

MYANMAR ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(January 2013– March 2014)

Columbia University's system-wide response supports Myanmar's political transition and peace process. Activities involve faculty from the Columbia Law School (CLS), School of Journalism, School of International Policy Administration, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, and Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health and Columbia Global Center | East Asia. The Myanmar Assistance Program is headed by David L. Phillips, Director of ISHR's Program on Peace-building and Rights.

Rule of Law

The Program on Peace-building and Rights at Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) hosted Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) on September 22, 2012. Daw Suu requested Columbia to provide training and technical assistance to the Parliament's Rule of Law (RoL) Committee. CLS Professor Sarah H. Cleveland visited Naypitaw to conduct a similar seminar, which was chaired by ASSK and attended by 60 Members of Parliament from different parties (February 2013). The seminar highlighted international experience in constitutional reform, including civil-military relations. Cleveland and 4 Columbia faculty conducted a seminar on the same topics in Yangon, organized by Myanmar Egress (February 2013).



ISHR conducted a "Legislative Training" over 5 days in Naypitaw with 25 MPs including military representatives (February 2013). Training highlighted the role of Parliament in democratic governance highlighting legislative oversight, bill drafting, and holding a hearing. Creating a parliamentary research service was also discussed.

Professor Anu Bradford met ASSK's representatives during a visit to Myanmar with the World Economic Forum (June 2013). The Parliament provided CLS with a draft Media Law. CLS provided redline comments, drawing on analyses by media law experts. A draft Telecommunications Law is also being provided for critique by CLS faculty and outside legal experts. Expert review of other legislation is envisioned.



Columbia is working with “Justice for All” (JFA) to develop a training manual on human rights and advocacy aimed at repeal of regressive legislation and strengthening fundamental citizens’ rights. Over 18 months, 24 seminars will be organized around the country including ethnic areas targeting workers, farmers, lawyers and political activists. Mariel Fernandez, a recent graduate of CLS, is being sponsored by CLS to spend a year based at JFA working on the program and other RoL initiatives.

In association with the student-led Columbia Society for International Law, 6 Columbia Law Students visited Myanmar to assist JFA in the preparation of JFA’s “Training Manual: Access to Justice and the Rule of Law” (March 2014). Students in the “Legal Caravan” met with over sixty lawyers, educators, community leaders, and activists in Bago, Mawlamyaing, and Yangon. While in Yangon the caravan participants met with the Myanmar Legal Aid Network (MLAW), the Yangon Justice Center, the Yangon University Law Department, UNDP, Mizzima News, and Herzfeld Rubin Meyer & Rose Law Firm. Students led seminar discussions on about American and Canadian law, focusing on how those legal systems compare with Myanmar's and what can be learned from them (March 2013).

Peace Process

Leadership of the Myanmar Peace Center (MPC), NGOs and representatives of the diplomatic community attended a “Negotiations Training: International Models of Power-Sharing,” conducted by a team of 5 Columbia faculty members (February 2013). Topics discussed were relevant to Myanmar’s negotiations with the non-state armed groups. The training occurred the day after H.E. U Aung Min, Myanmar’s Senior Minister and chief peace negotiator, returned from talks in Ruili with the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO).



As requested by members of the KIO Central Committee in Chiang Mai, Columbia provided a negotiations road-map as the basis for ongoing discussions (June 2013). The roadmap was incorporated by the KIO into its discussions with U Aung Min. At the request of the KIO, Columbia also provided a policy paper on “International Models for Monitoring Peace Agreements” (July 2013). Columbia also provided technical assistance to La Awng, a leading figure in the KIO, during his visit to the United States (May 2013). Communications with the KIO’s technical team in Myitkyina are ongoing. “A Negotiations Manual: Towards Sustainable Peace in Myanmar” was translated in Burmese and presented to members of the KIO negotiating team at a workshop organized by the KIO’s Technical Advisory Team in Myitkyina (March 2014).

The Negotiations Manual was also presented to civil society and political party leaders at a Workshop for Kachin State based political parties on Strengthening Political Parties. Professor Lincoln A. Mitchell led the workshop, which was organized in Myitkyina by the Kachin Women Union (KWU) and attended by the Kachin Democratic Party, Kachin National Congress for

Democracy, Kachin State Democracy Party, National Democratic Force, Lisu National Development Party, and the Unity and Democracy Party of Kachin State. Topics included party development, strategy and communication, coalition building, campaigns and a political party code of conduct (March 2013). Discussions are underway with the KWU about public opinion surveys and establishment of a process/mechanism to involve Kachin civil society in the peace process.

Columbia faculty members also provided Negotiations Training to the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC). All 11 non-state armed groups sent delegations to Chiang Mai for a 3-day seminar on power-sharing (February 2013). Establishing the Ethnic Nationalities Affairs Center (ENAC) was discussed at a follow-up workshop on organizational development (July 2013). When the non-state armed groups sign a cease-fire agreement, ENAC has been asked to provide expertise in support of negotiations on a comprehensive political settlement.



U Aung Min, Myanmar's peace negotiator, contacted Columbia to arrange a lecture at Columbia, during which he engaged students and faculty on the peace process (April 2013). Prior to the lecture, Aung Min and his 12-person delegation attended a brainstorming session on cooperation with approximately 20 Columbia faculty from 6 different schools/institutes. The MPC is identifying core issues for its political dialogue with ethnic groups, and has requested that

Columbia develop policy papers based on relevant international experience.

A "Seminar on Ethnic Political Development" was organized with Ar Yone Oo, a local NGO with ties to parliamentarians and local ethnic political parties/movements at the national and state/regional levels (January 2014). Representatives from 19 ethnic political parties attended.



University Partnership Program

ASSK arranged meetings for Phillips with Rector Tin Tun, University of Yangon (July 2013). He finalized a University Partnership Agreement with University of Yangon (UY), to work with Dr. Khin Mar Yee (Chair, Law Department), Dr. Margaret Wong (Chair, Journalism Department), and Chaw Chaw Sein (Chair, Political Science Department).

A short course on clinical legal education was provided by Professor Andrew Scherer (January 2014). Benedict Fleming +taught a 2-week course on human rights at Mandalay University, and conducted a nationwide assessment on opportunities to enhance legal education, with cooperation from the University of Yangon, Mandalay University, Mawlamyaing University near Kayan State, and Taungyi University (February 2014).

Columbia conducted a mapping of media workshop/capacity building activities in Myanmar as the basis for assisting Myanmar's nascent independent media (February 2013). The Journalism Department and UNESCO have developed a curriculum for teaching journalists. Columbia provided a critique the curriculum and will provide two instructors to lead short courses on

journalism with UY's lecturers/instructors. Professor Joshua M. Friedman will teach a short course at UY (June 2014).

Dr. Tin Tun also plans to establish a Political Science Department. SIPA's Professor Alfred C. Stepan provided a 2-week short-course on international relations/political science and advise UY on curriculum and capacity building for the proposed department (December 2013).

Health and Public Health



Representatives of Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health and the Columbia Global Centers | East Asia explored cooperation with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and NGOs working on HIV-AIDS prevention and treatment. Field observations, university and health facility visits were conducted (March 2013 and November 2013). A meeting was held with the Minister of Health and the director of the National AIDS Control Program as well as relevant individuals at UN agencies, non-governmental and civil society organizations as well as US government representatives. Columbia's Wafaa el-Sadr signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the MoH to

help the GoM develop policies and programs concerning HIV/AIDS, TB and other health threats.

Women's Empowerment



Columbia worked with Burmese women's groups -- the Gender Equality Network (GEN), Women's Organizations Network (WON), and the Civil Society Forum for Peace in Myanmar -- to organize a "National Women's Dialogue: Peace, Security and Development in Myanmar" (November 2013). The National Dialogue focused on the requirements of Myanmar women for humanitarian action, participation in political dialogue, women in peace-building and conflict resolution, economic development, preventing violence against women, and strengthening a

nationwide coalition of women including ethnic groups. International speakers included 2011 Nobel Peace Laureate Leymah Gbowee and filmmaker Abigail Disney. Columbia University representatives included [Wafaa El-Sadr](#), Joan Kaufman, and Danielle Goldberg. The meeting was attended by approximately 300 women.

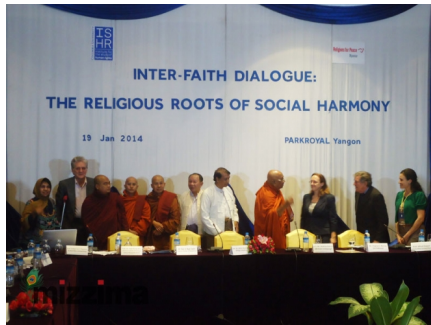
The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), in cooperation with GEN and RI, conducted a "[Workshop on Livelihoods and Preventing Violence against Women](#)" in Yangon for grass-roots women's organizations working in conflict areas around the country, including Rakhine and Kachin states (November 2013).

The Program provided a training/transfer of its practical "[Curriculum on Social Harmony and Conflict Resolution](#)" to



women associated with the Concord Institute (November 2013). Concord plans 7 workshops nationwide on conflict resolution and land rights. Columbia also provided a workshop on conflict resolution with youth from the conflict areas working involved in civil society organizations, political activities and peace-building (November 2013).

Inter-Religious Dialogue



Professor Robert A.F. Thurman, former Chair of Columbia’s Religion Department, held discussions with Myanmar’s leading Buddhist priests and leaders on the conflict between Buddhists and Muslims in Rakhine State and with mainland Muslims (January 2013). The Program developed a curriculum on the “[Theravada Roots of Conflict Resolution](#),” which interprets its Curriculum on Social Harmony and Conflict Resolution based on the Pali Canon. Thurman led an “Inter-Faith Dialogue: The Religious Roots of Social harmony” with The Venerable Sitagu Sayadaw (Buddhist community head), Al Haj U Aye Lwin (Chief Convener of the Islamic Center of Myanmar) and Kyaw Hlaing Bwa (Myanmar Institute of Theology and Christian community leader). They released a [joint statement](#) condemning hate speech and the use of religion to justify violence. About 60 top tier religious leaders, officials, and educators participated in the dialogue (January 2014).