

Myanmar Young Leaders Programme 2015 Review – MFAT Response

In 2015 the Myanmar Young Leaders Programme (MYLP) review was undertaken by an independent reviewer at the request of UnionAID. While this was not required by MFAT under the scope of the activity, we would like to thank you for taking the initiative to undertake the review and for sharing it with us.

The core reference point for the review is the set of medium term outcomes from the MYLP results framework. The review covers five intakes of young leaders (2009-2014), including both the Burma Young Community Leaders Programme (BYCLP) and MYLP, and is predominantly based on the feedback from alumni supervisors and students. It found that BYCLP and MYLP have met, if not exceeded, expectations across all areas. It comments that the programme has created a core group of NGO young leaders who are clearly exerting influence within their employing organisations and beyond in ways which can be directly traced to skills and experience acquired in the course of BYCLP and MYLP training. The review highlighted distinct improvements in alumni effectiveness and influence in several key areas including: leadership skills and impact; understanding of alternative conceptual frameworks; analytical abilities; improved English language skills; project and organisational management; research and training; and concern for diversity.

The review further developed a number of recommendations.

Review Recommendations	Response
<p>In order to further enhance the systemic impact of the programme, investigate the potential added value of including a focus within the overall programme on selected strategic organisations within the NGO/CSO sector, with a view to building-up a critical mass of MYLP trained staff within these target organisations over successive intakes.</p>	<p>While we can see value in working with selected organisations to build critical mass, we consider that this needs to be balanced against the opportunity to create new relationships and training a wide range of young leaders. We also wonder if we would be creating a bottleneck for supporting organisations which could potentially lead to fewer opportunities for alumni on their return, as well as potential to not be able to select the best candidates if they are involved in different organisations. We would support UnionAID's continued focus on selecting the best individuals and be open to their selection from both selected as well as a range of organisations.</p>
<p>Begin preliminary soundings with MFAT on scaling-up the size of the programme in its next phase, ensuring that the provision of commensurate resourcing for the effective and efficient functioning of the UnionAID office is part of the budgetary package.</p>	<p>MFAT would be happy to consider this as an option as long as the quality of the programme was not compromised. As discussed with UnionAID, this can be addressed in the proposal for a next phase and MFAT would consider options in the proposal for a scale up in both number of participants as well as length of the programme.</p>
<p>Strengthen mutually reinforcing links between</p>	<p>MFAT agrees with this recommendation. In terms</p>

<p>the MYLP and the wider New Zealand Government engagement in Myanmar by seeking synergies with the New Zealand Aid Programme, which includes a focus in Rakhine State. As appropriate, this could include funding linkages; facilitating broader cooperative relations, including information sharing; and ensuring that New Zealand Aid Programme staff visit MYLP sponsoring/employing organisations and alumni during field/partner visits in Myanmar when locations and/or interests coincide.</p>	<p>of New Zealand Aid Programme staff visiting MYLP alumni and supporting organisations during field visits to Myanmar, this has already been undertaken with 2 staff members visiting with an alumni, the organisation he works with currently, and a supporting organisation in Pyin Oo Lwin in December 2015. It should be noted that while we have one activity in Rakhine State, this is not a geographic focus for us.</p>
<p>Develop mutually beneficial links with English Language Training for Officials (ELTO) staff counterparts for the purpose of sharing lessons on how to maximise the long-term benefits of such training/learning programmes based in New Zealand, including through alumni follow-up and networks.</p>	<p>MFAT agrees with this recommendation. It would be good to see in the forthcoming proposal formal mechanisms built into the programme which will develop these links both in New Zealand and in Myanmar.</p>
<p>Ensure that the necessary long-term system and resources (human and financial) are in place for the sustainable maintenance and development of an effective alumni network, including discussion with IDG/MFAT on potential incorporation of the MYLP alumni system into the broader MFAT scholarships online alumni arrangement currently under development.</p>	<p>The MYLP alumni conference provides a solid platform for the development and management of an effective alumni network. Additionally to this, MFAT intends to include MYLP alumni in the online scholarships alumni system currently in development and this will need to be addressed in any forthcoming proposal. Based on the small number of alumni, however, and personal/hands-on approach that the programme takes, it would be a shame to solely rely on this online network and lose the personal approach once the young leaders return.</p>
<p>Investigate the potential for and desirability of providing follow-up opportunities for selected alumni to return to New Zealand for further in-depth training/education in their area of focus, both reinforcing linkages with New Zealand and deepening the acquisition of critical skills and experience for application in Myanmar. This would need to be covered by budgetary arrangements with MFAT as part of the next phase of the programme.</p>	<p>Currently MYLP alumni are able to apply to return for further study under the scholarships programme – something that several have taken advantage of. However they must meet the requirements for a scholarship and there is currently a two year stand-down period between an MYLP award and being able to apply for a scholarship award.</p>
<p>To ensure ongoing commitment to and engagement in the MYLP by sponsoring/employing organisations with respect to maximising the added value MYLP alumni, systematically monitor the quality and continuity of relationships with sponsoring/employing organisation from the beginning of applicant selection processes to post-training follow-up. Ensure that up-to-date records of employing organisation and supervisor</p>	<p>MFAT agrees in principle to this recommendation; however this should be addressed in the forthcoming proposal for the next phase.</p>

details are maintained to the extent possible to support future surveys for review purposes (this could be a component of the alumni online network system referred to above.