



3<sup>rd</sup> CONFERENCE ON  
MEDIA DEVELOPMENT IN  
**MYANMAR**

18-19 SEPTEMBER 2014

**SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Moving Towards a Sustainable Media Environment



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# Introduction

Election reporting, media ethics and public service broadcasting were all among the topics on the agenda at the 3rd conference on media development in Yangon from 18 – 19 September 2014.

For the third consecutive year in a row, the Myanmar Media Development Conference, a unique multi-partner, multi-stakeholder enterprise, gathered government officials, journalists, media owners, editors, reporters, NGOs, local, regional and international organisations for discussions on the status and way forward of media development in Myanmar in the year gone by.

The theme of the conference was ‘Moving Towards a Sustainable Media Environment’ and in constructive and dynamic discussions, Myanmar media stakeholders debated the current status and way forward for the Myanmar media environment three years after the first media reforms were set in motion in 2011.

With reference to the broad gathering of participants, keynote speaker Professor Yuen Ying Chan of Hongkong University said:

“This is a unique model of collaboration and partnership. Our accomplishments will be an inspiration for governments and civil society around the world, China included. I hope the leaders in Beijing will follow what’s emerging as the Myanmar model of media development very closely.”

Media reform in Myanmar has come far in three years with a Media Law and Printing and Publishing Enterprises Law adopted in mid-2014, as well as a Code of Conduct for journalists published by the interim Press Council. While progress has been significant, there are still great challenges ahead. Laws remain that infringe on freedom of expression and these must be addressed. Also, the lack of professionalism amongst journalists was raised by participants as a major hindrance, particularly when media play an important role in covering conflict and in view of the central role that media could play in the country’s upcoming elections in 2015.

A number of suggestions were made on how to move forward which were summarised at the end of each session. In the concluding remarks made by Myanmar Minister of Information U Ye Htut, he highlighted the need for greater access to information for journalists and professionalisation of media as part of the way to move forward media development in Myanmar. The conclusions drawn from each session are summarised in the last chapter of this report.

The conference was organised by the Myanmar Media Development Thematic Working Group jointly with UNESCO, Ministry of Information (MoI) and International Media Support (IMS). The first Myanmar Media Development Conference in Yangon took place in March 2012. The meeting was the first of its kind in Myanmar to specifically address media development in a gathering of national and international media stakeholders.



# Acknowledgements

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Nant Aye Myat Mon

For more information please visit:  
[www.myanmarmediadevelopment.org](http://www.myanmarmediadevelopment.org)

## Opening session

### Moving towards a sustainable media environment

**HE Ye Htut, Union Minister,  
Ministry of Information (Mol)**

The Myanmar government has stressed the importance of media reform as part of our overall political and economic reform process over the last three years. Our challenge has been how to implement the necessary changes. The President has instructed us to join with international partners to hold international media conferences, to review progress and look to the future.

It is important to examine media as part of the political discourse and the reform process. If we look back over the last three years since President Thein Sein came to power in 2011, we now have a freer media environment. Each year has meant progress for the media. In 2012, press censorship was abolished. Then in 2013, we saw the introduction of the media law and the expansion of ethnic media.

The major challenges include access to information, especially from the government sector, and the recognition that the survival of media groups is tough. We face a new situation. This includes the introduction of the broadcast law, community radio, ethnic media, and reporting on the upcoming 2015 elections, an important element in the reform process.

The importance of media sustainability also reflects government thinking. Three points stand out:

- Consolidate the success over the last three years;

- The need for strong institutions to move forward;
- The need to deliver the reform process to the people

People's expectations are high, so there is a gap. If we cannot narrow the gap, some elements will use this gap through some movement or social instability to threaten the gains of the reforms. We have to deliver the benefits. Our focus needs to be on freedom of the press, respect the privacy of citizens, and have strong institutions.

Also we have to deliver to the people quality and balanced information. This is needed because without it, people cannot make good decisions.

Over the last three years, there have been conferences, workshops, and various international initiatives that have given our local people the opportunity to build capacity. But, unfortunately, very few senior editors-in-chief and publishers have been turning up for these meetings.

**Irina Bokova, Director-General of  
UNESCO (VIDEO)**

It is a pleasure for me to address this third conference on media development. There have been great changes in the Myanmar media landscape. This reflects the government commitment to place media reform at the heart of social, political and economic development and I see this conference as a new step towards change.

” Our focus needs to be on freedom of the press, respect the privacy of citizens, and have strong institutions.

HE Ye Htut  
Union Minister, Ministry of  
Information (Mol)

” I see this conference as a new step towards change.

Irina Bokova  
Director-General of  
UNESCO (VIDEO)



Minister of Information, U Ye Htut opens the 3rd Conference on Media Development in Yangon. Photo: MMDG

” It is important to remember that the quality of democracy and journalism are deeply intertwined.

HE Roland Kobia  
Ambassador to the EU in Myanmar

This is an opportunity to explore the challenges. This is also a chance for all to renew the commitment to the importance of independence, free and realistic media for freedom of expression, good governance and the rule of law. This is called for to protect all rights of journalists. It means encouraging an independent media by promoting professional standards and self-regulation. It means the empowerment of women and young people and marginalised groups.

The way forward involves dialogue and partnership. UNESCO works in partnership with representatives of the United States of America and the European Union. We are working along with the international media to support media registration, to advance media literacy and to build capacity through the Myanmar Journalism Institute and the Department of Journalism in the National

Management College in Myanmar. UNESCO will continue to actively support the government in creating a free and safe environment for media workers.

#### HE Roland Kobia, Ambassador to the EU in Myanmar

As the late American president Abraham Lincoln said, if you want to know the character of a man, give him power. But as a Greek philosopher said, out of all the manifestations of power, a key trait is moderation.

Changes are welcomed and transitions are difficult; this is just the nature of political transitions. What we have observed in Myanmar is a living signal and concrete steps, and the opening of the space of the media is warmly welcomed by the EU.



Freedom of expression is part of the deep DNA of the EU. We recognise that vibrant media is crucial. We understand that it is difficult to have democracy without media. It provides accountability, and a contribution to citizens' knowledge in the public and private sector. All this is important as we move towards the [2015] elections.

A vibrant media promotes debate and tolerance, listening as much as speaking. But media freedoms should not mean you can violate people's rights, such as the example of hate speech. This should not be allowed. It is the responsibility of the government and other sectors to prevent hate speech.

As one of the main donors, the EU – with programs in rural health care, nutrition, and so forth – recognizes the responsibility to translate more reform. The EU-Myanmar Human Rights Dialogue in May of this year had media freedom at the heart at that dialogue.

The EU is giving 28 million Euros this year for the rule of law and electoral support systems, with the recognition that journalists must be part of the electoral process.

We will remain fully engaged. Success will depend on the efforts of everyone and we provide a supportive role. It is important to remember that the quality of democracy and journalism are deeply intertwined. Your Excellency U Ye Htut, the fact that you want to spend two days at this media conference shows how important you consider it.

**Anne-Charlotte Malm, Head of Development Cooperation, Regional Asia and Myanmar, the Embassy of Sweden, Bangkok**

We are happy that we could provide financial help from the first media conference and onwards.

The media is an important platform for public debate. A key factor we need to keep in mind is that without good media, democracy cannot flourish. The media plays a crucial role in terms of accountability and it provides an antidote to corruption.

It is important that all sectors including women be represented in the media, to seek a conscious analysis and long-term engagement. What is needed are durable operating structures.

The transparency of society highlights the interest and concerns of all society, and the impact between government and governing. It is welcome that Myanmar is moving towards a sustainable media environment and we can see its reform processes. By supporting independence of media and cooperation with partners, I hope we can contribute to development of the media sector.

Scandinavian countries are committed to support the reform process, including the media.

**U Kyaw Min Swe, General Secretary, Myanmar Press Council**

Today is a significant day for Myanmar, the third time we hold such a media conference. During the past three years, we have seen the development of press freedom, the acceptance of the Fourth Estate, with the approval of the Office of the President.

” The media plays a crucial role in terms of accountability and it provides an antidote to corruption.

Anne-Charlotte Malm  
Head of Development  
Cooperation, Regional Asia  
and Myanmar, the Embassy  
of Sweden, Bangkok



Panelists in the opening session set the scene for two days of media development discussions. From left: Anne-Charlotte Malm, profession Yuen Ying, Minister U He Ye Htut and He Roland Kobia. Photo: MMDG

” Reliable journalism will benefit the government and the media needs to be developed to reach this goal.

U Kyaw Min Swe  
General Secretary,  
Myanmar Press Council

A process is underway seeking to adhere to international standards, one in which the media and intellectuals will safeguard the freedom of the press, and be concerned about responsibility and accountability, and the code of conduct.

There has been a lot of improvement. The media law has been passed by parliament. The participation of the people and media council was needed in order to pass this law successfully. When applying for these requirements, it is wise to be careful about the rules and regulations. There have been some wrong approaches that parliament has rejected which can harm the government policy. The thing is, there are old fashioned-people in parliament as well, so it is quite natural that these people reject some of the developments in media taking place these days.

That said, there have been attempts to “restructure” the press by the use of other laws. This is a reflection of the old way of life, a form of resistance. The Myanmar Press Council reacts to such resistance through discussions and negotiations. But there are still challenges. Journalists are imprisoned, there are leadership challenges, and media ownership challenges.

Summing up, we see a pledge to support the Fourth Estate as part of a reliable and peaceful transition to democracy in Myanmar. We are also still going for ethical media development, and the Press Council has had a meeting with the President and speakers of the House. Reliable journalism will benefit the government and the media needs to be developed to reach this goal.

# Keynote speech

## Role of a Journalist in Moving towards a sustainable media environment

**Professor Yuen Ying Chan,  
Director, Journalism and Media  
Studies Centre, Hong Kong  
University**

I am keenly aware of the historical significance of this conference. What we see in this room today is a unique multi-partner, multi-stakeholder enterprise. We have government officials, journalists, owners, editors, reporters, NGOs, local, regional and international.

This is a unique model of collaboration and partnership. Our accomplishments will be an inspiration for governments and civil society around the world, China included. I hope the leaders in Beijing will follow what's emerging as the Myanmar model of media development very closely.

I first visited Myanmar three years ago in 2011, soon after the reform process began. I have since visited Yangon every few months and have witnessed historic changes. During my many visits, I have been fortunate to meet many of you and to learn from you about the exciting changes that are taking place in the news media here. Speakers before me have cited many of these incredible reforms that have taken place in the short space of three years.

I share with you the excitement at the transformations taking place. I also envy you for your historical opportunities to create a news media system from the ground up. But I am also keenly aware of the historical challenges faced by the media here, which is reflected on the

agenda of this conference. Over the next two days, we are going to explore issues such as ethics, media regulation, public broadcasting, public service, ethnic voices, election reporting, and press councils.

In the parlance of today's media development language, sustainability has become a buzzword in the media development world. It is an idea that our media need to be able to support themselves financially. How can we do well and make money at the same time? This is a million dollar, or even multi-million dollar question, that the media around the world are grappling with.

I believe that by the end of the day, money will follow journalism that is credible and relevant to the people. Somehow good journalism will survive and thrive, because the people need it. By good journalism, I mean the journalism that is free, accountable and transparent.

The importance of media development in social, economic and political progress has been well documented. A review of the literature on the relationship between the media and development commissioned by the Media Development Investment Fund summed up the findings under these headings:

- Media improves governance by monitoring the actions of those in power and alerting the public to corruption or abuse of trust.
- Media improves the efficiency of the economy by providing more and better information with which to make decisions and improving stability.

” I believe that by the end of the day, money will follow journalism that is credible and relevant to the people.

Professor Yuen Ying Chan  
Director, Journalism and  
Media Studies Centre, Hong  
Kong University

- Media catalyses positive changes in society by providing the information that influences public opinion.

We should recognise that media development is an integral part of social and economic development, not just a tool for development. It is heartening that the Myanmar government has fully embraced the vision, and is working hard to turn the vision into reality.

Asia is arising. And it is up to us to tell the stories with the best tools of journalism available. As chair of ASEAN for the first time since joining ASEAN 17 years ago, Myanmar is playing a more active role in regional and international affairs. In

fact, Myanmar will take a leadership role in ASEAN, and Asia, under the theme for the chair it has set for itself: "Moving Forward in Unity to a Peaceful and Prosperous Community."

The Myanmar media are facing historical opportunities and challenges. Myanmar is the one of the hottest stories in the world. The world's investors, governments, educators and journalists are dying to learn about what's happening here. Myanmar media can play a role in moving the media in Burma towards a sustainable environment. A journalist can and must play a critical role in fostering a sustainable media environment.

# Session 1

## Ethical journalism and social responsibility of the media

### Introduction

Session one focussed on international standards in professional journalism vis-a-vis the status of Myanmar media. The Myanmar Interim Press Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for journalists sparking discussion about the ethical standards and professional conduct of media practitioners around the country. As part of the process of further professionalising the media, institutions such as the Myanmar Journalism Institute (MJI) have been set up in 2014 to strengthen professional standards in the country, but as both government and media players admit, a great deal more has to be done to lift the level of journalism and avoid poor reporting practices. Ethical and responsible journalism has been described as the heart of the media challenge. There are said to be 4,000 working journalists in Myanmar, half operating with limited or a lack of professional training and the other half are veterans of the old system. This is just one of the challenges of pursuing ethical journalism in Myanmar.

**HE U Ye Htut, Union Minister,  
Ministry of Information (Moi)**

Myanmar has a vibrant democracy with all levels of society involved, one in which having balanced journalism is of paramount importance with adherence to a code of conduct. Pursuing a code of conduct is not a means for the government to control the media, rather it aims at gaining accountability and responsibility from the media.

The media has played an important role in society, but there are a number of concerns:

- A lack of interest by media organisations in human resource development, notably limited engagement by editors-in-chief and publishers;
- Market pressure on media organisations tied to a strict budget, when a publication has no loyal subscriber base, can lead the media to publish sensational stories to attract readers;
- Editorial independence is a worry, even with government publications;
- Given that government and private businesses are not easy to obtain information from, this difficulty can affect the ethical standards of the media when searching for information from less than reliable sources.

Let me give you an example. Some young journalists do not adhere to the Press Council's code of conduct for journalism. On one occasion, I went to the United States on a visit and it was reported that I was seeking asylum abroad, something of a surprise. Another time, a published photo showed the president's glasses had steamed up and it was reported that the president was in tears.

The media is making a lot of improvements but we should not be satisfied until we see a more professional approach to journalism.



**U Myint Kyaw, General Secretary,  
Myanmar Journalist's Network**

What is the biggest challenge in pursuing a media code of ethics? A code of ethics has been issued and the question is how it is being adopted amongst reporters and editors in Myanmar.

If we look at the background, there was an opening of the media in the year 2000 after years of repression. During this earlier era there was a focus on entertainment, there was the material published by Myanmar Times, and then after that came a growth in news journals, and then the growth of a news journal culture as seen in the weeklies.

When I look back at journalism training when I started in 2003, there was virtually nothing on ethics and what training existed was conducted in Yangon, sponsored by the foreign embassies. This training linked with other media organisations abroad was controversial at the time and ethics were not included.

As Myanmar publications started to write news in the period from 2003, we as journalists did not think about ethics, as we had hardly heard about the subject. Putting this in context, if today we consider the media to be 100 percent free, back then we were 30 percent free. We were not able to publish stories on controversial issues during this earlier period.

During this period, the foreign media criticized Myanmar and used unsure sources and facts in their reporting. As journalists, we did not have the chance to say anything critical. Those journalists who did speak out became more like activists.

We began to see improvements in the media landscape following the 2010 elections. At that time, there was no press council, no mechanism to settle disputes,

no one code of conduct. If there was a five-day training programme, maybe half a day was spent on ethics. Then in September 2011, we saw the introduction of the Press Council.

There was a gradual opening up of the media and in 2012 the press scrutiny regulation requiring pre-publication censorship was revoked and we began to regulate ourselves. But there were no guidelines on how to implement these measures. Having said that, there has been some progress to reach the point we are at now.

**U Soe Myint, Editor in Chief,  
Mizzima Media Group**

Firstly, our position on ethics includes the recognition that ethical standards must be brought into our newsrooms. Secondly, we cannot accept that the government imposes itself on media that it deems are falling short in the practice of ethical norms in journalism. Their actions serve only to delay the pace of professional development in the media.

It is important to recognise the extent of our ongoing efforts to bring professional and ethical standards to the practice of journalism in Myanmar. At the top of this list must be the ongoing training and capacity-building efforts with regard to upcoming Myanmar media professionals. This includes such undertakings as the Press Council project dealing with a Code of Conduct.

For years there were very few opportunities for journalists in Myanmar to become familiar with and practice international standards, while any social responsibility of the media was largely sacrificed to a strict regime of censorship. Today, many of our journalists continue to lack formal education and are largely reliant upon learning on the go and the guidance of editorial staff, who

themselves may have varying degrees of exposure and practice in ethical and international norms.

The former relationship between the government and media continues to hamper the development of ethical and professional journalism. Understandably, trust, or the lack thereof, is an enduring factor in our country's transition. In the relationship between government and media this is characterized by the former needing time to become familiar and comfortable with the workings of a free media. And in the case of the latter, there is the ongoing process of learning and implementing the professionalism and ethics required of the media industry.

By all accounts, media in Myanmar should abide by the ethical norms defined for the industry, and legislation will also hold media practitioners accountable, but these best practices must be developed and learnt within the media environment itself.

The realisation of an ethical and socially responsible media in Myanmar will take time and hard work. It will take time for the government to become comfortable with the operations of a free press, just as it will take time for media to fully incorporate ethical norms into their daily work.

One obvious test is the 2015 general elections. If the media is given the opportunity to conduct themselves freely in their electoral coverage and if the media is in turn able to execute their coverage in an ethical and professional manner, there can be an opportunity for trust-building and an appreciation of the positive role an independent and ethical media can play in a country's democratic process.

However, should either the government impair the media's ability to freely cover the event or the media fail in conducting themselves as industry professionals, we could experience a worsening of the destructive cycle of government interference in the conduct of media business, and stagnation or even regression in the practice of responsible and professional journalism in Myanmar.

### U Nay Phone Latt, Executive Director, Myanmar ICT Development Organisation

The media continue to face threats and journalists are still afraid to write the truth, from the period of the former regime up until the present day. Practicing journalism is challenging in a changing Myanmar. For example, a journalist may receive an invitation to lunch or dinner with a third party, but because of the gift of a meal, journalists feel pressured to write good news for them. It is a form of bribery.

We can see different types of journalism nowadays in terms of approach and format. There are those who write whatever they want using a sense of liberty. Some write within the area of the journalism code of conduct, and it is this writing we need from journalists. And in terms of format, we see short writing formats becoming very popular.

When we look specifically at online media, there are different types of stories that can be found varying in terms of how accurate they are. There are questionable stories that can be found posted on Facebook. Some media outlets publish what they term news, but are not concerned about the truth. What I appreciate are real news profiles that are a harbinger of Myanmar media's future prospects.

### Kavi Chongkittavorn, Columnist of The Nation, Thailand

Myanmar can be a key changer in the region within Southeast Asia. No country in ASEAN has undertaken media reforms so extensively as this country, even among the old members of ASEAN. We don't see the kind of changes taking place here in the media sectors in such countries as Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos. Now, Myanmar has created a media architecture that can serve as a strong foundation to provide a friendly media environment for a free and independent media.

When examining Myanmar, we can consider three issues:

Firstly, we need to look at the trust deficit. Minister Ye Htut talked about journalists' weaknesses. But at the same time there is a lack of trust. All stakeholders in Myanmar media now need to work together, learn together and live together. Now the practitioners and regulators have to move into the same house or condominium. They need to build mutual trust between the media and the rest of society. A code of conduct of journalists must be observed. This has to do with the training of journalists and their core knowledge.

Secondly, there is a knowledge deficit. During the 1997 Thailand financial crisis, there was only one journalist in Thailand who understood hedge funds. This has all to do with the training of journalists and their core knowledge. Writing about issues related to ethnic minorities, race relations, conflicts, and HIV/AIDS requires good understanding of the subjects.

Thirdly, journalists in Myanmar tend to be generalists. They must know everything.

Myanmar media personnel need to network with the regional and international community. At the moment, the media here has all sorts of relations with non-ASEAN counterparts. But I hope the Myanmar media will link up with the ASEAN media community as well. By doing so, this will provide technical and moral support for one another.

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is only 469 days away [at the time of the conference]. Myanmar has done a good job as the current ASEAN chair, actions that have further raised the country's profile in ASEAN and in the international community. With this in mind, maintaining freedom of expression and media freedom will only benefit Myanmar.

## Status

- Many journalists currently lack awareness and training in ethical journalism and adherence to a code of conduct.
- Senior and middle-level media staff may not have received training in journalism ethics.
- Salaries for many rank-and-file journalists remain low leading to payments of journalists under the table to write certain stories.

## Way forward

- Now is the time with the elections coming up for the media to build trust.
- Call for the government and politicians to be more open with information, to avoid journalists seeking information from untrustworthy or third-hand sources.
- Increased efforts should be made to link with other media in the region to lift the quality of journalism.

## Session 2

# Reforming and regulating the broadcast sector and public service broadcasting

### Introduction

The government has embarked on a reform process in the broadcast sector that includes introducing new broadcast laws. In a parallel move the state broadcasting institutions are being restructured based on public service media frameworks. The new broadcast laws will come into effect possibly in 2014, but the regulating aspect of the sector was still being discussed at the time of the conference. The discussion, therefore, examined whether the broadcast sector reforms were developing according to international standards and requirements needed (such as institutional capacities) to pursue regulating systems, and issues related to public service broadcasting mechanisms.

#### U Tint Swe, Director General of Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV)

Officials are working to transform the Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV), the only mainstream broadcast media of Myanmar for nearly 70 years, from a state-owned media organisation into public service media. The reform process includes legal reform, technical reform, broadcasting and content reform, increasing the capacity of the staff, and the carrying out of audience surveys.

When the 2008 Constitution was enacted, there were only two related major

laws for the broadcast industry of Myanmar. These were “The State-owned Economic Enterprises Law” enacted on 31 March 1989, and “The Television and Video Act” enacted on 29 July 1996. Subsequently, we observed international broadcasting laws and policies in preparation for drafting and enacting a broadcasting law in accordance with the provisions of the 2008 Constitution. Discussions were held with international media organisations until the draft bill was thoroughly revised and eventually approved by the government on 20 February 2014 and brought before the Upper House on 7 March 2014.

In total, the broadcast bill contains five categories: Public Service Broadcaster (PSB), Commercial Broadcaster, Community Broadcaster, Government Broadcasting Service and Content Distribution Services.

Moreover, in drafting the broadcasting bill and seeking to encourage diversity, we took into account an array of media users, including women, children, minorities and the disabled.

On technical reform, a vital part of the broadcasting media reform process of MRTV, is to transform the existing broadcasting system into a DVB-T2 broadcasting system like other ASEAN and regional countries. Digitalisation was begun on 15 October 2013 and the total number of stations stands at 250. The entire digitalisation process will be finished by 2020.

”As a public service provider, the most important relationship we have is that with the citizens of Myanmar.

U Tint Swe  
Director General of  
Myanmar Radio and  
Television (MRTV)

If we look briefly at the evolution of radio in the country, we see that in the past radio programmes of MRTV were broadcast by shortwave and medium wave transmitters. But now FM transmitters, which are of better quality, have been installed. Moreover, FM transmitters were installed in 18 radio stations by April 2014 and tenders have been invited to install a further 35 FM transmitters in radio stations in the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

On 1 April 2013 the MRTV Web Portal was re-launched and features live streaming for MRTV, MI TV, Hluttaw TV Channel (Parliament Channel) and the National Races Channel. Moreover, the live streaming of the channels for mobile phones and tablet computers has been available since 15 March 2014.

In the past, we broadcast on TV nine hours a day during the week and 13 hours a day on weekends and holidays, with news broadcasts three times a day. However, starting from April 2013 we have broadcast 16 hours a day, with news aired 14 times per day.

As for radio transmission, in the past we broadcast 14 hours a day and news was broadcast six times a day. Now, we are broadcasting 18 hours a day with news bulletins 10 times a day.

Further, as a part of our growth strategy and according to the needs, news bureaus have been opened in Yangon and Mandalay. Another 11 news bureaus have been opened to service the National Races Channel. In the Yangon News Bureau and Mandalay News Bureau, radio journalists are working together with the TV department in the production and broadcast of news.

Of course, all of these changes and reforms mean we have to constantly upgrade the capacity of our employees. In all, I am proud to say that 578 staff across TV, radio and technical support

have so far benefitted from our training initiatives.

I want to stress that throughout the reforms we are undertaking at MRTV, the voice of the people remains at the heart of what we are trying to do. After all, as a public service provider, the most important relationship we have is that with the citizens of Myanmar.

Of course, many challenges remain if we are to meet our goals in the reform of the media sector. These include:

- Criticisms that the current reforms are either too slow or too fast;
- Better understanding among the public of the nature of a public service broadcaster;
- Boosting our human resources and technological capacities;
- Better communication with government departments whose staff do not understand the nature of public service broadcaster;
- Recognition that MRTV is understaffed and that some staff have left for the private sector.

The momentum will continue. There is a saying about media: Media shapes public opinion. As for MRTV, our motto is: Public opinion will shape MRTV.

**U Aye Chan Naing, Director,  
Chief Editor, Democratic Voice of  
Burma (DVB)**

Myanmar has seen a great deal of change over the last three years since the 2010 elections brought in a new government.

Public broadcasting is not the same as commercial broadcasting. It is the main point of public access to information that they need to know about. It speaks to everyone as a citizen. It does not belong to anyone, not the government nor the

” It is important to stress the need for independent media and a watertight law to go with it.

U Aye Chan Naing  
Director, Chief Editor,  
Democratic Voice of Burma  
(DVB)



private sector but to the public by which I mean the people.

If we look at the public service provided by the public broadcaster MRTV, there are more than 3,000 staff working for the station and the number may be rising. Given the changes taking place in Myanmar today it is quite a struggle for them to change their mindset suddenly when their minds should be focusing on providing a public broadcasting service.

I had a chance to meet with 15 members of the broadcasting council. Five of them were selected by our President. Another five were selected by Upper House members and the other five by Lower House members. Basically the government appoints most of the key persons in this council so that they keep it under their control. This bias can also be seen in the funding of MRTV, where up to 70 percent is provided by the state and 30 percent from commercial sources.

Given these circumstances, it is important to stress the need for independent media and a watertight law to go with it. If there is no clear editorial independence, this poses a danger to independence.

The effective development of public service broadcasting is not an easy job, but it can be done by working hard. When we look at the broadcast council, the authority still lies with the government and there are still no clear guidelines to the broadcast law. Public service broadcasting needs a level playing field.

**Speaker: Joe Elsom, Business Development and Strategic Partnerships Manager, Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) International Development, Australia**

What is the definition of public service media? It is more than entertainment. The heart of public service broadcasting is public service. It is about information and education. For example, a farmer in Cambodia may depend on the radio to keep themselves up to date with the latest news. Through the participation of the audience, it can encourage changes to public policy, opening up of roads, facilitating the transport of crops to market. In Australia, people have emergency broadcasting services, so the information broadcast about natural disasters can save lives.

In Myanmar, the MRTV and the Government have a responsibility. At the end of the day, success can be defined in how it demonstrates a public service. We are happy to help MRTV for the value it provides as a public broadcasting service.

The impact is measured on several levels. Trusting the information and having open information for the public would be considered a success. We see evidence in how it helps when providing radio programmes that examine the maternal health of women. The results can be seen on a practical level in birth spacing. Women who listened to the programme understood more, and this would affect pregnancies. The same can be said for programmes on HIV. Listeners understood more and behaviour could be changed. On the subject of male involvement in these areas, listening to the programs could mean a difference in whether men would more readily accompany women for clinical checkups.



Photo: IMS

These programmes raise awareness, educate, inform and entertain. How do you know when you have met your goal? When put at the heart, the goal is trust and credibility.

**Speaker: U Khin Maung Htay, Co-founder, Director, Forever Group Co. Ltd**

As part of improving and regulating public sector broadcasting, I suggest opening up more options with the public service media law, including offering a mechanism for expression of public opinion. There is an option that allows a member of the public to make a complaint, but what I mean is to open up more options for public involvement in TV and radio.

Secondly, there should be a mechanism to protect the public interest, including the right to access to information.

What is needed is a more open environment for the public to be involved in this public service. More options are needed to allow the public to voice their opin-

ions, both good and bad points, through the medium of public TV and radio.

The other issue involves the content of the public service media broadcasts. There are currently problems with access. For world events, especially the broadcast of sports events like the Olympics or World Cup football, our people do not have access to view these events unless they subscribe to the TV channel that has secured the contract to broadcast. We need an option that will allow the sharing of such major events between broadcasters.

We must value the importance of public involvement and access to public opinion, taking a cue from other countries that practice such an approach, like Thailand and Singapore. When looking at public service broadcasting, I was encouraged by the sentiment that public opinion will shape MRTV. I would say we should “shake” MRTV.

## Status

- The Myanmar government has taken the need for media reform seriously, but there is still the occasional interference of politicians.
- Media reforms have resulted in shifts to transform from state TV to public service broadcasting - from a government mouthpiece to a voice of the public.

## Way forward

- A number of suggestions were made to improve two Media Laws on which the Member of parliament will take note
- In the broadcast reform process, challenges should be addressed and resistance be recognised.
- A Forum on Broadcast Regulation should be organised

## Session 3

# Community radio and ethnic voices

### Introduction

The ongoing media reform process looks to encourage the development of community radio in Myanmar, though experience with this form of outreach has been limited so far. There is no lack of excitement about developing this sector with people keen to know when they can start. Plenty of examples could be drawn from neighbouring countries where this sector has lost its focus and intended outcomes. An equally important aspect is the challenge of developing effective platforms for the various ethnic groups. This session examined the lessons learnt, challenges and opportunities in establishing community radio mechanisms in Myanmar.

#### U Ze Yar, Director, Myanmar Radio and Television

When examining community radio and ethnic voices in Myanmar, we need to look at the legal framework that enables this media to operate. The current legal framework for establishing a community broadcast station includes two laws: the State-owned Enterprises Law and the Video and Television Law. In 2008, we received a new constitution and Section 354 of that constitution guarantees freedom of expression.

When we look at broadcasting as a whole, everybody knows that radio is the third tier after public and commercial broadcasting. Community broadcasting operations are owned and run by

communities as its name suggests. Any not-for-profit legal entity, except individuals, political parties, and criminal and banned organisations, can apply for a community radio license in order to operate.

The objective of community radio is to provide education and entertainment in specific geographic areas of the country. Community radio stations are expected to produce at least 50 percent of their programmes locally, as much as possible in the local language or dialect.

A community broadcasting institution should operate based on the criteria and we have that for regional FM stations now and most FM stations are focused on entertainment programmes. We have two radio channels for ethnic languages - 16 hours air time per day for nine ethnic language programmes for Upper Myanmar and 13 hours air time per day for eight ethnic language programmes for Lower Myanmar.

When we look at community broadcasting services, they will play an essential role in making the masses aware of their basic rights and duties often in far-flung areas of the country. However, we need to be careful in how we role these services out. We here in Myanmar need to avoid some problems that are seen in other countries, for example like our neighbour Thailand and the conflict played out on the radio pitting the "Red Shirts" against the "Yellow Shirts" that contributed to social disruption. With this in mind, we need to follow the correct guidelines and regulate properly to

make sure the right material is broadcast. For example, there are some problems in the south of Thailand and the broadcasting of hate speech can sully the atmosphere. So when rolling out community radio stations we would be wise to consider these issues.

To sum up, when we consider community radio broadcasting, we need to put in place and adhere to broadcasting laws and run training programmes to help develop human resources and an understanding of the correct approach to radio outreach. All these factors will contribute to the growth of community broadcasting services.

### Naw Hsa Moo, Thoolei Kaw Way Community Radio, Karen State

I would like to present community radio and ethnic voices from the perspective of Karen State where I come from. What I found was that community radio was one of my best teachers growing up. I listened to the programmes often where I lived in Karen State and really loved to learn from the radio.

Today, in my role as a community radio broadcaster, it is helpful to me if I feel I am very useful to the community. I get a sense of this when I travel around in the villages. Sometimes when I walk around in the communities, the people know me and recognize me. It can be comical at times when they recognize me and then say, you look very small [referring to my physical size], expecting somebody bigger.

When we look at the ethnic areas and the remote parts of Myanmar and the refugee camps, radio is one of the main ways that people receive news and entertainment. It is one of the fastest ways to get access to news. Many people in the refugee camps are subject to restrictions on movement. For these people,

radio is trusted whether in terms of reporting on local issues and problems, health, education or forms of livelihood.

In these circumstances, people share information. In Karen State, for example, many people are illiterate and listening to the radio is a way they receive information. For many, this information is not accessible by internet, phone or TV as they do not have these options. It is not just a matter of sharing news and useful information. The radio also provides a chance to entertain these rather isolated communities when there are no other alternatives.

Any notion that TV will replace radio is unfounded when it comes to these communities. It is the primary form of communication, particularly for the poor and it is the most affordable, given the cheapness of radios and batteries. Community broadcasting is a good way to reach ethnic community groups. Since radio is a low power-consuming device, it is beneficial in rural areas where there is no good electricity supply. Therefore community broadcasting is an effective way to reach out and touch different ethnic groups.

What we have found is that ethnic groups trust the community radio that broadcasts in their own language.

But when we make an effort to assess what it will take to set up community radio, there are the following challenges:

- Difficulty in applying for a broadcasting license;
- Funding constraints;
- Lack of skills amongst broadcasters;
- Geographical difficulties.

With all this in mind, the Myanmar government should offer media freedom to community radio for every ethnic group to help them keep themselves up to date and well informed.

” What we have found is that ethnic groups trust the community radio that broadcasts in their own language.

Naw Hsa Moo  
Thoolei Kaw Way  
Community Radio, Karen  
State





**Daw Hla Yin Aye, Manager,  
Mandalay FM**

Mandalay FM is the only entertainment radio station in this central area of Myanmar, but the owners are trying to develop it into a community radio. These are early days. Since there is no reliable human resource training in radio broadcasting, most of the radio station broadcasts in Myanmar are based on providing a mix of different music types and generally there is no live broadcasting.

I have been working with Mandalay FM for six years. From my experience, I believe that live broadcasting is very effective as a means to share and to be in touch with the people. We at Mandalay FM have been pursuing this approach, developing our live broadcasts. It has been a learning exercise. After we were trained by a Swedish radio team, we came to realize that live radio is not

just entertainment, but an active way to connect.

At the beginning, we had problems with a lot of wrong information being provided by participants in our live broadcasts. But it was worth working our way through these problems to gradually earn people's trust.

As part of this process we have to consider our listeners and how they listen to the radio. Most people in rural areas listen to the radio in their homes or working in the fields. In urban areas, most of the listening is done in cars.

What we have found is that we can provide more current affairs, music mixed with dialogue, and it does not come over as acting on the radio. As radio presenters we find we like to talk to our new friends in real time on air. By doing so, we connect with what is happening

Photo: MMDG



outside our studio and city. Everybody has their own stories and through this live interaction we provide a chance for people to share their feelings and ideas on the radio.

We provide traffic reports to help people who are having problems with the traffic in Mandalay. We do not get information from traffic police. What we have found is that this does not work. Our methodology has been to accept phone calls from the public who are on the road. Some people cheat. Some complain about the police. As a result of this, the traffic announcer can face problems. But after going through some difficulty with this approach, we finally built public trust so that our traffic reports are useful, accurate and engaging.

The reform process that is taking place in broadcasting has resulted in a connection between the audience and the radio. Mandalay FM now is a developing radio station, and we hope to grow stronger with the introduction of the broadcasting law.

**Madhu Acharya, Project Director,  
Internews Nepal Project**

One of the most popular places in the world for community radio is Nepal. There have been significant changes there over the years. In 1996, when I was travelling to Humla, in the remote west of Nepal, I met a person on the road and asked what the most important needs of the people were. They said roads, elections, and ideas and information. The latter is what the radio can provide.

In 1997, the first radio station was set up and today there are more than 600 radio stations across Nepal.

Radio is the most trusted form of media communication in Nepal. If we look at media users, 46 percent are radio listeners, 22 percent watch TV, and six percent read newspapers.

About 700 radio licenses have been issued for community and commercial radio. After the Maoist political party came to power in April 2006, the governments have been very liberal when it comes to the freedom to operate radio stations. When we look at the radio stations we find that most are non-profit organisations, some are government-run and some are run by libraries.

How are they spread across the country? There are 40 stations in Kathmandu and all the radio frequencies are now taken up. If we look around the country we see that there are about 15-20 radio stations in every town. Most of these stations are aligned to political parties. So when it comes to the extent of radio coverage and communication, Nepal is the leader in the whole of South Asia.

That being said, there are challenges. Much of community radio broadcasts depend on Kathmandu-generated content. Clearly there is a gap. Much more is needed in the way of community-oriented programmes. People want to listen to the entertainment and information that is relevant to them in their communities.

Part of the problem as these radio networks have been developed is that there has not been enough focus on human resources. Content is the priority. There is a need for involvement in human resources development and training. This has proved very successful in the Tamang and Pahari communities, for example. Of course, we have to be careful not to encourage conflict between ethnic communities. We've seen examples of this in Nepal.



Variety of newspapers and journalists in Yangon. Photo: IMS

### Status

- Local communities have grown over the last decade in Myanmar, providing community-centric content.
- Challenges include the difficulty of applying for a broadcasting license, funding, a skills deficit, and geographical difficulties.

### Way forward

- Opportunity to open up to more stations, particularly in ethnic areas.
- Attention needed on funding, training, and easing problems associated with geographical challenges.
- Training for radio journalists needed
- Standards for community radio must be addressed

## Session 4

### Election reporting

#### Introduction

Myanmar is expecting national elections at the end of 2015 where the media will test its capacity and responsibility to report after the reforms that began in 2011. Media coverage needs to be fair if the process is to be seen as democratic. The question is how to ensure fair elections. All Myanmar citizens need access to reliable information. This is only possible through professional and diverse journalism, delivered by journalists, not activists. This session looked at whether the Myanmar media is ready to address such issues.

#### Dr. Daw Myint Kyi, Member of Union Election Commission

The media and election reporting play a critical role in the electoral process. Holding an election provides the people with the opportunity to make crucial decisions about their future. There is the need for the media to cover the political parties effectively so that people can make an educated decision on the political party of their choice. In addition, the public needs information about the rules and processes involved in the electoral process. The people must understand how to follow the system. The media can fulfil all these needs.

Press coverage of elections involves care so that news, interviews and programmes are not biased, keeping in mind the strategy of political parties will be aimed at attracting voters. The resulting media coverage should give equal opportunity to all parties.

Myanmar is preparing for the 2015 national elections. To date, there are 67 registered parties with some more in the process of being registered. Out of these, some are richly funded and others have limited funding.

The media is developing well in Myanmar. Cooperation between the media and political parties can help the people know when to vote, how to vote and offer guidance on who to vote for, at the same time informing them about the rules and regulations. My organisation, the Union Election Commission, is seeking to monitor and watch the electoral process to make sure it is free and fair for voters.

However, in this process we will need reliable journalists. We have seen how trusted media have been developed around the world basing their principles on truth and accuracy. To obtain genuine information is the most important task for a journalist. The reporter should not twist the original information because it could even provoke a riot. We have seen difficulties with media coverage of communal tension in Mandalay and elsewhere. With this in mind, we have the codes of conduct from 150 organisations around the world that offer guidance on correct reporting practice.

The media plays a crucial role in providing the news as well as details of the election and it is important that we offer freedom to journalists to report. But in Myanmar some journalists use incorrect information to attract public attention, which is a very dangerous thing to do.

” Cooperation between the media and political parties can help the people know when to vote, how to vote.

Dr. Daw Myint Kyi  
Member of Union Election  
Commission



In order to obtain genuine information, the journalists need to:

- Make sure the date and facts are reliable;
- Know the rules and regulations to avoid mistakes;
- Provide equal amount of coverage for both sides.

Overall, it is important that there is cooperation between the Union Election Commission, political parties, and the media to achieve the best level of election reporting.

#### U Khin Maung Win, Deputy Director, Democratic Voice of Burma

When we look at how to approach national elections the key principles are impartiality in reporting and fair and balanced reporting. Let us take a look at the history of reporting elections in Myanmar. We have the milestone elections of 1960 and 2010 to follow. In 1960, we can call it the era of independent media in which media coverage could be described as free, fair and competitive. In between we had the 1974 and 1988 elections that were covered by what we can describe as a controlled media because it was only a one-party race on both occasions. When it comes to the 2010 elections, we can consider media reporting was carried out under “controlled and controversial” conditions.

Covering the coming 2015 elections will require skilled and experienced journalists who understand how to cover elections. Let us take a look at the gap. If we make a calculation for the 2015 general election, from 1960 to 2015 the time elapsed since the last democratic general election in 1960 is 55 years and adding the minimum age of an experienced journalist of 25 years, the age of an experienced journalist at the time

of 2015 election would need to be at least 80.

Where can we find journalists with the knowledge, experience, skills and capability that an 80-year-old journalist might have? We have to accept the fact that none of us has experienced elections in free and fair conditions in this country.

Given this challenge, we need to look at how we should prepare as journalists to cover this groundbreaking election in 2015. The editorial policy of the media must guarantee fair and balanced reporting, with no prejudice, and the resources need to be sufficient enough to cover the election. At the same time, we also need to keep in mind that the media can be very divisive and we need to look at how to curtail this tendency.

As it stands at the moment, many media organisations in Myanmar struggle to maintain their daily operations and put out their products. And when we look at the national elections, they will need to cover the whole country in one day. Media organisations must cooperate in the process and not regard each other as competitors for the interests and good of the people.

Here are a few tips for journalists covering the election: follow the issues to look at beforehand, report the process on election day, and report the post-election process. In order to do this effectively, journalists must go beyond their comfort zone.

#### U Sein Win, Training Director, Myanmar Journalism Institute (MJI)

When we look at the upcoming 2015 elections, the objective should be for polls to be free and fair and include media coverage of all the stakeholders. I



Photo: MMDG

” The Myanmar Journalism Institute and we can provide you with training on reporting elections.

U Sein Win  
Training Director, Myanmar Journalism Institute (MJI)

” Reporting elections is really about reporting democracy in action.

Adnan Rehmat  
Director, Civic Action Resource, Pakistan

am confident we can overcome these challenges.

Let us look at where we stand in terms of media capability. Our journalists were not trained to cover elections. So 2015 will be the biggest moment for them in their media coverage of events in Myanmar. Given these circumstances, we should have honesty, should be independent, and should be objective. The problem is that we have young, inexperienced journalists.

Whenever you look at the capability of our journalists in this country one can recognise that they are quick learners, but they can also make mistakes. The media coverage of the communal crisis in Rakhine State last year was mixed, ridiculous and divisive, but in the case of [communal riots in] Mandalay, it did not happen in the same way. There was more measured, balanced reporting that came out of Mandalay. The difference was that we had time to prepare.

We need to work to help our reporters with skills and knowledge to cover the election properly. This covers all forms of media from newspapers and magazines to television. When we consider the

media’s coverage of elections, TV and radio are very powerful in reaching out to the people, to reflect voters’ opinions as seen in election coverage around the world.

If you need us, you can ask for training from the Myanmar Journalism Institute and we can provide you with training on reporting elections. Not only training the journalists but even the various stakeholders amongst the political parties, who also need advice in how to interact with media personnel. Reporters and other media personnel may not have experience or know about election reporting, but we still have enough time to prepare, including offering advice on how to handle such issues as coverage of vote-buying, a potential threat to the election’s outcome.

We need free, fair and democratic elections and a competent media is part of that process.

**Adnan Rehmat, Director, Civic Action Resource, Pakistan**

How the media covers the elections affects the outcome as we have seen in Pakistan. Reporting elections is really about reporting democracy in action. And democracy is really a mechanism to unceasingly articulate and assert public interest and citizens’ aspirations for their collective welfare and prosperous future.

There are four points that cover the promises and pitfalls, revisiting the primary mission of journalism, the guardian of public interest.

Firstly, all stakeholders must be brought onto the same page. Promoting pluralism and strengthening pluralism, strengthening accountability, and calling all actors to account. There are the right kind of laws. And there is the strengthen-



ing of journalism and media. The pitfalls include manipulation, with competing players interfering in media coverage. There is the question of credibility, with media betraying the public trust. This can fuel political conflict.

Secondly, who are the key stakeholders and how helpful can they be for voters. The election candidates have the most to win and lose, they are the most desperate ones. They can be helpful but if things don't go their way, there can be problems. Political parties understand the importance of media strategies. The election commission will be a friend of the media if the election coverage is going the right way, but may respond negatively if there are problems.

Thirdly, there are the conflicting interests of commercial media during election times. These conflicts include the parties and the military having competing interests, as we have seen in coverage in Pakistan, and the difficulty that most media will not have reported in elections before.

Fourthly, there is the challenge of how the media report the elections. Reporting an election is an event or process and there are stages to go through. There are strategies to consider. Given this, the media may consider having election reporting cells in-house to handle this.

We have to be careful. When it comes to editorial policy, a free media can mean a media free to choose sides in the election. There is a need to acknowledge this, the need for editors to communicate with their staffers. When it comes to

newsroom and reporter management, you can't have a secret policy and a public policy. Clearly, when it comes to planning media coverage of a national election, this process offers opportunities but also challenges.

## Status

- Rules and regulations of the elections were not available to the public in 2010 and 2012. Efforts are now being made with international organisations to disseminate information to the public.
- Journalists covering the 2015 elections will lack experience from covering open elections, given 1960 was the last free and fair election in Myanmar.
- Is there a need for a specific journalism code of conduct for covering elections?

## Way forward

- Training is needed, possibly with the help of foreign media or development partners.
- The Union Elections Commission must be transparent and communicate more effectively with the media, in conjunction with local and international election observers.
- Good media relations must be built between the journalist community and the Union Elections Commission.

19 September 2014

## Session 5

# The Press Council and the Complaints Mechanism

### Introduction

The by-laws of the newly introduced media laws are in the making. These will provide the detailed legal provisions for the Press Council mechanism. The interim Press Council has provided its proposals for the legislation that is now being reviewed by the MoI and the Attorney General's department. The Council has yet to adopt a comprehensive complaints mitigating mechanism against its newly introduced Code of Conduct for Myanmar journalists. This session discussed what could be the best model for resolving disputes for the upcoming permanent Press Council. It also looked at what should be the role of the press in defending press freedom and the rights of journalists.

#### U Pe Myint, Member, Myanmar Press Council (interim), Complaints Committee

The Myanmar Press Council Complaints Committee held discussions in 2012 about Press Council rules in order to reduce complaints against media which mostly cause media people difficulties. Up until now we have dealt with 82 complaints, a number which might appear small when compared to other countries.

It appears that we now have the chance to enjoy the beginnings of media freedom, although there are some complaints that have come from the government. This is something new for our country. But with the agreement of the

government, the censorship system was removed in 2012. We all celebrated that the government council approved opening the doors to freedom from censorship.

We have been able to resolve the majority of complaints over the media, mostly complaints about factual errors, one-sided reporting, and slander. Some journalists did not cooperate in the complaints process. Some claimed what they wrote was correct.

Some complainants also refuse to cooperate to solve the complaints by abstaining from signing a statement that they made the complaints. It happens sometimes that those who complain don't identify themselves, using communication devices such as mobiles, or email, and this has meant the Press Council has had to try to investigate who the complainant is. This takes a lot of time.

The Complaints Committee has worked to get lawsuits against journalists withdrawn. In this regard, the media has advanced further than other institutions.

Various institutions in Myanmar are still in need of change by which I mean they need to upgrade. The media is upgrading and making some advances and journalists and complainants don't seem to have caught up. Recently, a meeting of the Fourth Estate took place at which the conflicts within the Myanmar Press Council were discussed. Further discussions will be held with the hope of getting a better result.

**U Ye Tint, Director General, Information and Public Relations Department, Ministry of Information**

Our new government has embarked on media reforms as part of its overall democratisation process, step by step. Now we have a newly-enacted media law and drafting of by-laws.

We are seeing progress. Publishing processes are easier than in the past. The Media Bill and Printing and Publishing Enterprises Law are making progress, but there are still challenges. We find with the media that there may be unbalanced coverage of issues, the use of weak sources, unclear descriptions, disrespect and bias in published reports.

However, finding a process to deal with the problems that typically crop up between journalists and citizens or the government due to the publication of certain stories will be solved. Discussions will be held in Nay Pyi Taw on how to solve problems between the government and journalists. All this is being pursued so that in the future, the complaints mechanism, now being drawn up, will be the medium to use rather than taking cases to the courts.

**U Ba Oo, Myanmar Journalists' Association, Mandalay**

One of the problems of the growing speed of media development in our country is that our journalists are facing some difficulties in not being able to deliver the correct information in a timely manner.

For example, a report was published about a young female tourist guide giving birth to a child with the father being a foreigner. When we took a look at this story, we found that the complainant or source of the story remained any-

mous, so the news was unreliable. Because of this “false news” some of our journalist members faced charges in court. The story slandered tourist guides in general. This resulted in the Myanmar Press Council accusing Mandalay News and Yadanapon News of reporting incorrect information. From this case, it is clear that many of our journalists do not know the rules and regulations. This causes problems for them and typically they are unaware that they are, in effect, breaking the rules of responsible conduct.

Every news station or publisher has employees who follow the rules, but also have freelancers, some of whom do not know the rules and regulations. Under these circumstances, the public should make an effort to understand the role of the Myanmar Press Council in these times where reporters face difficulties in reporting effectively.

Some journalists do not feel they have to follow the guidelines set out by the Myanmar Press Council because they are not a government body. Instead of taking that approach, it would be wiser for journalists and media people to work together to respect the rules and by encouraging people to care about the rules in order to reduce the number of complaint cases.

My hope is that the Myanmar Press Council will get stronger in this country.

**Manfred Protze, Member of the Complaints Commission, German Press Council**

Germany suffered under twelve years of Nazi dictatorship and we learnt what censorship was in practice. All media organisations during that period were a mouthpiece of the government. After the Second World War, Germany developed a new democratic system and

” Effective self-regulation is perhaps the best system for promoting excellence in media regulation.

Ramon Tuazon  
President, Asian Institute  
of Journalism and  
Communication (AIJC), The  
Philippines

established a free press, like our own version of the BBC and a free print press.

Press Councils handle the problems. Free press means public radio along the same lines as the BBC, without the control of the government and press without regulations.

Here in Myanmar the new democratic government is trying to continue to control the media by the use of laws. Journalists are defending press freedom, convinced that the media is a special case, with NGOs calling on the government to get a fair opinion.

Who controls the press when they make a mistake? In Germany the answer is the Press Council, with input from the public, not the government. In this society you have the right to express your opinion. The German Press Council is a self-regulating body. We do not have an ombudsman. We never send journalists to jail and there are no fines. This approach recognises that indirect censorship is caused by the fear of being jailed or fined.

When making a judgment on a complaint, it is important to have an unbiased person doing this and secondly, it should not be a media business employer.

To find a solution to a complaint, everyone has to be willing to accept the media should be open to discussion. The Press Council is relevant for all media. Everyone has the right to make complaints, whether a normal reader or the President, everyone can make complaints without privilege.

### Ramon Tuazon, President, Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC), The Philippines

Equipping the Myanmar Press Council requires media literacy. A media literate public is where the news media can perform freely and the public can be involved. A complaint mechanism is useless if it is the media user who is the only one complaining. As Myanmar continues to walk along the democratic path, this is the best time to introduce media literacy.

In the Philippines the national press council was not successful, but regional and local press councils work well for the country. The regional press council has adopted a multi-sector membership which perhaps addresses the concern that many press councils are all “boys clubs” organised to protect self-interests. The local press council has members from the media, academia, and the public sector, and from the Church as well.

A reviewing board consisting of three to five members is formed to hear each complaint filed. They are selected from among the Council's general membership depending on availability, willingness, and absence of conflict of interest. If a huge amount of complaints come in, the committee members deal with those complaints, which is not same as in Myanmar.

There are some guidelines that could be relevant for the Press Council in Myanmar to consider:

- The complaint shall be addressed first to the publication concerned. Only when it is not satisfactorily met by the newspaper should further steps be taken;
- A waiver of the right to sue shall be a condition for a complaint to be heard by the review board;

- No lawyer shall appear before any proceeding of the review board;
- Meetings of the review board shall be in executive sessions closed to the media and the public;
- The filing of the complaint and all proceedings relating to it shall be confidential until the review board renders its decision final.

So, if the newspaper refuses to publish the decision within two days from receipt of the copy, the Council shall release it to all the other publications. The Press Council through its secretariat, may refuse to accept a complaint under cases that the Council shall list as off-limits; such as legal or contractual matters or those subject to legal proceedings; parts of the newspaper that are not classified as editorial content; and the editor's choice of articles to publish.

Aside from providing an internal review mechanism, the media ombudsman can also help a good relationship with the public as the setup provides the message that the public's feedback is valued and their complaints are appropriately addressed.

In conclusion, effective self-regulation is perhaps the best system for promoting excellence in media regulation. This will not happen unless a media law is passed and media literacy is improved.

## Status

- Early days for the Myanmar Press Council's Complaints Committee with a limited number of complaints dealt with (82).
- The Media Bill's by-laws are being drafted now and are under review.
- Concern over the journalists failing to respect the Myanmar Press Council.

## Way forward

- There is a need for amicable solutions to disputes.
- Complaints mechanism should become more useful for the media environment.
- Reporters need resources and support, both in terms of understanding correct practices, and if facing challenges over their stories.
- Media-literate public needed through education and the Ministry of Information.





3<sup>rd</sup> CONFERENCE







Photo: MMDG

## Session 6

# Managing a sustainable business model in the media sector

### Introduction

The rapidly expanding media industry not only challenges the media as a business, but also raises questions about competitive media content and the availability of trained journalists, capital, equipment and facilities, and distribution channels. The rapid expansion in mobile networks as well as the digital/data sector provides new media platforms and also introduces new media products on the market. The key words are survival, sustainability and economic viability in the new era of media in Myanmar.

#### U Ko Ko, chairman, Yangon Media Group

When looking at how to set up and run a sustainable media business, we can see there have been some improvements. Obtaining a publishing permit is easier than in the past. This means a greater number of weekly journals and books are being published in a freer environment. Such is the change that we can see one and a half times the number of new journals, books and dailies in the market.

On the reader side, reader numbers are not expanding at the same pace. As a result of this, the print media is facing a big challenge at a financial level with publications competing in a limited market. What we are seeing is that the younger generation is not interested in reading. I would blame our education system which does not promote the habit of reading.

Even the students who are reading tend to do little to expand their reading scope. A lot of students are not interested in finding other reference books apart from their allotted text books. When trying to analyse why this is happening, we can see that the growing popularity of looking at material online and using social media, leads to people becoming less interested in reading publications.

The demand side is not the only troublesome area. The other problem is the distribution and transportation problems for print publications, which are rather underdeveloped. People in some rural areas only receive a publication one or two days after the official publication date in Yangon.

The other challenge is that of declining advertising income for print media as most commercials go to television. Many publications find it difficult to compete amongst a limited pool of advertisers at this particular stage in the country's economic development.

When we consider what could be done to help media businesses, a reduction or adjustment of tax for media organisations should be considered.

#### U Sonny Swe, CEO, Mizzima Media Group

I am quite optimistic about the market and the current generations of media product buyers. There are opportunities, but they are not like those of the past. We cannot only rely on the print version



of newspapers to survive in the future. You have to target the growing digital generation as well. You have to try to make the most of your data and content within your media company.

During last year's media conference, we offered a clear message that print would die because of the inroads of online media, but this year I think we have seen improvement because the discussion focuses on a dual track, maintaining both digital and print versions of our products.

There are tons of challenges left in publishing in Myanmar. But there are also opportunities in the market, especially with the young generation coming up. It is not only print. When we look at private media companies it is clear that print faces problems. There is no way we can compete with government newspapers in terms of distribution, for example.

Print will be part of the mix. The future lies in publishing on five to ten different platforms with the aim that everybody is reading your stories, whether as a print newspaper in your hand or news sent to your smartphone. In this respect, the message is keep print and push digital.

Watching this generation and their use of mobile phones will provide a guide to our future. Options are increasing and prices are going down dramatically. We originally had SIM cards issued by our government that were expensive. With the launch of Ooredoo and then Telenor there will be a huge amount of people who will use mobile phones, since the prices are going down at an unbelievable rate. Today, more than 50 percent of internet users in Myanmar surf through their mobile phones.

In order to survive, we as media publishers have to find a way to keep in touch through the digital world. So my mes-

sage is try to get going digitally if you have the chance.

### U Min Min Latt, *Thanlwin Times, Mon State*

When we look at local media in Mon State, we find that they face a lot of challenges. The financial market is small in this state. Generally, investors do not like to invest in local publications in the Mon language. In terms of demographics, there are a total of 2 million people in Mon State but then we need to ask the question how many of these people will be readers. It is a small market, based on local towns, and most of our Mon people can't read in the Myanmar language. When we look at local publications, I am not sure we can survive.

If we compare the situation to Yangon, the big advertisers like Telenor telecommunications company don't want to advertise in small media publications and outlets. If we look at how we can move forward, financial support and international development support could help us in some way. If there was a commitment there, we could rely on them to expand our publications.

Under the more open media and political environment that we see today, we are looking to expand or extend our work, but this presents a challenge. We need competent journalists and editors and need to produce reliable news of good quality that will generate more interest. This is a human resource issue that is not easy to solve.

As for the 2015 election, we hope to cover it extensively for our readership in Mon State.

Local media can survive in the short term, but the challenge will be how we can survive in the long run. We have to look at the trends and the move to digi-

” The future lies in publishing on five to ten different platforms

U Sonny Swe  
CEO, Mizzima Media Group

” The survival of media is like swimming through a pond that is full of crocodiles. The swimmer has to be careful not to touch the mouth or tail of the crocodiles.

Bulbul Monjurul Ahsan  
Vice Chairman,  
International Press Institute

tal. As televisions and particularly mobile media are popular among young people, the young generation uses their mobiles to keep informed. A sustainable business model needs to keep this in mind.

### Bulbul Monjurul Ahsan, Vice Chairman, International Press Institute

The survival of media is like swimming through a pond that is full of crocodiles. The swimmer has to be careful not to touch the mouth or tail of the crocodiles.

If you look at Asia you will find the blooming of print newspapers, while westerners have turned to internet media, although private television channels are still popular.

Fair journalism is a matter of having enough data. If you have enough data you will have good journalism. Unfortunately, owners spend more of their money on their machine, more than on their men working hard behind the scenes who provide them a good quality product. Although Myanmar is only starting up media businesses in the pond full of crocodiles, there is a huge sized crocodile ahead to face.

This is not a level playing field. Private media receive limited access to the advertising pie.

News media companies face a challenge in reaching out to the younger generation.

My humble suggestion for Myanmar is to sustain the industry. Across Asia, we all use bus transportation even though technology has improved. Bus transportation is still the device that completes our data. When it comes to media, people trust the same source that they have been putting their trust in. All digital

media will become like some reference books, like Facebook and Wikipedia. The main source will always be newspapers and journals. So at the end of the day, you need to take care of the people behind the scenes.

There are young fellows who need jobs and who can provide the media with good quality data. In this process of collecting data, try to avoid repeating the same issue as much as possible. A finished product should not just be the highlights, like on television. Newspapers are not only for highlights, but for detail, that is what people expect from a newspaper. Good journalism is a good business. People will keep buying your product as long as the product is good.

## Status

- Myanmar has a highly competitive media publication market with a limited or declining advertising pool, and a poor delivery system.
- This is not a level playing field, with the private media receiving limited access to the advertising pie.
- News media companies face a challenge in reaching out to the younger generation.

## Way forward

- While preserving print media, focus also on expanding digital platforms as a sustainable way forward. Young people use mobile phones to access news, reflecting an opportunity for publishers.
- A means of funding must be found for media outside Yangon.
- There is a need to address the taxation system, given that the media offers a “public good.”



## Session 7

# The media, peace building and civil society

### Introduction

This session looked at whether Myanmar media has a strong and mutually benefiting relationship with civil society. In the conflict and peace negotiations the question has been raised as to whether Myanmar media is a “driver” of conflict by reinforcing the prejudices and stereotypes that exist between the conflicting parties through its coverage or whether it can also work as a peace builder. The session highlighted the necessary healthy relationship between media and civil society and the critical role of media in the promotion and pursuit of reforms in other sectors, such as the peace process, elections and the criminal justice system.

#### Dr U Kyaw Thu, Director, Paung Ku

When we look at the peace-building process in Myanmar, it is described as a process to end conflicts between people in the ethnic states and the central government. But for me, peace is directly related to the reform of education of ethnic people, and resolving conflicts over land possession between farmers and investment or development in areas such as dam-building.

Part of the process of peace building in the country is to make sure that media workers have sufficient knowledge, background and capacity to help inform their audience or readers. Media and the people should be connected and the

media organisations should be beneficial to the people.

When it comes to the sensitive issue of negotiations and peace-building, some media have a tendency to sensationalise to catch the eye of more readers. This can prove difficult and destructive when delicate peace negotiations are underway.

#### Aung Naing Oo, Special Advisor, Myanmar Peace Center

When I meet journalists, I typically have to say that what I am about to tell them is “off the record”. This is important in order for me to explain to them the sensitive situation and issues behind the process of negotiations without them actually publishing those details. If they publish those sensitive details, it may damage the negotiations.

The peace process is deeply intertwined with the media. The peace process progresses much faster with the help of the media. We have made progress. There is only about 4 percent that remains to be talked about concerning the cease-fire agreement on the table. The media seeks to cover this and there is always a press conference after closed-door negotiations that allows the media to openly collect information about the peace process.

Having said that, some of those involved in negotiations are not happy to see the discussions reproduced in print. Yet, it

” The peace process is deeply intertwined with the media.

Aung Naing Oo  
Special Advisor, Myanmar  
Peace Center

is a good thing for us to share information, but we have to be careful about what we write.

When we started the peace process two years ago, we were restricted by our country's government. We have made progress and now we are at a stage where we still have two parties at the talks who do not agree with the general consensus. We can say that the peace process is still fragile.

I personally would like to have an open relationship with the media, which is really hard in my position at the Myanmar Peace Center. I was seen as threat to the general public while I lived in exile. But actually I would love to tell the story about the peace process via the media. I am so much looking forward to being open with the media when the whole negotiating process is finished. Until then, I have to be very careful because the peace process is so sensitive. If you don't pay attention to every single issue, it could provoke a bad result.

As I mentioned, I have talked with local and foreign media "off the record" to offer them background about the progress of the negotiations. I have had mixed results. I always say "off the record" whenever I start to talk to international media. I make it clear that if they want to quote my words, they have to ask for my permission, explaining how want to use it. This is understood and works well with foreign reporters, particularly one reporter who regularly contacts me. But I have had trouble with local reporters publishing my "off the record" comments without checking with me.

**Michael Pan, Project Director,  
Internews Europe**

We have to import a training model from another country which will suit Myanmar. We are in the process of im-

plementing a project to Myanmar, a media laboratory to train journalists. To improve the media coverage is to include people's voice in the media. We have a 10-week-long journalism workshop to train journalists in peace process issues, and have worked with the trainees to produce 600 published stories. The trainees had to go to different regions of the country which typically are hard to reach by Yangon-based journalists, such as small villages in the Shan, Kachin and Karen states.

In addition to this outreach, we have had formal classes in Yangon as well. Since journalists are young they need to catch up with the recent historical events of this country which they have missed due to a period of controlled media. As part of this training programme, network communications or fellowships are offered with various community radios, placing trainees out in villages or in more remote areas to obtain an insight into the issues that are important to these communities.

Students are trained to obtain several skills communicating, sharing, and collecting information from the local people in these circumstances. To be able to reach people, one has to earn their trust so that one can dig out data and information.

This can be an eye-opening experience for trainees. We have received some testimonies from our participants that when they went out to visit people in the countryside, they found themselves in a situation where they learned new things which they would never have known by only working in their hometown, Yangon, where typically the bulk of journalists come from. It gives us real satisfaction to see our training programmes helping like this.





**Ljiljana Zurovac, Executive Director of the Press Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

I am a journalist of more than 25 years. From my personal experience, my colleagues say the world of media is a terrible one. It is tough providing information to different nationalities, as we saw during the conflicts in former Yugoslavia.

Not only in Myanmar, but all over the world, media professionals have to start to think. A journalist has to be a really noble person. The journalist has to be respectful. The journalist has to follow the rules.

When we look at all kinds of media, there are a number of media outlets that don't have proper education, freedom of media, expression, speech and opinion. If we don't have this we can't talk about democracy.

When we examine the situation in Myanmar we see the same problem. Unbalanced information is very dangerous, one-sided stories are dangerous to other side.

I have developed many education programmes, we accept complaints and we educate people about freedom of expression and how to stop hate speech,

Photo: MMDG



which is a discriminating act. Hate speech does not lead to the right form of democracy.

The process of peace is still fragile. Just because certain media organisations don't follow professional rules is no excuse for poor media practice. We must remember that young people listen to the media and educate themselves from poor reporting, their main source being the internet. What we want are responsible, free media.

## Status

- On-going efforts are being made to train and enhance journalists' understanding of peace and conflict issues.
- Many people in the ethnic areas do not know about or understand the ceasefire negotiations, hence there is a need for media organisations to help inform them.
- Rural people are still unable to access media effectively, and often find it hard to get their voices heard.
- Negotiations are taking place in the public/media with a negative impact.

## Way forward

- More needs to be done to help journalists understand the complexity of the conflicts and peace efforts.
- While media coverage of peace and conflict issues should be encouraged, care has to be taken that more reporting does not lead to more conflict.
- More needs to be done to improve communications with the media when working in a multi-language environment.
- Should a media strategy be developed on the role of media in conflict and be agreed on by all stakeholders in the conflict?

## Session 8

# Beyond media laws – other legal threats to freedom of expression

### Introduction

Several recent developments in Myanmar highlighted the incompatibility between several existing laws and the public's right to information. Without knowledge about existing non-media related laws, journalists and media workers risk put themselves at great risk, including the possibility of jail, as seen in several recent high-profile cases. The session looked at the challenges for journalists while at the same time raising public debate on the issue.

#### U Zaw Thet Htwe, Myanmar Journalist Union (MJU)

There have been two menacing media periods in contemporary Myanmar. I will provide a review of laws before 2010, when the last national elections were held, and the current democratic transitional period.

Before 2010, the 1962 Press Law No. 17/20 which spells out what is allowed to be published could lead to a 17-year prison sentence for a media worker who breaks the law. During that period, hanging up a picture of a "banned" person on your wall could send you to jail for 17 years.

The most menacing laws that are still in place include the Official Secrets Act 1923 governing the transmitting of information and the 2004 Electronics Transactions Law.

I was sent to jail for 17 years due to the 2004 Electronics Transactions Law which controls the media. The reason was that an email was found on my computer indicating that I was in contact with and giving information to international organisations in the wake of Cyclone Nargis in 2008.

Comedian Ko Zarganar, one of my friends, was put in prison for 45 years as three emails were found on his computer. [He has since been released].

Following the enactment of the 2008 Constitution, the media started to develop. Some of the "threatening" laws were changed. The currently existing Electronics Transactions Law should be changed as it is now out of date.

Some laws were adopted from the British colonial administration and India. We still use them. But those laws can be described as both criminal and severe and we need to review them too.

We need to know the best and safest ways to access information. Currently, over 4,000 reporters are not protected by the News Media Law 2014, which is not finished yet. So the present era is a critical period, still using the old laws.

There is the question of different laws overlapping while many different media laws will be defined soon. We as journalists have many questions about how to face these legal threats and challenges.

” The most menacing laws that are still in place include the Official Secrets Act 1923 governing the transmitting of information and the 2004 Electronics Transactions Law.

U Zaw Thet Htwe  
Myanmar Journalist Union (MJU)



**Dr U Thi Han Myo Nyunt, Legal Counsel, Myanmar Peace Center**

What can we do under the current circumstances to be free of threatening laws? Let's start by agreeing on freedom of speech and then move on to special rights in society and how we can develop these.

Freedom of speech is fundamental in democracy. Freedom of speech is essential to be able to speak the truth to the government. This process brings value to a democratic society. The freedom process provides hope to all media people. At the end of the day, we've been asked to provide our media with a shield; perhaps it does or doesn't have one. This is what we need to discuss.

We need to address laws and regulations regarding publications. The danger does not come from the law, but from how we understand it and choose to carry it out. If the information collected is not properly handled, it can give us a wrong answer, a situation which we are afraid of.

The freedom process framed within the media law currently in process shows how journalists and media can work in society with clarity and safety. We have to realise that freedom of speech and press freedom has its limits. It needs a debate to arrive at a good solution. The best way is to use the current laws as best we can while at the same time we consider how to polish, remove or rebuild other laws. We need competent legal research to serve this purpose.

**U Khaing Maung Yee, Member of Parliament, Pyithu Hluttaw**

We have heard from some media people who claim they are being controlled. From my point of view as a member of parliament, we must keep in mind that

we are in between two different governments. By this I mean some members of parliament worked for the previous government and continued in the new government. Some of the current parliament members hold the same positions in the new government as they held in the old one. For this reason, newcomers as myself in the new government may not share the same points of view as those who also worked for the old government.

The question we are frequently asked by the local and international media is how do we work under such circumstances in what is in essence a transition period? We, as members of parliament, accept many requests for interviews, and freedom of the media will hopefully be established within a short period of time. What we need to keep in mind is that there are still arguments going on amongst members of the House as to whether media freedom is essential or not. Not everybody accepts the argument that press freedom is the right thing.

By the end, the Hluttaw or Lower House passed the News Media Law, but those who work in media are still unable to enjoy full freedom due to the fact that the rules and regulations have not been institutionalised yet. There are no negotiations between the government and the Myanmar Press Council about journalists accused according to the News Media Law. In regard to one particular article under the new law, I made a proposal for fines to replace jail punishment in cases where media are believed to have overstepped their mark. This proposal was rejected due to the failure to receive sufficient votes in the House.

We continue to wait. As the government has stressed the importance of the media, they should have finished the rules and regulations by now, and not leave the media hanging.

” We will keep trying to improve the situation for the media to operate freely in the country.

U Khaing Maung Yee  
Member of Parliament,  
Pyithu Hluttaw



Photo: MMDG

There is still pressure on the media. Recently, the offices of media organisations were visited by the Special Branch police looking into their financial situation, a form of intimidation. The truth is, we are still not satisfied with the current situation and we will keep trying to improve the situation for the media to operate freely in the country.

**Bart Robinson, International Research Coordinator (please take out International Media Support)**

UNESCO, the National Management College and IMS are implementing a Media Development Indicators (MDI) assessment in Myanmar. The MDI assessment consists of 50 indicators and 150 sub indicators developed by UNESCO to apprise the overall media landscape in a given country. To date 14 MDIs have

been published and Myanmar has recently embarked on undertaking this process, which we trust will be completed in the Spring of 2015.

In our review of initial legal findings for the legal and policy framework indicators set, we looked at international standards, as well as the threats to freedom of expression, where threats may exist in Myanmar law, and contrasted the laws in place with current social norms and attitudes. We looked at the telltale signs of restrictive laws, such as vague wording and harsh sentences. Examples of this can be seen in the Emergency Provisions Act and Section 505 of the Penal Code.

If we look at the laws by number we find the following:

- Constitution: 1
- Active Media Laws: 7

- Draft Media Laws: 2
- Laws that contains restrictions on freedom of expression: 15
- Sections of the Penal Code that affect freedom of expression: 26.

Constitutional reforms have been discussed widely in Myanmar. Chapter 8 of the 2008 Constitution covers the rights of the citizen, but does not protect the rights of journalists or contain a Right to Information law.

Commonly used restrictions on freedom of expression include:

- Emergency Provisions (Act 5)
- Penal Code
- State Secrets Act
- Internet Laws
- Peaceful Assembly and Procession Act.

Overall, the current social norms are far ahead of the legal framework. While harsh laws remain, social norms and attitudes also favour media openness and freedom of expression. In this regard, there have been rapid and positive developments; a reinventing of the role of the citizen, social momentum to update

laws accordingly, prevent backsliding, and promote further change.

## Status

- There is some confusion and uncertainty over laws that might put journalists at risk merely for doing their job.
- Journalists and editors tend to self-censor due to fears that they could overstep the mark, action that could lead to criminal or civil charges and prosecution.
- Freedom of speech is fundamental to democracy, but uncertainty surrounds a miss-match of laws which could impinge on citizens' rights.

## Way forward

- More effort needs to be made to help the media understand existing laws that might affect media freedom.
- Many laws that affect freedom of expression and the ability of the media to do their job need to be examined, highlighting legislation that might need to be changed.

## Session 9

### Summary of conference conclusions and way forward

At the 3rd conference on media development in Yangon from 18 - 19 September in Yangon a list of key points covering the status and way forward of the media-related areas debated over nine sessions were presented in the closing session by Minister of Information U Ye Htut and U Thiha Saw, Chair of the Myanmar Journalist Institute.

- HE U Ye Htut, Union Minister, Ministry of Information (MoI)
- HE Thierry Mathou, Ambassador of France to Myanmar (TBC)
- Lars Bestle, Head of Department for Asia, International Media Support (IMS)
- U Thiha Saw, Chairman, Myanmar Journalism Institute(MJI), Vice President, Myanmar Journalists Association (MJA)

Moderator: Sardar Umar Alam, Head of Office UNESCO Yangon

Please find a summary of the key points below.

#### Session 1: Ethical journalism and social responsibility of the media

##### Status

- Many journalists currently lack awareness and training in ethical journalism and adherence to a code of conduct.
- Senior and middle-level media staff may not have received training in journalism ethics.
- Salaries for many rank-and-file journalists remain low leading to payments of journalists under the table to write certain stories.

##### Way forward

- Now is the time with the elections coming up, for the media to build trust.
  - Call for the government and politicians to be more open with information, to avoid journalists seeking information from untrustworthy or third-hand sources.
  - Increased efforts should be made to link with other media in the region to lift the quality of journalism.
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### Session 2 – Reforming and regulating the broadcast sector and public sector broadcasting

#### Status

- The Myanmar government has taken the need for media reform seriously, but there is still occasional interference of politicians.
- Media reforms have resulted in shifts to transform from state TV to public service broadcasting - from a government mouthpiece to a voice of the public.

#### Way forward

- Some suggestions on the two Media Laws (Members of Parliament to take note)
- In the broadcast reform process, challenges should be addressed and resistance be recognised.
- Forum on broadcast regulation.

### Session 3: Community radio and ethnic voices

#### Status

- Local communities have grown over the last decade, providing community-centric content.
- Challenges include the difficulty of applying for a broadcasting license, funding, a skills deficit, and the geographical difficulties.

#### Way forward

- Opportunity to open up to more stations, particularly in ethnic areas.
- Attention needed on funding, training, and easing problems associated with geographical challenges.
- Training for radio journalists.
- Standards for community radio

### Session 4: Election reporting

#### Status

- Rules and regulations of the elections were not available to the public in 2010 and 2012. Efforts now being made with international organisations to disseminate information to the public.
- Journalists covering the 2015 elections will lack experience of covering open elections, given 1960 was the last free and fair election in Myanmar.
- Is there a need for a specific journalism code of conduct for covering elections?

#### Way forward

- Training is needed, possibly with the help of foreign media or development partners.
- The Union Elections Commission must be transparent and communicate more effectively with the media, in conjunction with local and international election observers.
- Good media relations must be built between the journalist community and the Union Elections Commission.

### Session 5: The Press Council and the Complaints Mechanism

- News media companies face a challenge in reaching out to the younger generation.

#### Status

- Early days for the Myanmar Press Council's Complaints Committee with a limited number of complaints dealt with (82).
- News Media Law by-laws are being drafted now and under review.
- Concern over journalists failing to respect the Myanmar Press Council.

#### Way forward

- There is a need for amicable solutions to disputes.
- Complaints mechanism should become more useful for the media environment.
- Reporters need resources and support, both in terms of understanding correct practices, and if facing challenges over their stories.
- Media-literate public needed through education and the Ministry of Information.

### Session 6: Managing a sustainable business model in the media sector

#### Status

- Myanmar has a highly competitive media publication market with a limited or declining advertising pool, and a poor delivery system.
- This is not a level playing field, with the private media receiving limited access to the advertising pie.

#### Way forward

- While preserving print media, focus heavily on expanding digital platforms as a sustainable way forward.
- Young people use mobile phones to access news, reflecting an opportunity for publishers.
- There is a need to address the taxation system, given the media offers a "public good."

### Session 7: The media, peace building and civil society

#### Status

- On-going efforts are being made to train and enhance journalists' understanding of peace and conflict issues.
- Many people in the ethnic areas do not know about or understand the ceasefire negotiations, hence a need for media organisations to help inform them.
- Rural people are still unable to access media effectively, and often find it is hard to get their voice heard.
- Negotiations are taking place in public/media with a negative impact.

#### Way forward

- More needs to be done to help journalists understand the complexity of the conflicts and peace efforts.
- While media coverage of peace and conflict issues should be encouraged, care has to be taken that more reporting does not lead to more conflict.

- More needs to be done to improve communications for the media when working in a multi-language environment.
  - Should a media strategy be developed on the role of media in conflict and be agreed on by all stakeholders in the conflict?
  - Journalists and editors tend to self-censor due to fears that they could overstep the mark, action that could lead to criminal or civil charges and prosecution.
  - Freedom of speech is fundamental to democracy but uncertainty surrounds a miss-match of laws which could impinge on citizens' rights.
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### Session 8: Beyond media laws – other legal threats to freedom of expression

#### Status

- There is some confusion and uncertainty over laws that might put journalists at risk merely for doing their job.

#### Way forward

- More effort needs to be made to help the media understand existing laws that might affect the media freedoms.
- Many laws that effect freedom of expression and the ability of the media to do their job need to be examined, highlighting legislation that might need to be changed.

# Annexes:

## Conference agenda, 18 – 19 September 2014

18 September 2014

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### Opening session

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#### Panelists:

- HE U Ye Htut, Union Minister, Ministry of Information (MoI)
- Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO (Video Message)
- HE Roland Kobia, Ambassador for EU in Myanmar
- Anne-Charlotte Malm, Head of Development Cooperation, Regional Asia and Myanmar, The Embassy of Sweden, Bangkok
- U Kyaw Min Swe, General Secretary, Myanmar Press Council (Interim)

#### Keynote speech:

Role of a Journalist in Moving Towards a Sustainable Media Environment by Professor Yuen Ying Chan – Director, Journalism and Media Studies Centre, Hong Kong University

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### Session 1: Ethical journalism and social responsibility of the media

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#### Panelists:

- HE U Ye Htut, Union Minister, Ministry of Information (MoI)
- U Myint Kyaw, General Secretary, Myanmar Journalists' Network
- U Soe Myint, Editor in Chief, Mizzima Media Group
- U Nay Phone Latt, Executive Director, Myanmar ICT Development Organisation
- Kavi Chongkittavorn, Columnist of The Nation, Thailand

Moderator: Agneta Söderberg Jacobsson, Programme Manager, Fojo Institute Sweden

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## Session 2: Reforming and regulating the broadcast sector and public service broadcasting

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### Panelists:

- U Tint Swe, Director General of Myanmar Radio and Television
- U Aye Chan Naing, Director, Chief of Editor, Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB)
- Joe Elsom, Business Development and Strategic Partnerships Manager, Australian Broadcasting Corporation International Development, Australia
- U Khin Maung Htay, Co-founder, Director, Forever Group Co. Ltd.

Moderator: Ramon Tuazon, President, Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication, Philippines (AIJC)

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## Session 3: Community radio and ethnic voices

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The ongoing media reform process intends to introduce community radio to Myanmar with limited experience in the sector. Plenty of examples could be drawn from neighboring countries where this sector has lost its focus and intended outcomes. An equally important aspect is the challenge of developing effective platforms for different ethnic groups. This session examines the lessons learnt, challenges and opportunities in establishing community radio mechanisms in Myanmar.

### Panelists:

- U Ze Yar, Director, Myanmar Radio and Television
- Naw Hsa Moo, Thoolei Kaw Way Community Radio, Karen state
- Daw Hla Yin Aye, Manager, Mandalay FM
- Madhu Acharya, Project Director, Internews Nepal Project

Moderator: Cheri Mangrai, Australia Broadcasting Corporation Sweden

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## Session 4: Election reporting

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### Panelists

- Dr. Daw Myint Kyi, Member of Union Election Commission
- U Khin Maung Win, Deputy Director, Democratic Voice of Burma
- U Sein Win, Training Director, Myanmar Journalism Institute (MJI)
- Adnan Rehmat, Director, Civic Action Resource, Pakistan

Moderator: Eric Glover, Project Manager, Canal France International  
19 September 2014



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### Session 5: The Press Council and the Complaints Mechanism

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#### Panelists:

- U Pe Myint, Member, Myanmar Press Council (Interim), Complaints Committee
- U Ye Tint, Director General, Information and Public Relations Department, Ministry of Information
- U Ba Oo, Myanmar Journalists' Association, Mandalay
- Manfred Protze, Member of the Complaints Commission, German Press Council
- Ramon Tuazon, President, Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC), The Philippines

Moderator: U Thiha Saw, Chairman, Myanmar Journalism Institute (MJI), Vice President, Myanmar Journalists Association (MJA)

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### Session 6: Managing a sustainable business model in the media sector

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#### Panelists:

- U Ko Ko, Chairman, Yangon Media Group
- U Sonny Swe, CEO, Mizzima Media Group
- U Min Min Latt, Thanlwin Times, Mon state
- Bulbul Monjurul Ahsan, Vice Chairman, International Press Institute

Moderator: Isabella Kurkowski, Country Manager – Myanmar, DW Akademie

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### Session 7: The media, peace-building and civil society

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#### Panelists:

- Dr. U Kyaw Thu, Director, Paung Ku
- Aung Naing Oo, Special Advisor, Myanmar Peace Center
- Michael Pan, Project Director, Internews Europe
- Ljiljana Zurovac, Executive Director of Press Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Moderator: Lars Bestle, Head of Department for Asia, International Media Support (IMS)

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### Session 8: Beyond media laws – other legal threats to freedom of expression

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#### Panelists:

- U Zaw Thet Htwe, Myanmar Journalist Union (MJU)
- Dr. U Thi Han Myo Nyunt, Legal Counsel, Myanmar Peace Center
- U Khaing Maung Yee, Member of Parliament, Pyithu Hluttaw
- Bart Robinson, International Research Coordinator, International Media Support

Moderator: Adnan Rehmat, Director, Civic Action Resource, Pakistan

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### Session 9: Summary of conference conclusions and way forward

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- HE U Ye Htut, Union Minister, Ministry of Information (MoI)
- HE Thierry Mathou, Ambassador of France to Myanmar (TBC)
- Lars Bestle, Head of Department for Asia, International Media Support (IMS)
- U Thiha Saw, Chairman, Myanmar Journalism Institute(MJI), Vice President, Myanmar Journalists Association (MJA)

Moderator: Sardar Umar Alam, Head of Office UNESCO Yangon





