS and UNOPS was sensible given the mandates and experience of the two organizations and complexity of the context. UNOPS strengths lie in their ability to manage large grants and funds and in Myanmar, their experience and success with 3MDG and LIFT attest to this. However, peace process support is very different compared to development sectors such as livelihoods and health due to its highly politicized and technical nature. Similarly, NIS had already demonstrated their technical ability to run the peace programs PSF and MPSI in Myanmar. Given the risks associated with a full tender for such sensitive work in Myanmar, it was decided an appropriate balance would be to combine their two sets of skills for JPF. This was an unusual procurement option for EU and UK, and it was understood there would be an option to tender or go to market at the mid-term point.<sup>31</sup>

***What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current set-up in terms of providing the growing number of implementing partners with the necessary support and ensuring coordination with other actors?***

**External Coordination.** There is direct coordination between PSF and JPF through monthly meetings (and indirect secondary coordination through FB members DFID and DFAT according to SIDA) although the extent to which this is only ensuring no duplication rather than strategic synergies is unclear. At the donor level, the coordination picture is mixed; PSG members reported that active

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<sup>31</sup> This was explained by a key respondent in an interview, but the team cannot find official documentation to that effect.

coordination is at an early stage with JPF so far with some information sharing but JPF has not yet been presenting much even though attending meetings. There is a degree of potential complementarity that has yet to be explored, with “the Lek 5” (consisting of Norway, the Dutch, the New Zealanders, Swiss, and South Africa), who see themselves as like-minded donors looking for opportunities to support small-scale interventions to catalyze or stimulate change. This could be an opportunity for more intentional collaboration whereby identified successful interventions could be taken up by JPF and developed or scaled up. A further UNOPS initiative has the TS director sitting on the 3MDG board (as a non-voting member) and expected to join the LIFT board later. It is too early at this stage to see any significant value-added but given 3MDG has a new mandate to focus work in conflict-affected areas, there may be opportunities for cross-fertilization.

**Internal Coordination - Grantees/Partners.** At this stage, there has been little space and time for JPF to bring partners or certain types of grantee together for coordination, development of collaboration or synergies, or cross-grant learning yet. Partners, in particular, CSOs and the research institutes, reported feeling isolated and wanting to share experiences and opportunities for learning. One suggestion from a key partner to JPF was to adopt the “Swissaid” approach whereby partners themselves are empowered to decide how, when, and where to undertake such meetings.

**Internal Coordination - Bilateral Programs.** A further dimension is in the sphere of bilateral programs. Several FB members also have bilateral peace programs in addition to JPF (e.g. Swiss, USA, and Norwegians as well as the EU). The coordination here is also mixed. One donor felt JPF had insufficiently reached out to learn from and understand potential complementarities from their bilateral program, although this goes two ways and there have been missed opportunities on all sides and a reluctance for JPF donors to share their bilateral programmes. A positive example was given by a JPF staff noting the involvement of two bilateral donors agreeing to provide bridge funding for a partner while grant-making processes were underway. On the other hand, more than one external observer (internationals) noted there is a degree of unhelpful competition between bilateral programs, personnel, and JPF. At its worst this was exemplified in a JPF project reportedly voted against by a donor and then immediately picked up by them in their bilateral program. While it is unlikely there will ever be 100% transparency around sharing bilateral programs nevertheless there is an opportunity here, in a similar but more intentional way, for JPF and donors to extend reach and potential impact through complementarity, seeding, or sharing opportunities with each other, agreeing on funding from JPF or bilateral sources where it makes most sense. This would require a greater disaggregation and a common understanding of what should be “in or out” of JPF versus bilateral programs. There is also an opportunity, given the impending closure of USAID “Office of Transition Initiatives” (OTI) program, Kann Let, managed by DAI for JPF to initiate a lessons-learned exercise that could include aspects such as experiences and mechanisms around rapid grant-making, as well as ensuring relevant projects and initiatives are picked up by JPF (or other bilateral funds).

### ***How well are resources (human, financial, organizational) used to achieve results?***

**Fund Management Costs.** To assess this aspect fairly requires looking at the purpose of the Fund, the type of program, and the context in which it is operating (e.g. Afghanistan or Iraq are clearly very costly contexts to work in currently). If its purpose is to be a 3MDG/LIFT type MDF with an emphasis on disbursing grants then it is easier to imagine a small staff overseeing large, long-term grants with manageable levels of compliance. One senior respondent suggested JPF is expensive

compared to other MDFs, especially in Myanmar, but this also depends on how you calculate costings. While a rapid scan of the literature does not reveal a ratio that is considered best practice a broad ‘rule of thumb’ for programming in this type of situation<sup>32</sup> is a 30% management - 70% activities ratio<sup>33</sup> with a caveat that peace process support is generally more expensive as there are few activities (e.g. no construction or large activity related expenses such as agricultural inputs, education, etc.) and so most costs are associated with people, travel, meetings, and interactions. In peace process costings, the ratio may creep to 60%-40% for this reason and in difficult contexts has been as high as 50%-50% due to poor infrastructure, costs of travel (need for chartered flights etc.). JPF total management cost percentage is under 30% which is appropriate given the programme and context. A recent TS memorandum/paper analyzing, and forecasting management costs estimates the total cost of fund management over the course of the whole JPF lifetime (aggregating TS and TCM costs) at ca. 22% (depending on slightly differing projections of spend). However, if ‘value-added’ activities (i.e. cost of TA services to stakeholders, capacity building support and peace process advisory support) are removed from the calculation this reduces it to 18%.<sup>34</sup>

**Grant Management.** Given respondent feedback on the time JPF takes for grant processing, the MTR team requested the TS for data on processing times. There are some constraints with the data collected (not surprising given the time pressures TS was under to provide the information), in particular there are gaps associated with declined projects for both large (in 2016 and 2018) and small projects (2016) as well as an absence of data on pipeline grants under consideration in 2018. The results are collated in Table 3 and initial analysis suggests that, as expected, processing times have reduced for small grants to 1.4 months from submission to signing, although this is skewed in 2017 by the rapid approval of National Dialogue grants in December (average 3 weeks – which demonstrates JPF (both TS and TCM) can issue grants very quickly when needed). For large grants, it has also reduced to 3.7 months.

There are complexities, however that deserves greater scrutiny, and other figures provided reveal alternative angles to consider, for example, some approval times for both small and large grants are longer when comparing 2017 to 2018. The TS speculated this may, ironically, be due to pressure induced by the CFCN which may have forced quicker action and possibly, less lengthy deliberation. They also speculated that shorter time frames for Large compared to Small Declines may indicate greater efficiency, or focus by TS and TCM on priority large grants. While **Figure 9** provides tentative information for discussion purposes it is important not to read too much into the figures as often unique issues will affect each process. For instance, one important grantee noted that their own grant was so slow in being approved partly due to their own slowness as they were affected by internal issues and so took weeks to respond to questions. However, it does strongly suggest that it would be worthwhile for TCM and TS to invest some time in analyzing the issues at stake in each part of the grant-making process to assess blockages and how they can better manage them to increase efficiency. This would be a useful joint exercise between TCM and TS that may emerge from different institutional factors as well.

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<sup>32</sup> A scan of the academic and grey literature does not reveal any research or documentation generating such figures, but this is drawn from the 25 years plus peace programming experience of the MTR TL. The TS Director noted that in his experience ratios have been as high as 60% management to 40% programming.

<sup>33</sup> In the opinion and experience of the MTR TL this should indeed be classed a programme rather than a standard MDF fund.

<sup>34</sup> See Memorandum to the FB and FB working group dated the 18 August – page 2.

Figure 9: Overall Processing Times for Grants

By year of submission	Small	Small Approves	Small Declines	Large	Large Approves	Large Declines
2016	10.2	10.2		7.8	7.8	
2017	4.4	5.6	3.6	4.4	8.8	2.8
2018	2.6	1.4	5.0	3.7	3.7	

**Staffing Levels.** Considering costs and staffing it is important to recognise peace work is necessarily more “hands-on” requiring more direct staff engagement with the context, close contact with partners and stakeholders monitoring the political and conflict environment as well as constantly considering evolution and adaptation, and scrutinizing conflict sensitivity to ensure harm is not done inadvertently (e.g. increasing tensions between EAOs). Given this, the organogram does not appear over-full, with some positions not yet recruited (e.g. Program Team Coordinator, members of the M&E team, and an SSR advisor). There is also evidence of nationalization with national staff hired for an intended international position in the strategy team. The Program team is looking to increase staff and eventually have the senior programme advisor as a national.<sup>35</sup>

Interviewees pointed out that given expectations around a nationally-led process and Myanmar organizations receiving the bulk of the grants, potentially more staff are needed than other funds. Considering the reality where the majority of partners have low-levels of capacity, the type of activities undertaken, the useful small grant capacity (but human resource heavy), the TA approach, staffing levels are probably a little low, particularly in the strategy and advisory support team. If JPF chooses to invest in the further capacity building of partners, as opposed to the current approach, which is more around risk mitigation of grants, and compliance (particularly reporting and financial management), more staff will be needed. In addition, the introduction of micro-grants may also require a slight increase. Contradictorily there is a small amount of duplication between staffing in TS and TCM, but this is offset by the overall advantages of having both UNOPS and NIS.

**Staff Interaction with Partners.** The “JPF Structure and Staffing Review (10<sup>th</sup> Nov 2017)” noted that there are “silos” between the staff in different pillars and parts of JPF. While this is being addressed in the restructuring and there has been considerable improvement in the way that staff interact with each other with the adoption of intentional management integration models, there are still issues needing resolution reported by all JPF teams to the MTR team. There appears to be a separation between M&E team and Program teams as well as a need to better bring grant officers from TCM and TS together. The issue manifests itself most clearly in staff interaction with partners associated with when, how and why teams are sent to the field and the types of question or budget challenges that they receive, which absorbs a lot of time and energy.<sup>36</sup> This creates burdens and

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<sup>35</sup> This should only be undertaken if there a sufficiently qualified person available – not simply for the sake of nationalizing alone.

<sup>36</sup> A simple example to illustrate this was when a finance team changed the budget to approve standardized costs for meetings based on Yangon prices when the reality is that the costs varied significantly by based on location (village vs. town costs), etc.

frustrates partners while also reducing the consistency of approach to partners, knowledge sharing and transfers across JPF as the details of grantees are not widely shared.<sup>37</sup>

***How well is JPF managing spend in terms of planning the pipeline, forecasting actual expenditure, managing disbursements and avoiding accumulation of a large balance in the bank?***

FB respondents had varying levels of concern with respect to the apparent large balance of funds held by the TCM, the consequential amount of money raised through interest, and that funds appear not to be disbursed or being spent at the rate that they would like to see (also linked to the visibility of results). JPF has now created a strong system to accurately forecast and manage disbursement. However possibly experiences at the beginning of the fund may have shaped some of these concerns but there have been valid reasons for the difficulties experienced in managing disbursements and the accumulation of a large balance, that reflect the context, the nature of the work, the different donor administrative needs or imperatives, and the evolution of the fund to date. These issues can be summarized as follows.

**Systemic Donor Issues.** In the donor optimism of start-up, large funds were transferred at the beginning which JPF was not authorized to disburse until late 2016. Donor pressure around the CFCN also ironically prevented funds from being disbursed rapidly, due to the management workload. In addition, annual 'spend-it or lose-it' characteristics of donors do not assist wise management or spending of funds. While a minor issue, there are also differing donor definitions of whether funds are committed, disbursed or reconciled, reportedly impacting on JPF accounting. Clearly, levels of spending on peace work do not necessarily equate to positive progress or success and can increase risks of harm. For instance, it may influence the system towards less than ideal project choices based on ability to absorb funds. It may also affect speed, levels of risk management in project development, transfer pressure to partners inadvertently encouraging poor behaviors or pushing them to undertake activities when it may not be the right time to do so.

**Systemic Recipient Issues.** Ironically, donor over-optimism in what is realistic, is also visible in partners. Partners plan activities in line with aspirations resulting in a tendency to underspend. They (like donors) struggle to budget activities appropriately and estimate the realistic timing of activities. This is apparent from all partners – EAOs, civil society, and government – e.g. NRPC had to extend their grant by a year, not wishing to reduce their budget or alter the original funding request. In this case, the politics of the grant has implications that appear to reflect less well on JPF.<sup>38</sup>

**Context Issues.** The macro-political context evolves in ways that impact on priorities for leaders. The need for some activities and their timing shifts, slowing spend rates. For instance, reduced UNFC viability means associated spending also slows down. Emerging political changes within and across groups alter travel plans and have knock-on effects to other broader 'group' activities (e.g. NCA Signatories). Macro issues affecting the country, such as the Rakhine crisis also absorb energy and may shift or prevent activities take place (e.g. BBC media underspend is reported directly associated

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<sup>37</sup> An additional dimension was added when a grantee noted they had had three visits (two donors and the MTR) from JPF associated people when they had only had the grant for a few months. The lack of coordination and burden appeared disproportionate (they were a women's organization, so this may well have been a factor for the extra visits to demonstrate gender work).

<sup>38</sup> In this case, reportedly, the Head of NRPC Supporting Team did not want to go back and lose face in front of the State Counsellor and report a need for reduction in the requested amount for funding even though it was admittedly overbudgeted.

with this). Activities and spending are also linked to the nature of peace processes with fluctuating waves of intensity or inactivity, and their systems-nature, as all activities connect to each other.

**Commitments and Fund Flow Management and Flexibility.** At this stage there is US\$12,986,769 (TCM financial update to FB 17/08/2018), uncommitted funds for new grant or commitments up to 2021, which is not as large a buffer as it might appear when expected cost extensions to current agreements and pipeline commitments are taken into account. However, according to TCM, as long as the overall signed donor commitments are not less than those made in grant agreements, cash flow and disbursements can be managed. Increased disbursement would require a shift in emphasis and balance in the current strategy towards Outcome 3 requiring FB direction and a strong argument given this sensitive point in the peace process and upcoming elections.

**Surge Capacity.** One FB respondent noted it is critical JPF has the ability to take advantage of “windows of opportunity” in the peace process that might emerge and so be able to mobilize and deploy funds rapidly. This requires having funds to hand at all times. This is an interesting observation given some EAO leaders’ analysis suggesting there will be a period of intense activity coming up in the next year requiring rapid response from JPF. This is in contrast to the majority of FB respondents who considered it likely to be quiet, or flat due to elections. The suggestion was whether JPF is able to use funds from donors with time-bound imperatives first, without requiring additional reporting, to create this flexibility?<sup>39</sup>

**Grant size and length.** As noted by the TS, an additional potential way to free-up flexibility, is the management of the funds through grant size and length. Shorter commitments enable fund availability for alternative activities rather than tied to long-term commitments prone to alteration anyway. If this approach is utilized, the choice of which type of grants to apply this to is important. The benefits of having greater flexibility need to be balanced with the potential negative impact on particular grantees associated with the increased uncertainty of funding for activities or resources.

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<sup>39</sup> TCM initial response was that there was not an easy way to do this because JPF is a pooling of funds, but it is worth exploring further.

## Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

### *Is JPF's MEL Framework feasible and useful for fostering accountability and learning, and generating evidence to support policy development, both for JPF and implementing partners?*

**Historical Evolution.** JPF efforts in developing its M&E systems has been a direct reflection of its broader evolution. Decisions on what indicators to choose, what data to collect, and how to collect it have been reliant on having the broader fund structural foundations in place. Without a finalized strategy, for instance, the risk of collecting irrelevant data or unhelpful information that will not inform programming decisions or ensure appropriate progress and accountability as well as impact is high. The M&E framework is thus one of the last piece of the picture that is able to be put in place as it is reliant on all the other aspects to define its meaning. In this respect, the perceived lateness and difficulties associated with M&E implementation are unfair as they are a direct result of the huge adjustments made in JPF structure, strategy, and results framework. A document recently shared with the MTR team by the TS reveals ten different iterations of the results framework as JPF has adjusted to the various changes in its strategy and operational context.

**Current situation.** A considerable amount of work has been invested, particularly in the last six months in both the development of the M&E system, as well as the migration of indicators and alignment of all current JPF grants with the new results framework. TS reported feeling confident that they now have a system in place that will enable JPF to collect consistent data across the program and allow adaptive programming. This will be significantly enhanced as the IMS comes online. In addition, as noted by the TS staff, JPF indicators will inevitably not cover all actions and activities in each project. Implementing partners are also able to develop their own indicators to mark and report on progress as well.

**Technical Issues.** While acknowledging the huge amount of work that has been invested in the M&E system and JPF results framework, it is notoriously difficult to devise useful MEL frameworks for peace processes. This is due to the inherent challenges associated with assessing change and progress in multi-causal, multi-factorial processes and the issues in time-bound projectization of long-term transformations. The findings outlined below should be considered in light of these challenges.

As several FB members noted, the current M&E framework is not technically satisfactory and reflects a classic disjunct between what it is trying to assess and the indicators it is using for this purpose and in this regard. It is also worth noting that JPF donors have specific bilateral requirements that need to be reflected in the framework.

- (a) At the outcome level, indicators are often output in nature and vary in the extent they reflect meaningful aspects of change. e.g. percentage of gender spending is not necessarily a measure of inclusiveness or change, but rather, one of spending.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Or considering another example 2c. (a) # of advocacy opportunities advanced by JPF to the FB (b) % of opportunities that have been actioned upon by the FB. To take this indicator as an example of change influenced by JPF operations and technical support is not helpful. The number of advocacy opportunities does not say anything about the quality, usefulness, appropriateness, and timeliness of the opportunity or indeed what constitutes an opportunity (presumably a possible message? Although this is not clear from the documentation), the change being sought or what “actioned” means. Percentage of opportunities actioned is similarly flawed. How these measures reflect a change from technical

(b) At the output level, it is not always clear how JPF work is reflected in many of the indicators (some are better than others) and the extent to which any measurement is helpful, or change assessed can be attributed to JPF. On occasion, indicators reflect aspects outside of JPF control or are dubious in appropriateness. For instance, # complaints received by the JMC is not necessarily a reflection of increased functionality or capacity, but may simply reflect increased violations. Similarly, reduced complaints may reflect reduced incidence (which may or may not be related to functionality), or it may be that people have stopped reporting because responsiveness is inadequate. Many of these examples, therefore, would need other types of verification or triangulation to understand what is actually going on.

**Accountability.** In terms of accountability, JPF is well placed to obtain a clear picture in the coming period following the work invested in migration and consistency of indicators across in partner their grants. Historically the picture has been fractured due to the reasons above and the multiple changes. There are also challenges for JPF team associated with the quality of information from partners which is inconsistent and often has gaps at present. Reliance on reports inevitably also creates issues around self-reporting, although given political sensitivities and the type of activities this is unavoidable. Triangulation may be possible sometimes, but where this is the case it needs to be identified. At this stage, the M&E work is predominantly focused on donor accountability and reporting rather than informing program management or learning.

**Evidence for Policy Development and Adaptive Programming.** It is too early to say whether the indicators currently being used within the framework will be helpful as ways to collect data to inform policy development. The compiled summary findings at outcome level shared with the MTR team reveal some elements that could be drawn out to inform adaptive programme management if followed up and explored in more detail.

**M&E Management.** Again, while there has been huge progress, JPF is still facing challenges in how their teams work together, which also impacts on the M&E team. The issues below emerged from interviews with the M&E team, the program team as well as CSO partners.

- a. *Monitoring Visits:* At present, it is not clear when and how the M&E team are able to visit grantees. They report they only go to activities if invited by the Program Team and do not feel able to act independently. This reflects a broader picture of JPF teams still needing to better understand, coordinate and support each other. Some grantees reported the M&E team seemed unaware of local situations for data collection which also correlates with their own comment that their operational guidelines have not been updated since the restructure, so they are currently without guidance documents. Grantees and JPF teams reported issues of consistency regarding accountability, be that finance, M&E or the program team.
- b. *Reporting:* Grantees also consistently reported issues on the heavy burden of reporting, its inappropriateness (e.g. reporting outcomes quarterly when they take longer to emerge) and timing. Some partners reported having to provide reports at fixed times irrespective of when

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support is not at all clear. At its most absurd interpretation, it is suggesting that JPF is providing technical support to the FB. It does not take consider aspects such as that one message repeated by multiple actors may be more efficacious, or the way that it is conveyed or by whom, or that one strong message rather than a hundred less significant ones is more important. In other words, it does not consider how advocacy works and the lessons learned about how to assess success in advocacy rather than simply a set of numbers.

their activities started (i.e. the calendar rather than project quarter). This suggests the need for greater flexibility around when and what type of report is required. It is acknowledged that this work is underway. On a more positive note, partners appreciate organizational learning from JPF staff interactions they can apply to other proposals.

- c. *Learning and analysis:* From the M&E team discussion it appears they are unclear at this stage on how to approach the task of data analysis as well as contribute to internal, ongoing learning, which is an opportunity for internal capacity enhancement, that could be linked to the implementation of the upcoming launch of IMS.

#### ***How well is JPF able to measure and capture its delivery of direct technical assistance to peace stakeholders?***

As noted above JPF framework is aimed principally at output level in terms of the number of requests and advisors rather than capturing the quality of inputs and whether it is useful. For example, it is assumed (but not stated directly) that increasing numbers of requests for TA is a measure of success and valuing of the advice as well as enhanced capacity. It could also reflect increasing needs and pressure, with JPF one of few peace work funders. It is difficult to measure this aspect, but the most important aspect is whether it is helpful, useful and applied. This can really only be assessed through interviews and specific collection of evidence related to that TA.

#### ***How can structures and systems be improved in order to strengthen JPF's accountability, learning, and evidence to support direct technical assistance?***

At present, there is a huge burden on all parties in the collection of all this data and the expected later analysis, and there is a risk that there is an insufficient emphasis on identifying change and learning. It is hoped that the new IMS being put in place at the moment will help with some of these current issues but many are related to partner and JPF capacity and the use of traditional M&E forms. The huge amount of energy invested by JPF in trying to improve the M&E system to date is acknowledged, but in the light of hindsight, it would have been helpful to engage/contract a peace process M&E specialist to assist during set-up. There are not many advisors globally with this expertise and experience and would have meant commissioning someone, however, it may have saved some pain and effort.

**Outputs and Common Accountability Standards.** Output measurement for accountability reasons is important and valid and TCM and TS teams that interact with partners need to agree on appropriate evidence across their different disciplines and for differing circumstances. For example, to show a meeting has taken place or people have traveled and attended if they crossed borders or reached the venue by unconventional means. Grantees reported the burden of evidence-heavy and difficult to fulfill M&E reporting, though some of these challenges have since been overcome. Some even perceived the detailed reporting was for spying purposes when asked for registration numbers for car hires, photographs of attendees, etc. It is always challenging to identify boundaries and where requirements can be reduced, but it would be useful for teams to agree which grantees it is appropriate to have lighter conditions than others, and what those might be, due to the political sensitivities. This would enable them to present a consistent face.

**Assessing Outcome Change.** JPF needs to create a broader picture of change around process dimensions that are not captured in the results framework and M&E system (as set out in the RF) in addition to outputs. In this type of environment and types of activity 'anecdotal' qualitative change

is far more significant to understand what is happening as a result of JPF investment and to show JPF is making a difference while balancing and ensuring you are not undermining confidentiality or compromising respondents. Assessing change in processes is made harder if you predetermine the changes you are expecting by setting indicators or ranking performance. It is rare that change takes place in the way envisaged, let alone incrementally or in a linear fashion and it is difficult to rank technical assistance in the absence of counterfactuals or alternatives. Change can reverse and is often associated with relationships, attitudes, and behaviors rather than concrete outcomes (such as a final peace agreement, or a constitution, etc.).

This suggests it would be sensible to supplement existing outcome indicators with methodologies that will capture different dimensions of change. For instance through structuring reflection opportunities and interviews with partners to undertake outcome harvesting, possibly every six months (depending on the type of grant and activity). This approach appears to have started, to some extent, given the M&E outcome information obtained “by interview.” However, this approach needs to be structured more formally and in such a way that the discussion captures change, allows for reflection and identifies potential changes for future programming. It is acknowledged that this is difficult with senior stakeholders, (it is harder – but not impossible - to ask generals to sit down for reflective sessions). Some of these types of activity may need to involve JPF supported technical advisors as trusted interlocutors, although JPF would need to accept the bias inherent in their involvement and possible self-reporting.

An important aspect is to assess the significance of such changes as well, including an estimate of the contribution of JPF towards the change (see **Figure 10**) where each number represents an outcome that is described in full and then placed on the grid in relation to its significance on the y-axis and the level of contribution to that outcome by JPF on the x-axis. So, for example, 8 by NCA signatories, might be that they report a series of meetings with KIO and the outcome has been that KIO and the signatories have a number of common positions they are jointly presenting to the Tatmadaw. The significance is high as they have never developed this many common positions, or united strength in prior meetings and the contribution of JPF was medium level as they JPF provided TA and some funding for meetings). However, this approach has implications for which staff members are involved in such a process as it requires good facilitation (combined programme and M&E as well as senior staff for particularly important partners). This process should also be mirrored by team reflections on the changes that they may have encountered or that are worth exploring more, particularly through the use of deeper case studies. In addition, it is worth considering how to utilize—Most significant change (MSC) methodologies as well.<sup>41</sup>

**Figure 10: Example of Outcome Harvesting Significance Grid**

Significance of the outcome	H		2	8	10	3
			7			13
M	15		5	6	16	
				9	12	
L						
	Low	Medium	High			
Contribution by JPF (black) and partners e.g. NCA signatories (Red)						

<sup>41</sup> For instance, see [https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/most\\_significant\\_change](https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/most_significant_change)

In the course of the MTR, while not measuring impact, nevertheless occasional questions were asked of respondents to see if they can identify changes, associated with JPF contributions, in a peace process that appears to be characterized by stagnation. Interestingly respondents that were asked (this was not consistent depending on the time, direction of the interview etc.) had little trouble identifying various changes in the macro process, their significance and JPF contributions to these changes, which suggest the above paths are worth exploring.

### ***Is JPF's framework for measuring, reporting and using Value for Money appropriate and how might it be strengthened?***

At present, JPF does not have a formal framework for VF, and it is not clear the extent to which all donors are interested in this dimension. The DFID framework to assess value for money, which has been the main driver globally of this consideration, is not easily applicable to peace process support and non-grant interventions and support. It is particularly difficult when considering the prevention of a negative result; for instance, if the primary outcome of the JPF was to prevent the collapse of the peace process and ongoing discussions. Similarly challenging are how to undertake assessments of VFM where activities are values-driven. For instance, the cost of developing capacity and its usefulness may be more about quality of life and its inherent value as the “right thing to do” rather than yielding a visible economic benefit within the life of a project. This issue is also associated with other intangibles such as trust, good will, good office, strengthened relationships, etc. that may develop as secondary characteristics of the way that JPF works rather than necessarily as partner outputs. In process work, the process and the way it is conducted is itself a development outcome.

However, a common-sense approach is already undertaken by JPF during the grant negotiation process where assessing budget versus achieving potential outcomes is already quite rigorous. This is backed up by partner comments about how fierce budget cutting is during the process.

There is also a risk of creating a disproportionate increased burden that may have other less positive consequences if more than a common-sense approach is applied in assessing the VFM of each and every grant (more time, more costs, delaying approvals, impacts on relationships ,etc.). It would also involve needing to consider changing measures of VFM depending on the length and nature of the grant, as well as other factors and the intended impact. Given these challenges and in context of the JPF at present, it is more important to consider how any particular grant and activity contributes to achieving the JPF strategic outcomes more broadly than to invest more time in this aspect.

However, there is a marked gap in the literature with respect to VFM for the peace sector,<sup>42</sup> which provides an opportunity for JPF to make a contribution to the broader sector. In this respect it would be interesting and useful to take one JPF approach such as the provision of technical assistance, which encompasses some of the challenges outlined above, and explore the various dimensions of VFM that may also lead to an assessment of the utility of VFM in peace work and possibly lead to the creation of a more appropriate framework for assessing VFM that could be applied to similar programming interventions. This would require commissioning a piece of work to undertake such an exploration.

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<sup>42</sup> The MTR team was only able to find on report by Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue on VFM called 'Valuing peace: delivering and demonstrating mediation results' by Dr Ian Wadley, November 2017, for mediation efforts which has some insights on M&E but not sufficient for a large peace fund like the JPF.

## Conclusions

Overall, the MTR found that JPF has made significant progress from a difficult start and is well placed to make an increasingly strong contribution in its support to the Myanmar peace process.

**Relevance.** Myanmar is a complex country with multiple ongoing conflicts and a fractured peace process occurring simultaneously. JPF's DOA was developed in the backdrop of a momentous transition to a civilian government after almost five decades of military dictatorship. This was expected to provide the foundation for increased positive change which did not occur as expected. JPF has worked hard to reposition and reframe itself, ensuring its ongoing relevance to the new reality with programming based on rolling analysis with key stakeholders and partner research than applied in its interventions. JPF is able to adapt to political change, through and within grant-making, although constrained by burdensome grant-making processes, which are now improving.

JPF is adhering to its guiding principles and working on the right issues given its mandate to focus on supporting the peace process. There is, however, an opportunity to deepen the articulation and common understanding of its strategy and in particular review the Fund's breadth, balance in emphasis between outcomes, and current focus to maximize impact within its remaining lifespan.

Differing stakeholder willingness to engage with JPF and draw on its resources has resulted in varying strengths of relations with key stakeholders such as government and the Tatmadaw. JPF is actively working to improve in this area. The complexity of resource allocation politics, differing perceptions of needs, and the complex interactions between and within stakeholder groups also makes meeting differing needs across EAOs challenging to address and a consequent mixed success. This picture is further complicated by an overlay of donor politics and risk tolerance.

**Effectiveness.** A combination of external and internal factors constrained JPF early effective performance and legacies from these issues still affect perceptions of JPF. Many of these factors have since been resolved or improved, and JPF is in a much sounder position to capitalize on its position moving forward. Data and comprehensive evidence though are still patchy due to changing M&E frameworks and gaps in data availability, particularly at outcome level. Many grants have only just started and so it is too early to see this type of change.

There are tensions between the political reality and characteristics of peace processes and the demands of aid systems used to implement support. Coupled with a range of unrealistic stakeholder expectations this has impacted on perceptions of effectiveness. Donor expectations, in particular, need aligning with the reality of peace process timeframes and JPF work. Stakeholders, in general, do not well understand what JPF is doing or funding. This is partly a function of its low visibility in the public arena which is appropriate and important to maintain. However, greater investment in key stakeholder and partner consultation and understanding (on an individual bilateral basis) would increase confidence in JPF and a feeling of partnership. Effectiveness in communicating JPF achievements cannot be judged from the data collected.

JPF is successfully targeting Myanmar Organizations as fund recipients, with over 90% of partners being Myanmar-led, although it is less clear whether they are sustained in taking ownership of the peace process. This is complemented by the relative successful positioning to provide technical advice to stakeholders within broader contextual constraints. JPF is working on improving and deepening this work given peace process support needs a long-term perspective around capacity enhancement and development of second tier leadership across many stakeholders.

**Efficiency.** From a difficult start, JPF has evolved and matured in confidence over the last year. It has demonstrated an increasing ability to respond to the demands of the context and has overcome many, but not all, of the staffing issues. In addition, the TCM/TS relationship has been strengthened and now includes a standing weekly coordination meeting between Head of Programmes (HOP) and the Director of the TCM. Many of the basic building blocks are in place, such as the Strategy, the Results Framework, and the start of the IMS. JPF has signed 45 projects to date (19 large and 26 small grants) with 42 of those projects on-going. Relevance and success in this regard have also been reflected in examples such as the provision of support to the UPCs, to EAOs and civil society for political dialogue when requested; the latter with an average turnaround time of three weeks.

In terms of oversight and governance, the current structures do not facilitate effective and efficient fund management. The original DOA intentions are aspirational and not appropriate for the current political context. Streamlined working procedures are required to ensure the two bodies are differentiated to avoid duplication, ensure accountability and FB engagement while empowering the TS and TCM to advance programming.

Efficiency is also constrained by insufficient coordination, both internally with bilateral programs and externally with other actors. This requires more attention to maximize effective use of funds, reduce competition within JPF donor family, and create broader complementarities and efficiencies within the sector.

Grant-making processes have improved over time, and while there is ongoing work to improve further, this area warrants more scrutiny to consider additional efficiency gains.

Staffing levels are low for the peace sector given partner capacity, support needs (including fulfilling JPF bureaucracy) and JPF intent to fund national organizations. The balance of skills, experience, and types of staff is appropriate, although consistency of interactions with partners still needs attention and a greater degree of empathy for some partner situations is required. Following JPF staffing and Structure review, JPF has been addressing these issues although staffing levels in the Strategy and Advisory Support team, warrant further scrutiny to assess adequacy.

The pipeline and fund expenditure is being managed as well as possible given systemic aid architecture factors, with the majority being out of TCM control. The level of uncommitted funds is appropriate given the fund's remaining time frame and the potential need for surge capacity.

**Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning.** JPF has invested a huge amount of work in its MEL, to overcome inherent challenges assessing peace processes, JPF structural changes associated with new the development of a new strategy, results framework, rearrangement of the structure and aligning partner grants with the new system. At the time of the MTR, JPF had a completed its RF and the migration of JPF indicators into active and proposals under development which will now all IPs to report against relevant JPF indicators. The overall emphasis is on donor accountability and given partner capacity challenges and challenges associated with capturing changes that may not be reflected by chosen indicators, suggests supplementary qualitative methodologies need to be explored. JPF does not have a VfM framework at present, and the utility and appropriateness of developing one are debatable.

## Lessons Learned

### To Inform Future Peace MDFs:

- **JPF Set Up - Political Needs versus Technical Functionality.** JPF's history illustrates this tension well, where the challenge of political imperatives and interests overrode technical functionality. The JPF noted that in the inception period for example, if it had been staffed by those with deeper granting and programming experience, confident to stand up to donor demands, this might have avoided the cumbersome granting procedures bequeathed by the operational team. The structure of the Fund with two equal directors approved by ambassadors is unlikely to have been approved by experienced managers. Likewise, their appointment of the first TS director (unquestionably an outstanding UN diplomat of great reputation) might not have been selected to run the Fund by professionals with years of granting and programming experience. In the second appointment, the FB took advice from the then interim director who himself had this background.
- **Weakness of the inception period.** Junior staff with insufficient granting and programming experience were mandated to prepare granting procedures which under the direction of the JPF's growing number of donors, became overly complicated and cumbersome. Despite attempts by this team to produce a strategy to bequeath the permanent TS team, the donors could not agree on a draft that was presented to them in the Fund Board by the inception team. This suggests the need for clear parameters around the role of individual donors in the set-up of MDFs in the event of such interest and numbers of donors.
- **Fund Board: Role of Ambassadors.** JPF's FB has started to harness its diplomatic power in support of the JPF's strategy. Increasingly over the course of the 2018 the JPF Chair and Vice Chair have acted as key interlocutors for JPF in a positive way, taking messages to government and getting involved in sensitive strategic negotiations (e.g. JMC). Given the political nature of peace process support this has immense potential as a model demonstrating how to work politically on peace within an aid-driven structure.

### Forward Looking Lessons:

- **The Call for Concept Notes.** While not a new lesson—the broad all-encompassing call in November 2016 without a clear deadline raised huge expectations that the JPF would be the source of all funding. The large number of applications were processed through an unwieldy and slow system; and the sudden closure of the call in April 2017, all contributed to damaging JPF's reputation. Future calls will need to be more focused in intent and bounded by clear time parameters.
- **Relationships Shape Success.** Again, this is hardly a new lesson but important nevertheless given the Fund structure with two directors, which is very unusual. The TS director has a strategic mandate while the TCM director has primarily a financial oversight and compliance role. Personal tensions between the first two directors added to the challenges faced by JPF. In contrast, the current strong collegial relationship between them overcomes the potential awkwardness of the structure. This needs to be commended and maintained.
- **Fund Board Engagement in Project Detail.** During the course of the Fund, over engagement in individual project funding by the FB has hampered progress. This may be understandable

as the fund got off the ground, but given the TS is staffed by deeply experienced programme and peace process specialists, and budgets are overseen by professional UN staff they need to be empowered. There is also a broad spectrum of experience in peace process funding in the FB and by no means do all members have a strong background in this area. This speaks to the different motivations and capacities of FB members in their engagement with the JPF, and this means that clear orientation on FB and FB WG roles and agreed parameters and expectations is very necessary.

- **Risk and JPF Value-add.** Eleven donors within an MDF is unusually high. This is an advantage when operating in such a sensitive political space noted by FB members: risk absorption. Yet decisions appear to gravitate to the lowest common denominator rather than raising the 'risk tolerance threshold' even when projects clearly align with the FB approved strategy. This provides an opportunity to explore how to use this collective leverage more effectively. What are the barriers to sharing risk and what type of initiatives are best suited to JPF (e.g. JMC, NRPC etc.) and sharing risk versus bilateral initiatives? This requires further discussion between FB members as well as with TS/TCM to agree on the appetite for risks, as the JPF continues to grow in confidence as an organization.
- **Bi-Lateral Interests and Coordination.** Linked to the above lesson, a key reason for creating a peace support MDF is to limit the impact of bilateral interests in shaping the process through funding. Originally JPF thinking was that it would absorb the majority of costs of the process, reducing the need for bilateral support. However, the current reality is that donors naturally continue supporting bilateral initiatives. There will never be 'perfect coordination and transparency as some bilateral projects are 'under the radar' but there have been cases where bilateral interests have hampered the process of funding key projects, despite their clear alignment with the FB approved strategy. Greater bilateral transparency coupled with greater clarity on the type of initiatives are best suited to JPF (noted above) will assist in creating effective peace process support.

# Recommendations

## Fund Board

- *Governance Structures:* Formalize the current governance structures to replace the original articulated structures, unless the political context and situation warrants a further review and adjustment. Adjust the FB role to reflect a higher-level strategic oversight role while the FB Working Group (FBWG) takes on more practical strategy engagement.
- *Fund Board Meetings:* The FB should reduce how often they meet for the next year to bimonthly, and then move to quarterly meetings, assuming there has been an improvement in confidence and understanding of the fund. Given the absence of the HLC and Executive Working Committees originally designed for this purpose, this move aims at raising FB discussions from project level to higher strategic issues, such as:
  - Themes on program cohesion—e.g. balance and emphasis between outcome areas, particularly a relative emphasis on national and lower level participation. Appropriate geographic balance.
  - Levels of engagement and ways to interact with EAOs (particularly non-signatories).
  - Common advocacy messages or specific aspects of engagement with government and the Myanmar military as well as linkages between stakeholders.
  - Politically sensitive and risky projects as appropriate.
  - Programme direction and new JPF initiatives such as the need for specific Call for Proposals
  - Exploring consequences and implications for JPF associated with emerging political scenarios.

There are some important implications of this change if it is adopted. For instance, duties and role of the chair and vice-chair of the board will also change. The frequency of meetings if moved to quarterly would mean, under current arrangements, that the chair would only preside over two meetings. On the one hand, this may create opportunities for taking a greater role in advocacy and representation of JPF externally. However, it may also be an opportunity to revisit whether the current six monthly revolving chair mechanism is the most effective for FB members and JPF. It is worth considering whether the tenure of a chairperson might be better if extended to a year. Additionally, not all FB members may wish to take a turn as chair due to their commitments and levels of human resources in their mission, while others may have greater interest and space in their schedules to take on the responsibilities.

## Fund Board and JPF

- *JPF Focus:* Review JPF's breadth and consider adjusting the balance between outcomes. This could include increasing JPF's focus on Outcomes 1 and 2 and reducing its emphasis on Outcome 3 where JPF could instead focus on ensuring greater linkages with the higher-level peace process. For the purpose of exploring the implications involved in such choices three options are outlined below:

- **Direction One:** The Fund would narrow its scope to focus even more on addressing political dimensions inherent in outcomes one and two dedicated to the NCA, bilateral ceasefires and peace processes. This would require lower levels of funding, less grant-making and would emphasize technical support and analysis linked to strategic programmatic response, flexibility, and adaptability to the ongoing political evolution, and deep and closer interaction with a set of partners and stakeholders. The main purpose is to focus on maximizing progress and effectiveness in stakeholder negotiations and dialogues informing the peace process. This approach would lend itself to the TS strengths and successful positioning with the key stakeholders. Visibility and success would be subtle and focus on self-identified outcome harvesting and reflective approaches with strong, immediate feedback loops into adaptive programming. There would be a reduction in focus and emphasis on outcome three or much tighter linkage on how these grants directly feed into the union level. At its most extreme there could be a division of the fund with one more political responsive peace fund (Outcome 1 and 2) and another more grassroots civil society – civic engagement fund (Outcome 3), could be an option in the future. JPF is still only halfway through its lifespan at this stage and this would be premature.
- **Direction Two:** The Fund broadly continues as is, with the current balance in effort and emphasis between the three outcomes, but possibly with a more explicit focus on addressing the current strategic problems associated with a lack of clear and explicit linkages between citizen participation and the peace process. At present this is more downward oriented (dissemination and awareness raising as well as civic engagement) with few vertical links directly to the union level. The risk here is a potential creep if there are insufficiently tight criteria defining funding decision-making which could also result in a more diffuse potential impact.
- **Direction Three:** The Fund would shift emphasis more towards the broader Outcome 3 concentrating on community-level awareness and peace process participation (in its broadest sense) to address the potential lack of progress in the peace process at union level in the coming period while investing in longer-term foundational peace. This is likely to evolve into greater work at the sub-Union level on civil society strengthening, governance, local government, and practical federalism at State level. While it still requires a strategic programming approach (rather than a pure fund management option), it would lend itself more to broader Calls for Proposals and public tenders addressing the issues.
- *Strategy Document:* Deepen the current strategy document to better articulate and reflect assumptions, approaches, and theories of change implicitly informing programming decisions, as well as ensuring vertical linkages between the grassroots and higher levels are better expressed. Employ an incremental approach to the strategy enhancement involving FBWG members that are interested and ideally completing the exercise by the end of 2018. There are three ways the strategy issues could be addressed, given strategic understanding is already fairly clear within staff:
  - *Strategy Improvement “Lite”:* The TS works on better developing and explaining the strategy in each of the key areas; conflict management, negotiations and dialogue, and participation. This requires articulation of theories of change in each area (or the

equivalent rationale explaining ‘why’ JPF is doing what it is doing), specific approaches adopted to achieve that change and a brief explanation of how current grants and activities have been selected to achieve the intended outcomes.<sup>43</sup> TS presents each area incrementally to the FB demonstrating how each of the different areas link together.

- *Strategy Improvement “Semi-skimmed”*: The TS undertakes a similar process but involves FB Working Group members that wish to be engaged in strategic thinking for each component and outcome area, and then validate the outcomes with the FB following a full presentation.
- *Strategy Improvement “Full Fat”*: Involve the whole FB and undertake a full, more formal, classic, strategy process with an external, professional strategic facilitator in the context of a retreat. Given conflicted appetite for such an exercise, this seems the least attractive proposition, but it does allow for full engagement and the opportunity to discuss it in a different environment.

The most sensible way forward is to merge the first two options and schedule a process that culminates in an enhanced strategy by the end of 2018.

- *Bilateral Coordination and Collaboration*: Improve transparency of direct bilateral peace support activities with JPF where possible. Look for synergies in support, assessments, etc. to better ensure complementarity and synergies (e.g. through scale-up, seeding, and use of comparative advantage) between bilateral peace programs and JPF activities to reduce competition and better coordinate efforts across JPF, bilateral programs, and other initiatives such as the “Lek 5.”

### **Technical Secretariat**

- *Analysis Gaps*: The TS should invest in filling analysis gaps to inform its future work. This could include investigating commonalities and differences between bilateral ceasefire agreements and implications for leveraging better peace outcomes; how the existing peace process accommodates Rakhine and other diverse macro issues; or how to make use of the upcoming USAID/DFID funded analysis of the peace process itself. The TS should also continue efforts for greater analysis and disaggregation of differing key stakeholder needs, particularly between the different EAOs. Similarly, the TS should utilize its “JPF Peace Process Diagram” to map existing support avenues and additional entry-points to influence the peace process.
- *Increased National Voice in Strategy Formulation*: Explore different ways to increase broader national voice more explicitly in strategy formulation by taking forward the planned convening of a variety of stakeholder groups (e.g. research institutes, security sector, etc.) that can feed into strategy dimensions as well as stimulate discussion in the broader community for the public good.
- *Informal Space*: JPF should continue the testing, development, and support of a neutral informal space where specific issues and barriers (e.g. secession clauses) can be explored by parties informally with accepted facilitators.
- *Deepening Negotiation Skills*: Given EAO needs for more support on negotiation, further extend ongoing work to develop a comprehensive mini-strategy integrating a range of support. This

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<sup>43</sup> It is not always clear how grants actually contribute meaningfully to change, rather than simply reflecting the topic at hand.

could include, for example, exploring the possibility, viability, and provision of an ongoing experiential negotiation skills programme for EAOs that wish to take part. This should include women, civil society, and political party members.

- *Provision of Technical Assistance (TA):* Continue to explore options to strengthen TA on how to draw on potential diaspora advisors, particularly women, to deepen EAO negotiation teams. Explore the possibility for a more substantive, integrated approach and development of a mentoring program for a cadre of second-tier leaders, particularly women and youth. Improve coordination and mutual support across TA, particularly if working on similar issues (e.g. JMC, security, natural resources etc.).
- *Communications Strategy:* Encourage JPF reporting and communications to also include partial success/failure to provide a more complete picture of JPF's experience to stimulate reflection and examples for other peace support processes to learn from. Further the planned development of a comprehensive communications strategy articulating the different audiences, their information and communication needs, and how JPF will meet them.
- *Internal Learning:* Identify internal JPF learning objectives around JPF's experience as it evolves, to track and better understand peace process support praxis. It could be a series of case studies or a more "longitudinal" approach. Potential ideas could include (a) how to better complement informal dialogues in conjunction with formal ones to influence progress; (b) how support to women and youth leaders and their involvement in negotiations alters discussion content, process, and outcomes; or (c) how to support political parties in the peace process and how this affects their success and broader political agendas in the upcoming elections.

#### **TCM and TS**

- *Grant-making:* Continue working on improving efficiency by deepening information on the completion times of the different elements of grant-making process and then conducting a joint analysis of the factors constraining efficiency and how they might improve performance. TCM and TS should continue to broaden the range of contracts, types of agreement, and grant-making tools at its disposal to improve adaptability both within existing grants as well as with new partners aiming to reduce administrative burdens on partners as well as JPF teams.
- *Partner Interactions:* Continue working on improving partner interactions by strengthening internal coordination between teams for consistency of approach, common accountability expectations, and to reduce administrative burdens.
- *MEL:* Continue efforts to streamline and integrate data collection, learning, and adaptive programming to reduce partner burdens. Being mindful of donor considerations, where possible, reduce predetermined outcome indicators and shift to assessing beneficiary-centered indicators of change. JPF should also explore the potential use of "outcome harvesting" or other similar qualitative methodologies better suited for capturing nuances in process-focused peace work. Specifically, it would be worth considering the following:
  - *Develop a holistic approach to MEL:* A perennial debate is whether to "mainstream" M&E and should this be program work or undertaken by M&E officers but there are hybrid approaches that could consider some common tasks for both teams to collect data but with different emphases and tasks and thus reduce the burden on partners and the M&E team. This should preferably be linked to (a) a reduction in written reporting from

grantees (for instance limit outcome reporting to every 6 months) (b) innovative alternative reporting methods should be explored together. This could include the use and completion of data forms together rather than submission of the usual narratives, or linked to IMS direct uploading by JPF staff. Use of oral reporting and recordings covering the same headings. Joint report writing across groups (c) Explore how to link partner data collection and discussions with adaptive programming, analysis and learning at the time of field collection rather than later (but distinguishing outcome identification from output collection see below). (d) Work on 'One-stop visits' that are more time efficient, preferably quarterly, to cover as much as possible, reduce the feeling of being extractive and a JPF hoop to jump through to access resources to do their work. The intent is to reduce workloads overall and be useful.

- *Better Internal Coordination:* Develop common partner communication systems and improved coordination across teams for visits, collection of information and various supports offered to grantees. There may be valid reasons not to travel together or for only some teams to access certain grantees for security or political reasons, but senior management needs to ensure this is recognized and addressed or that other ways of doing business are explored. This may also be linked to grantee observations on a lack of empathy by JPF personnel for their situation.
- *Value for Money.* Take one aspect of the JPF approach and strategy as a case study, such as the provision of technical advice to peace actors, and commission a piece of work to explore the various dimensions of VFM more thoroughly. This might be a contribution to the broader literature and an opportunity to assess the utility of VFM approaches to a fundamental peace process support mechanism.