

Freedom of Association

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First Year Achievements

The ILO Freedom of Association Programme in Myanmar is now one year old and it is appropriate to reflect on what has been achieved in that time.

If nothing else the fact that more than 600 new unions have been registered points to success.

The first task was to raise awareness of the new freedom of association rights in a country where they had been suppressed for 50 years. Leaflets, posters, do-it yourself guides, fact sheets and public workshops in Yangon and other major centres have stimulated interest and raised the issue in the media.

But it is education and training work with union leaders, employers and government officials which has been crucial in building a modern industrial relations system as a foundation for the country's development.

The mainly young union leaders have been keen to learn and have quickly absorbed knowledge and skills in the two day basic workshops with their employers, which have included role plays and exercise on collective bargaining, dispute resolution and occupational safety and health.

At an industry and national level social dialogue workshops have encouraged a more consultative relationship. There is a long way to go yet but there is general acknowledgment that the ILO programme has done an excellent job in establishing these fundamental rights.

Project Leader Change

Ross Wilson, the Project Chief Technical Adviser completes his one year contract at the end of June and is returning to New Zealand. He will be replaced by Patrick Quinn who is currently employed by the ILO in Geneva. Pat has had vast experience in adult education and project management work and led a similar programme in Indonesia during the post-Suharto period there.

Pat will be supported by a strong project team in the Yangon FOA Unit which now numbers 6 people. The team is very sorry to see Ross go but they are looking forward to meeting Pat and working with him to take the programme to the next stage of its development. There are plenty of challenges ahead for everyone.



Panel Discussion: Ross Wilson (ILO), Moe Min Thaw (ILO), Khine Khine Nwee (UMFCCI), Than Than Htay (Worker Delegate), Than Swe (Worker Adviser) and Dr. Sai Khaing Myo Tun (Worker Adviser) (left to right)

FOA Activities (July 2012 to 2013)

- Total numbers of participants in FOA activities: 2,486
- Total numbers of training days: 81
- Total numbers of workers participated in FOA activities: 1,379
- Total numbers of employers participated in FOA activities: 277
- Total number of government officials participated in FOA activities: 264
- Total numbers of women participated in FOA activities: 713

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Reporting back from the ILC 2013

The FOA team organised a tripartite Social Dialogue Workshop on the 27th June so that the Employer and Worker Delegates and Advisers could report back from the ILC 2013.

In a panel discussion they spoke favourably about the democratic nature of the Conference and Committee processes, but admitted that the “ILO language” is a bit of a challenge.

The delegates reported that they had spent the majority of their time in the Committee discussion on Social Dialogue because this issue is so important for Myanmar.

The lifting of the 2000 “sanctions resolution” against Myanmar was celebrated, although it was noted that the

ILO Governing Body will continue to receive reports on progress with freedom of association and elimination of forced labour.

ILO Liaison Officer Steve Marshall and Labour Department Director General from the late 1990s U Khin Maung Yee recalled the history of this issue between the ILO and the Myanmar Government over more than 20 years. U Khin Maung Yee cause great amusement with his frankness and humour. He acknowledged he couldn't have made his comments a few years ago. It was disappointing that U Maung Maung was unable to attend and talk about the FTUB's contribution to that history.

INTRODUCING THE FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION TEAM

Zaw Lynn Oo

Zaw Lynn says “Driving is my hobby” which is just as well as he has spent a lot of time behind the wheel, all of it in the development community which he enjoys.

After working as a personal driver in the 1990s, in late 1999 he signed up as an office driver for the UNAIDS programme, which involved driving long distances across Myanmar.



Shortly after the FOA project was established in June 2012 he moved across the hall in Traders to take up the FOA driver position and is indispensable to the success of this project. Not only does he do distance driving for training and workshops, but he also assists with the preparing and setting up of equipment, and often acts as 'backup' secretary helping with photocopying, and other logistics like banking.

He completed a BA in 2005 as a distance student and has long term plans to run his own business in tourism. He has a young son and he is a conscientious father.

The Workshop concluded with a discussion about the form and terms of reference of a Tripartite Consultative Group which will be formed in the next few months.



Ross Wilson & Moe Min Thaw :
both leaving the FOA Team