

PROJECT IMPACT STORY: THE ENLIGHTENED MYANMAR RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Parliamentary Centre;

Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation ;

© 2018, PARLIAMENTARY CENTRE



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction, provided the original work is properly credited.

Cette œuvre est mise à disposition selon les termes de la licence Creative Commons Attribution (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>), qui permet l'utilisation, la distribution et la reproduction sans restriction, pourvu que le mérite de la création originale soit adéquatement reconnu.

IDRC Grant/ Subvention du CRDI: 108572-001-Building parliamentary research capacity: The case of Shan state's sub-national parliament in Myanmar

Impact Story:

Bringing Evidence-Based Research back to Myanmar

2010 marked the beginning of a democratic transition process in Myanmar. A re-definition of the roles of governance institutions, including national and sub-national parliaments was a natural step in the country's new path. New Members were elected and new staff appointed, all of whom with no or very limited experience and capacity. If Myanmar's transition is to be successful, legislatures need to be supported to develop the capacity to play their new roles.

Research suffered immensely during the years of military dictatorship and held a limited role in decision making. An evidence-based system needed to be rebuilt for the foundation of a more inclusive and open democratic society. It was this that motivated Myat The Thitsar and Myat Thet Thitsar to set up in 2010 the Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation or EMReF, as it is briefly known.

The organisation started providing elected Members, regardless of political orientation, with information needed to better perform their roles.

The Parliamentary Centre, a Canadian organization devoted to the strengthening of parliamentary democracy, and EMReF crossed paths first in 2015 and quickly found a common ground. 50 years of international

experience have enforced the Parliamentary Centre's belief that building the capacity of local organisations is instrumental in achieving sustainable results in the strengthening of parliamentary democracy anywhere, even more so in a vast, complex country with fourteen sub-national legislatures like Myanmar. Witnessing the passion and commitment of Myat The and Myat The to make a difference, the Centre became keen to support EMReF in this challenging but important mission.

In 2017 this became a reality through the project "Building Parliamentary Research Capacity: the case of Shan State's Sub-national Parliament in Myanmar" with the aid of a grant from Global Affairs Canada, and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Under the project, a group of thirteen members from EMReF's team, including its leaders Myat Thet Thitsar and Myat The Thitsar, took an active part in a train-the-trainers activity intended to equipping them with the skills to train parliamentarians and parliamentary staff how to conduct legislative research.



EMReF's President Myat Thet Thitsar



Myat Thet Thitsar presenting to MPs and Staff in Shan State

Myat Thet shared that the most valuable piece she took from working with the Parliamentary Centre was the value of incorporating international expertise and best practices into capacity building sessions. The EMReF team was not only fast to internalize international experience, but also weaved in its knowledge of local culture and working practices.

In response to requests from parliamentarians, the EMReF team, led by Myat Thet, was able to support a group of Shan State Hluttaw staff, who were conducting a comparative study of international experience in the area of municipal governance. This assisted Hluttaw members in their ongoing deliberations on a by-law that would determine the election process, roles and functions of Shan State municipal development committees, a rough equivalent of municipal councils in Canada.

Beyond this project, Myat Thet and Myat The hope that EMReF can become an accredited think-tank in Myanmar with the ability to offer capacity building sessions on parliamentary research to more sub-national parliaments as well as to academic institutions. They, along with their team at EMReF, have built the essential skills required for this ambitious mission.