

# Myanmar as an Inclusive Information Society: LIRNEasia-MIDO Actions

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Submitted by LIRNEasia

December 23, 2014



## A. Project overview

**Title of the project** : Myanmar as an Inclusive Information Society

**Project proponent** : LIRNEasia, Colombo, Sri Lanka

**Abstract** : It is proposed that research-based interventions be undertaken in parallel on all major aspects of the Internet eco-system in Myanmar, namely infrastructure and services, users with skills, user interfaces and attractive content and applications. It is contended that with this novel “all-fronts” approach has the potential to accelerate Myanmar’s progress from one of the least connected countries to an inclusive information society. The work will be undertaken in partnership with Myan ICT for Development Organization (MIDO), with the intention of mentoring the members of MIDO to reach their potential as policy intellectuals and future leaders and to strengthen the organization. The proposed work includes quantitative and qualitative studies that build on the baseline nationwide survey and qualitative studies. This research will be utilized in policy interventions and in the development innovation briefs for the development of apps and content useful for “those unlike app developers.” Scalable solutions for enhancing the ability of users to make full use of the Internet will be worked out. On the terminal “front,” the focus will be on raising awareness about meeting the needs of the differently abled. Supply-side interventions such as actions to improve the capacity of policy makers, regulators and stakeholders and rapid-response interventions will be undertaken primarily in the field of ICTs and to a limited extent in electricity which is a key barrier to broadband supply in Myanmar. Policy enlightenment will be the focus of e government activities where the principal activities are likely to be undertaken by government entities directly funded by development partners.

**Objectives** :

- Increase the indicator of Internet subscriptions and users<sup>1</sup> per 100 to above the average of comparator countries
- Establish MIDO as a credible, independent entity making evidence-based interventions in Myanmar ICT policy and regulation processes and playing a catalytic role in building an inclusive information society by mobilizing civil society and the private sector
- Achieve a good understanding of how Myanmar ICT users, especially those at the bottom of the pyramid, use ICTs and communicate this knowledge is effectively to relevant stakeholders and to those who develop apps and content
- Build capacity of policy makers, regulators and private-sector and civil-society stakeholders in consultative policy making and regulation and also in broadband quality of service experience monitoring
- Provide timely and comprehensive responses and advice on ICT reforms and, to a limited extent, on electricity reforms
- Identify scalable models of web literacy development and implement in at least 100 telecenters or equivalent locations

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<sup>1</sup> ITU indicators in this area are problematic. But they will be the default measure. Additional measures will also be used.

- Raise awareness of improving ICT access by the less-than-abled
- Enlighten policy makers on open data and e government

**Estimated duration: 36 months**

## B. Administrative information

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## 1 Introduction

A country emerging from the “deep freeze” of totalitarian control with weak institutions cannot absorb “best-of-breed” policy solutions, even if such exist. The optimal solutions are those that fit the circumstances, not the abstractly “best” solutions. This has been the guiding principle behind everything LIRNEasia has done in South and South East Asia over the past decade.<sup>2</sup> Myanmar’s circumstances must be understood in a systematic way to devise the optimal solutions based on experience, preferably from countries not too dissimilar from it. LIRNEasia, a regional think tank which has actively engaged in countries similar to Myanmar for 10 years, and the Myanmar ICT Development Organization (MIDO), a Myanmar civil-society organization established in 2012,<sup>3</sup> are ideally positioned to do this. The nature of the tasks that have to be accomplished are such that it would be necessary to have a three-year funding commitment.

## 2 LIRNEasia’s ongoing work in Myanmar

LIRNEasia and MIDO have been collaborating with each other since 2013 in the activities described below. The proposed activities will also be conducted jointly. The core objective of LIRNEasia’s Myanmar engagement is to execute the proposed projects in ways that also result in building up MIDO so that it can develop into an effective independent entity that can generate policy-relevant evidence and contribute to Myanmar’s reform process. This will, we believe, be a significant contribution to the formation of tomorrow’s leaders for Myanmar.

LIRNEasia has already made a start by conducting *baseline* qualitative (completed<sup>4</sup>) and quantitative (ongoing) surveys of information & knowledge consumption patterns, ICT sector performance reports (ongoing) and by analyzing the relevant legislation (commenced). Three training courses have been conducted, with MIDO successfully assembling high-quality audiences for the latter two.<sup>5</sup> Books and articles on the ongoing ICT reforms and ideas for the future in English and Myanmar have been published by LIRNEasia and MIDO.<sup>6</sup> As a result, LIRNEasia and MIDO have credibility within key government agencies.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In the context of regulatory or good-governance solutions, the earliest study to support this position was Levy, B & Spiller, P. T. (1994). The Institutional Foundations of Regulatory Commitment: A Comparative Analysis of Telecommunications Regulation, *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 201-246.

<sup>3</sup> Founded by four bloggers, the best known among them being Nay Phone Latt, winner of PEN Barbara Goldsmith and RFS’s Cyber Dissidents awards and included in list of 100 global influentials by *Time* in 2010:

[http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1984685\\_1984949\\_1985235,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1984685_1984949_1985235,00.html).

<sup>4</sup> Summary slides at [http://lirneasia.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/3-LIRNEasia\\_HelaniGalpaya-MyanmarMicorentrepreneurs\\_010814.pdf](http://lirneasia.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/3-LIRNEasia_HelaniGalpaya-MyanmarMicorentrepreneurs_010814.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> For government officials in August 2013; for civil society and officials in September 2013; for Parliamentarians in July 2014.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., <http://lirneasia.net/2014/07/myanmar-launch-of-information-lives-of-the-poor-book/>

<sup>7</sup> As evidenced by the attendance of 18 Parliamentarians from six political parties including the ruling party at the July 2014 course and meetings with senior officials including the Deputy Minister of Communication and Information Technology in Nay Pyi Taw in October 2014.

More needs to be done. The baseline studies must be complemented by periodic assessments of ongoing change. Legal and policy analyses must be completed and support given to remedial action. The activities described in the above paragraph were identified as priorities for MIDO by its 2014 strategic planning assisted by LIRNEasia and the Center for Internet and Society (CIS) (based in Bengaluru, India). The strategic planning also identified LIRNEasia as the primary source of mentoring for MIDO, especially with regard to the research activities. Given the relative inexperience of MIDO personnel, it will be necessary for LIRNEasia to play an active role in guiding their engagement with the policy process. LIRNEasia can best perform the mentoring function through physical presence in Yangon.

Physical presence is defined as repeated, regular visits by LIRNEasia personnel to Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon, as required. In the course of assisting our local partner organization develop its strategic plan we reached the realization that the relatively young staff of MIDO would require significant mentoring. There is no slack capacity in LIRNEasia that will allow the placement of a senior person of the type needed to provide the necessary mentoring. What we can do is send the appropriate kinds of senior personnel to Yangon for weeks rather than days. MIDO is moving into larger office space and can accommodate extended visits.

It is likely that Omidyar Network will provide partial core funding to MIDO as a result of the strategic planning. Support from LIRNEasia in this critical phase will accelerate the consolidation of MIDO as an effective research and advocacy organization, building on considerable potential. MIDO has always exceeded our expectations. In 2013, we offered to teach a course for civil society several months into the future. They wanted it within weeks and assembled a broadly representative group for the successful course. They managed to get 18 Parliamentarians from six political parties to attend another course. They suggested translating ICT books into Myanmar and got the first one completed on time. We see them as the keystone of everything we plan to do in Myanmar. We see enormous potential in these future leaders of Myanmar.

**Expected outcomes**

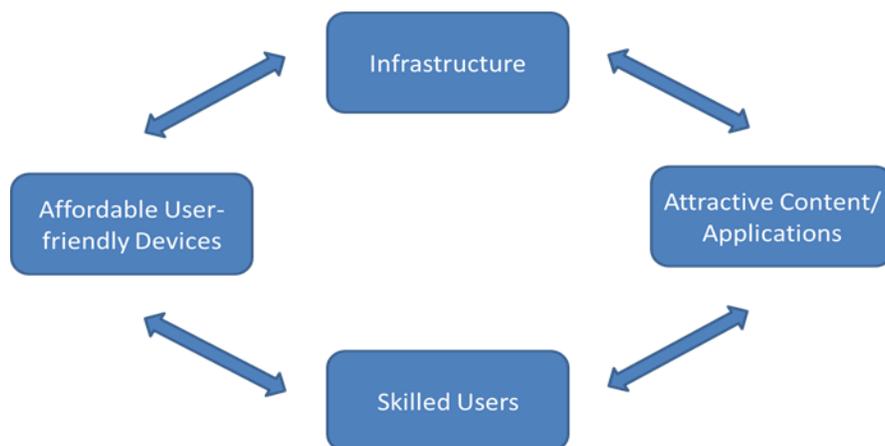
- MIDO is established as credible, independent entity making evidence-based interventions in Myanmar ICT policy and regulation processes and playing a catalytic role in building an inclusive information society by mobilizing civil society and the private sector.
- A good understanding is achieved of how Myanmar ICT users, especially those at the bottom of the pyramid, use ICTs and this knowledge is effectively communicated to relevant stakeholders.
- Timely and comprehensive actions are taken to analyze and improve relevant legislation and policies.

**3 Building on the foundation**

Building on the “baseline” studies that have commenced, LIRNEasia believes that there is an opportunity to undertake research and activities that would accelerate Myanmar’s transformation into an inclusive

information society within a shorter time than seen before in other countries. There is a good possibility that it can skip the voice-only stage and move directly to “more-than-voice” if **forward movement is achieved on major elements of the Internet eco system in parallel.**

Figure 1: Internet eco system



To the best of our knowledge, this “all-fronts” approach is novel. Up to now, LIRNEasia’s interventions have been mostly focused on making available affordable connectivity services. Limited efforts have also been made on developing attractive content and applications. MIDO’s efforts have also been focused on these two fronts. LIRNEasia is a research and capacity building organization that has for some time worked together with MIDO, which is a hybrid research and advocacy organization and which is well connected to other entities promoting ICT activities in Myanmar. The two organizations, working in tandem, can successfully execute the initiatives described below.

### Expected outcomes from combined actions

- Internet subscriptions and users<sup>8</sup> per 100 will be above the average of comparator countries (see Annex 1; Bangladesh and Cambodia may be added)

### 3.1 Infrastructure enabling affordable connectivity services

The telecom reforms implemented by the government in 2013-14 are the most important element of the eco-system. The momentum achieved by the successful, if incomplete, reforms constitute the necessary conditions for movement on the other elements of the eco system.

Taking broadband networks beyond the Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw-Mandalay triangle and the other urban centers requires energy-sector reforms. Without the 60+ percent of households currently lacking access to electricity and the energy-costs of maintaining base stations in rural Myanmar being brought

<sup>8</sup> ITU indicators in this area are problematic. But they will be the default measure. Additional measures will also be used.

down, it is unlikely that rural users will have anything more than voice connectivity. Working with MIDO and/or another local organization,<sup>9</sup> LIRNEasia can help in a small way to catalyze the needed energy-sector reforms.<sup>10</sup> Given resource constraints, this would take the form of providing regulatory and policy knowledge relevant to electricity in tandem with capacity building in ICT policy and regulation. Policy enlightenment as well as assistance to regulatory staff and civil society in putting in place an effective consultation mechanism will be included.

The independent telecom regulatory agency promised for October 2015 is likely to be behind schedule, given 2015 is an election year and because the consultancy contracts are yet to be signed for the consultancy assistance to the government in establishing the Myanmar Communications Commission and then in ensuring it performs well. This is squarely within the core competencies of LIRNEasia.

Additional actions that would contribute to ensuring affordable connectivity are (a) educating decision makers on how to ensure the continuation of an investor-friendly environment within the ICT space, especially by desisting from actions that amount to administrative expropriation, (b) assisting in the provision of adequate, reliable and low-cost international connectivity, (c) monitoring Internet quality of service experience thereby ensuring value for money for users, etc. Many of these activities, especially those related to regulatory capacity building, require repeated interactions with government officials which are difficult from outside the country but can be handled through MIDO and frequent visits.

### 3.1.1 Expected outcomes

- At least one course taught on how to participate in electricity and telecom policy and regulation processes offered for civil-society participants and government officials
- Timely and comprehensive responses and advice on ICT reforms and electricity reforms
- Advice on assisting in the provision of adequate, reliable and low-cost international connectivity, building on work done with UN ESCAP since 2010<sup>11</sup>
- Assisting the regulatory unit to establish a procedure for monitoring Internet quality of service experience thereby ensuring value for money for users, and/or operating a multi-location broadband QoSE initiative and disseminating its results through the media

## 3.2 Users with skills

Myanmar is blessed with a high literacy rate of 92.7 percent. Yet, it performs poorly on secondary and tertiary school enrolment, 50 percent and 14 percent, respectively (see Annex 1). It is perceived that

<sup>9</sup> In the event energy sector reforms require different skill sets than those possessed by MIDO and MIDO is not willing to expand the scope of its activities into energy reforms.

<sup>10</sup> LIRNEasia and its partners have expertise in energy-sector reform, as illustrated by <http://lirneasia.net/capacity-building/introductory-energy-regulatory-training-course/>. LIRNEasia's Chair was responsible for the enactment of the Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka Act in 2002.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.unescap.org/our-work/ict-disaster-risk-reduction/asia-pacific-information-superhighway> and <http://lirneasia.net/2012/12/lirneasia-at-interagency-meeting-convened-by-unescap/>

the quality of education could be better. This indicates there is work to be done on empowering potential Internet users with the necessary skills. This is among MIDO's strategic priorities.<sup>12</sup> The massive numbers of telecenters that will be established by Ooredoo Myanmar and the smaller numbers of telecenters promised by Telenor Myanmar (MIDO has been engaged to assist with these) provide a natural platform for this activity.<sup>13</sup> LIRNEasia will assist MIDO execute a web literacy training and credentialing exercise, using models such as Mozilla Foundation's Webmaker and badges.<sup>14</sup> The emphasis will be of scalable solutions, rather than those that work well in pilot mode.

### 3.2.1 Expected outcomes

- Investigation of scalable models of web literacy development and implementation of the selected model in at least 100 telecenters or equivalent locations
- Translation of relevant documentation to Myanmar language
- Pilot implementation of a badging solution

## 3.3 Low-cost and user-friendly terminal devices

Costs will be brought down by device manufacturers and telecom operators. There is little that LIRNEasia and MIDO can do with regard to costs. Our focus will be on those with disabilities who are excluded because of the absence of appropriate terminal devices.

In partnership with CIS, which has established a leading position in ensuring disabled access to the Internet,<sup>15</sup> LIRNEasia and MIDO can play a catalytic role in ensuring that the differently abled may participate in the Internet and mobile revolutions. This will include face-to-face interactions with key decision makers and media ideally by Nirmita Narasimhan, CIS's lead on disabled access issues.<sup>16</sup> In addition, barcamps and hackathons, discussed below, will also be used to improve accessibility.

### 3.3.1 Expected outcomes

- A visit by spokesperson for ICT access by the less-than-abled that will include interactions with government, operators and equipment suppliers as well as media and civil-society; Circulation of document with recommendations to enable such access to key policy makers.
- A workshop on solutions for disabled-friendly ICT devices and services

<sup>12</sup> When the problem is defined broadly as education, LIRNEasia has significant capabilities because of its Human Capital Research Unit. If it is defined more narrowly as the imparting of ICT skills, it does not. Therefore we will partner with an entity with the relevant expertise. Given the language capabilities of the potential "trainees" the frontline work would in any case have to be done by Myanmarese. This is included among the priority items in MIDO's current strategic plan.

<sup>13</sup> Samarajiva, Rohan (2014). "From 10 to 80 in five years: Myanmar's telecom challenge," in Fife, Elizabeth, ed. *Myanmar: Telecoms' Last Frontier*. Pacific Telecommunications Council Broadband Reports, No. 2. Honolulu, HI: Pacific Telecommunications Council, pp. 8-11.

<sup>14</sup> <https://webmaker.org/> and <http://www.badgealliance.org/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://cis-india.org/accessibility/blog/accessibility-blog>

<sup>16</sup> <http://lirneasia.net/2011/04/dealing-with-disability-in-the-connected-society/>

### 3.4 Attractive content and applications

Significant effort is required in this critical area that will drive demand.<sup>17</sup> First is a government-centric initiative to reengineer the delivery of government services and deliver them to citizens using ICTs. This would also include a significant data analytics component. Second is a civil-society centric initiative to build on the existing momentum around hackathons and barcamps (see Annex 2) to develop apps and content that would be of interest and value to new comers to ICTs including those who are different from the typical app developers, such as farmers and poor micro-enterprises.

- a. LIRNEasia senior personnel have considerable experience in designing and implementing e government programs.<sup>18</sup> Depending on the degree of buy-in obtained from the government, the activities that can be undertaken include (i) “policy enlightenment”<sup>19</sup> through the provision of training and familiarization to decision makers, including Parliamentarians;<sup>20</sup> (ii) assisting the government to develop evidence-based procedures on which government data files should be opened up for access by members of the public on a priority basis; (iii) assisting the relevant government entities (e.g., local government authority in Yangon) to establish demonstration projects on service delivery and data analytics, etc. The actual funding to implement e government programs are considerable and would have to be directly in the hands of the government. We understand the ADB is likely to fund these initiatives. What we propose, in addition to policy enlightenment, is assistance in conceptualizing the services, and in particular, help with data analytics on the transaction-generated data that are produced.
- b. MIDO has been among those organizing some of the largest barcamps and hackathons in the region.<sup>21</sup> LIRNEasia’s conceptual work on how young app developers could be encouraged to develop apps for “those unlike them”<sup>22</sup> contributed to the thinking of colleagues from its African sister organization who wrote up a recent guide for infoDev.<sup>23</sup> In collaboration with these colleagues and with those engaged with incubators and accelerators, LIRNEasia and MIDO can help focus and systematize the considerable energy existing in the app-development space in Myanmar.

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<sup>17</sup> For example, the critical difference between India’s broadband initiatives developed during the previous UPA government and modified by the present BJP government is the emphasis added on demand stimulation.

<sup>18</sup> The e Sri Lanka initiative was designed in 2002-04 by a team including Chair, Samarajiva. One of the key implementers was CEO, Galpaya. The design is described in Hanna, N.K. (2006). *From envisioning to designing e Sri Lanka: Joining the information services economy*, volume 1, Washington DC: The World Bank. The implementation phase is described in Galpaya, H.; Samarajiva, R.; Soysa, S. (2007). “Taking e-government to the bottom of the pyramid: Dial-a-gov?” International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance, Macau China, December 11, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.idrc.ca/EN/Resources/Publications/Pages/ArticleDetails.aspx?PublicationID=769>

<sup>20</sup> LIRNEasia received a request for such training from the Parliamentarians who attended a recent course:

<http://lirneasia.net/2014/07/myanmar-parliamentarians-keen-to-learn-about-icts/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.barcampyangon.org/>

<sup>22</sup> <http://lirneasia.net/2012/03/know-thy-user-mobile-apps-session-at-ictd-2012/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.infodev.org/articles/making-mobile-apps-work-base-pyramid>

- i. If the e government initiative takes off, LIRNEasia and MIDO will focus on developing useful apps from government data that are opened up or generated through e government initiatives. This would include institutionalizing open-data policies and practices.<sup>24</sup>
- ii. Designing applications for people “unlike the app developers” would require understanding them. LIRNEasia and MIDO will design innovator briefs drawing from the ICT consumption and micro-enterprise studies and participate in existing (and well-organized) hackathons, Barcamps, innovator meet-ups in Myanmar to build interest among the participants.

The core data for policy enlightenment (and general dissemination) will be generated from the nationally representative sample survey that is currently being undertaken, and the subsequent follow-up studies that are an attempt to evaluate/quantify the impacts of mobile phones on citizens. This data will be made richer through a series of qualitative research protocols. Emerging issues such as the priming effect of zero-rated content will be researched through both quantitative (questions in the surveys) and qualitative methods.

#### **3.4.1 Expected outcomes**

- Conduct of one follow-up quantitative survey and several qualitative research protocols in order to develop the innovator briefs.
- Offering of multiple learning opportunities including a non-residential course in Nay Pyi Taw for decision makers, including Parliamentarians
- Assisting the government to develop evidence-based procedures on which government data files should be opened up for access by members of the public on a priority basis, subject to government willingness; alternatively a media awareness campaign will be implemented
- If a government entity such as the local-government authority in Yangon agrees to accept LIRNEasia assistance on establishing demonstration projects on service delivery and data analytics, such assistance will be provided; alternatively a media awareness campaign will be implemented
- Preparation of (minimum of ten) “innovation briefs” so developers understand users unlike them, based on the nationally representative sample surveys, and research on SMEs using qualitative studies
- Participating in barcamps and hackathons organized in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay and other cities to disseminate innovator briefs and to generate interest in developing pro-poor and pro-disabled-user apps

<sup>24</sup> This is already included among MIDO’s strategic priorities.

## 4 Research Communication Strategy and Theory of Change

In light of the current relationships that exist between LIRNEasia-MIDO and key actors within the Myanmar government, it is expected that we will be able to anchor our dissemination activities on direct briefings at face-to-face meetings and in the context of capacity building activities such as courses. However, these conditions may change if significant personnel changes occur as a result of the 2015 October elections or other events beyond our control. In such circumstances, dissemination may have to rely more on the media and public events. However, in light of MIDO's success in interacting with politicians of multiple political parties and the credibility that LIRNEasia has built up in Myanmar since 2013, we believe that we will have continued access to decision makers in the ICT space.

Not all communication is targeted towards policy makers: an important audience are the private sector and civil society actors with whom LIRNEasia and MIDO have already established relationships (through previous work and events), and new ones who will be identified. MIDO is well wired into the innovator networks already existing in Myanmar (e.g. by being prominent organizers of Barcamps and other hackathons). Innovator Briefs will be developed based on the household surveys and other research. Participants of Barcamps will be a primary audience for these Innovator Briefs.

Both LIRNEasia and MIDO have attended meetings with (and MIDO continues to attend/engage with) the donors working in the space of ICT4D in Myanmar (e.g. the monthly Working Group meetings convened by the UN). They (along with private sector) will provide an important audience for some activities – such as our efforts to make UNICODE universal in the country.

In addition to tapping into these existing events and networks, about six LIRNEasia-MIDO jointly organized research dissemination events are budgeted for, to reach out to broad audiences that include policy makers, private sector service providers, civil society organizations and media. It is expected these events will be held in Yangon or Nay Pyi Taw, depending on whether they primarily target government actors or others. In the case of some research (e.g. those related to ICT access for the less-abled), one-on-one meetings may be attempted, in a manner similar to what LIRNEasia facilitated for Nirmita Narasimhan (Center for Internet and Society) in the past in Sri Lanka when similar work was undertaken.

LIRNEasia has already written op-ed articles in prominent publications, and been featured in blogs in Myanmar. These activities will continue as a routine activity.

Unlike many of the former British colonies that LIRNEasia has worked in, the level of comfort with communication in English is low even among Myanmar's senior officials. Therefore, we have worked with interpreters in our courses and have translated several documents into Myanmar. These solutions will continue to be used in all dissemination activities

A simplified Theory of Change is given in Annex 3

## 5 Partners

LIRNEasia will partner with two organizations that have a history of engaging with LIRNEasia (details below) and share similar values.

### 5.1 MIDO

The Myanmar ICT for Development Organization (MIDO) is a Myanmar based, non governmental and non-profit organization. Its mission is to “Be a catalyst in using ICT; for sustainable and inclusive development; and social and political progress in Myanmar”. MIDO is linked with both international as well as local organizations. Their focus is to help people deploy ICTs as a tool to meet core development goals. As such, the core activities are based on providing seminars and capacity building initiatives on ICT awareness, mainly in rural and suburban areas and on relevant development research around Myanmar’s ICT sector. At presently, the organization has five divisions, of which two focus on core activities (Research and Programs) and three on non-core shared services. MIDO is headed by Nay Phone Latt (graduate from Yangon Technological University with civil engineering degree in 2004, co-founder of Myanmar Blogger Society in 2007, award winner of PEN Barbara Goldsmith Award and RFS’s Cyber Dissidents Award, former political prisoner, CEC Member of Myanmar Journalists Association (MJA), Chief Editor of ThanLwinAinMat Online Magazine ([www.thanlwin.com](http://www.thanlwin.com)) and is on the BOD in House of Media & Entertainment (HOME)) and is run by a committed and experienced board of directors, full time and part time employees and volunteers. MIDO also has an Advisory Board from various sectors that could extend and guide to achieve the vision set by MIDO.

### 5.2 Center for Internet Society (CIS)

The Centre for Internet and Society (CIS) is a non-profit research organization that works on policy issues relating to freedom of expression, privacy, accessibility for persons with disabilities, access to knowledge and IPR reform, and openness (including open government data, free/open source software, open standards, open access to scholarly literature, open educational resources, and open video), and engages in academic research on digital natives and digital humanities. Its mission is to critically engage with concerns of digital pluralism, public accountability and pedagogic practices, in the field of Internet and Society, with particular emphasis on South-South dialogues and exchange. Sunil Abraham, the Executive Director of the Bangalore based research organization was elected an Ashoka fellow in 1999 to 'explore the democratic potential of the Internet' and was also granted a Sarai FLOSS fellowship in 2003. Between June 2004 and June 2007, Sunil also managed the International Open Source Network, a project of United Nations Development Programme's Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme serving 42 countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

On the proposed work pertaining ICT access for the less-than-abled, LIRNEasia will draw on the expertise of another CIS Staff member, Nirmita Narasimhan. As Policy Director at CIS, Nirmita works on policy research and advocacy related to IP reform and technology access for persons with disabilities. In December 2010, in recognition of her work, she was awarded the National Award for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities by the President of India. In a program spanning 30 months (ending in 2015), CIS has been working in collaboration with the Hans foundation to create a national resource kit of

state-wise laws, policies and programmes in India for persons with disabilities. The resource kit will benefit the disabled by providing them with a ready reference on the facilities extended by the government for persons with disabilities.

### 5.3 LIRNEasia’s past work in Myanmar with CIS and MIDO

In August 2014 LIRNEasia along with CIS facilitated the strategic planning activity for MIDO. The whole exercise has provided MIDO with the necessary tools and a plan to develop in to a globally recognized think tank in the ICT4D space.

Phyu Phyu Thi, co-founder and research & development manager of MIDO interned with LIRNEasia for four months. The internship has assisted in building a stronger relationship with MIDO and has provided MIDO with insights on the internal workings of an organization such as LIRNEasia.

LIRNEasia and MIDO have in 2013 and 2014 organized two capacity building courses, of which one was specifically designed for members of the Parliament. Eighteen members of Parliament from six different political parties, including the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party and the opposition National League for Democracy, actively participated in the training. The other was a five-day residential course on “Policy and regulation conducive to rapid ICT sector growth in Myanmar”. The main goal of this course was to enable members of Myanmar civil-society groups (including academics and those from the media) to marshal available research and evidence for effective participation in policy and regulatory processes. CIS executive director Sunil Abraham was a facilitator in both courses.

The first translation of the book “Information lives of the poor”, co-authored by Laurent Elder, Rohan Samarajiva, Alison Gillwald and Hernan Galperin and published by IDRC, was ceremonially released in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw at events last year. The translations were facilitated by MIDO and the events were organized by MIDO and LIRNEasia jointly. CIS Executive Director Sunil Abraham was a speaker at one of the events (in Yangon).

Sunil Abraham was also one of the facilitators and member of the judging panel of the 4-day residential course on ‘How to engage in Broadband Policy and Regulatory Processes’ funded by Ford Foundation. The main goal of the course was to enable and equip members of Indian civil-society with the necessary tools for effective participation in broadband policy discourse. In April of 2011, Nirmita Narasimhan, program manager on accessibility at CIS, visited Sri Lanka at LIRNEasia’s invitation where she also held a colloquium. LIRNEasia also facilitated her meetings with Telecom Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka, the ICT Agency of Sri Lanka and other foundations (e.g. the Jinasena Trust) where she raised awareness about the options available and the need for disabled persons to access ICTs.

## 6 Risks

Identified Risk	Likelihood of occurring	Risk mitigation strategy	Contingency if risk becomes reality
Radical changes post-2015 elections make it difficult to disseminate research due policy-makers with whom	Moderate	>> Continue to establish relationships with policy makers across all parties (as exemplified by 6 parties being	>> Change the focus of dissemination by reaching out the media in an attempt to

LIRNEasia has relationships no-longer being in the same positions		in attendance in 2013 course). >> Plan multiple dissemination events and modes, none of which completely depend on reaching policy makers one on one or specialized events for policy makers	influence the symbolic environment the (new) policy makers operate >> Double efforts to reach out to private sector service providers and civil society so that they may (in turn) take our research to policy makers
The government imposes new rules that limit the ability of LIRNEasia to carry out activities, specially activities related to field research/surveys of Myanmar citizens	Low	>> Where possible, obtain approval from relevant government organizations prior to carrying out research  >> Continue to develop MIDO's capacity so that they can carry out research, capacity building and dissemination activities themselves, over time	>> Carry out research through Myanmar-based organizations instead of LIRNEasia staff going to the field
Ethnic conflict worsens and LIRNEasia is unable to conduct field work in certain areas	Moderate	>> Current baseline survey avoids conflict zones already. As such, follow-up surveys (panel studies or otherwise) will be planned avoiding these areas anyway >> Design the Impact Evaluation in a manner such that effects on villages/townships/wards that ARE studied can be analyzed (i.e. samples are representative etc.) even if other areas cannot supply data.	>> Avoid (new) conflict areas and proceed with research. Limit analysis (e.g. on impact studies) to only villages that can be surveyed. The results will still be robust (i.e. representative, etc.) but less generalizable when compared to being able to visit all villages/townships/wards previously surveyed.

## 7 Ethical Considerations

Certain organizations have raised concerns that providing aid to a-not-completely-democratic country like Myanmar will result in reinforcing the anti-democratic tendencies within the system. Persistent calls are made to make all aid conditional on specified behavioral improvements by the government.

The government of Canada has considered these concerns and determined that the benefits of engagement outweigh the dangers.

LIRNEasia believes that engagement is important and that the amounts of aid involved in this activity are too small to make any discussion of conditionality meaningful.

The economic benefits to impoverished, currently unconnected citizens of Myanmar of increasing connectivity are well established. The concern that remains is that the new means of communication may be used for propaganda and/or surveillance. It is true that the agreements between the government and the principal telecom licensees require them to provide free-of-charge SMS broadcasts to the government. This facility may be used for good purposes such as disaster warnings and bad purposes such as election propaganda for one party. The fact that telecommunication networks can be used for surveillance has been well demonstrated by the Snowden disclosures. The actions that can be taken to mitigate these bad behaviors in Myanmar are no different from those that can be taken against them in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. That is, eternal vigilance, disclosure and situation-appropriate resistance within the law. MIDO is an organization deeply committed to civil rights. We believe that working with MIDO we can address any ethical issues that arise.

Another concern is that the newly available connectivity can be used by non-state actors such as the 369 Movement to foment religious or other forms of hatred. This phenomenon has already been observed in Myanmar, even before the acceleration of network rollout. MIDO has been at the forefront of efforts to negate the dissemination of hate speech. The topic was among those covered in the training course for Parliamentarians in July 2014. This is what can be done and this is what will continue to be done.

The other major ethical issue that we may have to face is the endangerment of MIDO personnel in the event the political situation deteriorates. There is little reason to believe that the relatively neutral policy and regulatory issues that we address in this project can pose a danger to the members of MIDO who have to live and work in Myanmar, unlike those from LIRNEasia. Nevertheless, all precautions will be taken to minimize risks.

Finally, there are the (more routine) ethical considerations arising due to research activities (specifically, the surveys and qualitative research protocols) that study, observe or interview human subjects. As in the past, LIRNEasia will strictly follow IDRCs guidelines on these matters. Routine actions such as obtaining the subject consent (to being interviewed, and separately, to being photographed or videotaped, where applicable), and informing the subject to opt-out of the research at any point will be done. Also as routine, no personally identifiable information about the subjects will be maintained in research databases, including those of field research firms that may be hired (these conditions are specified in the contract LIRNEasia signs with the research firm).

## **8 Information on aspects related to gender**

The household/individual level surveys will provide (perhaps the only) data on use of ICTs by men vs women of Myanmar. The qualitative research protocols will be designed to obtain richer insights, and

will include at least two gender disaggregated focus groups. In the past, similar qualitative and quantitative research has informed policy in meaningful ways – for example by highlighting the gender gap in mobile phone access in Pakistan.

The research team, as LIRNEasia, has significant participation of women. The project leader, one senior Research Manager, two Research Managers, two Senior Researcher, one Researcher, and one Junior Researcher are women. The Project Advisor and one Senior Research Manager are male.

Nirmita Narasimhan (female) from the Center for Internet Society will lead the work related to ICT access for the disabled.

## Annex 1: Comparative indicators of relevance to ICT development

	Myanmar	Nepal	Sri Lanka	Thailand	Vietnam
GDP per capita (OER)/USD <sup>25</sup>	1,156	730	3,212	6,120	1,895
Population/'000	51,419(2014) <sup>26</sup>	26,494(2011) <sup>27</sup>	20,271(2012) <sup>28</sup>	65500(2010) <sup>29</sup>	89,709(2013) <sup>30</sup>
Literacy rate adult (15 and above)/% <sup>31</sup>	92.7(2011)	57.4(2011)	91.2(2010)	93.5 (2005)	93.4 (2011)
Secondary school enrolment/% <sup>32</sup>	50 (2010)	67 (2013)	99 (2012)	87 (2012)	N/A
Tertiary school enrolment/% <sup>33</sup>	14 (2011)	14 (2011)	17 (2012)	51 (2013)	25 (2012)
Median age of population <sup>34</sup>	27.9	22.9	31.8	36.2	29.2
Adult mortality rate per 1000 <sup>35</sup>	102	180	102	118	174
Unemployment rate/% <sup>36</sup>	4.02	3	4.1	0.94	2.14
Internet users per 100- ITU method (2013) <sup>37</sup>	1.2	13.3	21.9	28.9	43.9
Internet users per 100- LIRNEasia method (2013)	13.6	13.3	34.8	28.9	22.4
Expenditure on education (% of GDP) <sup>38</sup>	0.8 (2011)	4.7 (2010)	1.7 (2012)	5.8 (2011)	6.3 (2010)
Population below poverty line/% <sup>39</sup>	25.6(2010) <sup>40</sup>	25.2(2011)	8.9 (2010)	13.2 (2011)	11.3 (2012)
Percentage urban	30 (2014) <sup>41</sup>	17 (2011) <sup>42</sup>	18.3 (2012) <sup>43</sup>	N/A	32 (2013) <sup>44</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Calculated by authors based on GDP (OER) estimates by the CIA and population results from the latest national census.

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.dop.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Census\\_Provisional\\_Results\\_2014\\_ENG1.pdf](http://www.dop.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Census_Provisional_Results_2014_ENG1.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> <http://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Volume05Part01.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/Pages/Activities/Reports/CPH\\_2012\\_5Per\\_Rpt.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/Pages/Activities/Reports/CPH_2012_5Per_Rpt.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <http://popcensus.nso.go.th/upload/census-report-6-4-54-en.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.gso.gov.vn/default\\_en.aspx?tabid=467&idmid=3&ItemID=15751](http://www.gso.gov.vn/default_en.aspx?tabid=467&idmid=3&ItemID=15751)

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2103.html>

<sup>32</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.ENRR>

<sup>33</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR/countries>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2177.html>

<sup>35</sup> <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.11>

<sup>36</sup> <http://ieconomics.com/?q=unemployment&ref=tradingeconomics.com>

<sup>37</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2206rank.html>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2206rank.html>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.adb.org/countries/myanmar/main>

<sup>41</sup> Calculated by authors based on enumerated population from

[http://www.dop.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Census\\_Provisional\\_Results\\_2014\\_ENG1.pdf](http://www.dop.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Census_Provisional_Results_2014_ENG1.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Calculated by authors based on <http://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Volume05Part01.pdf>

population/%					
Net number of migrants (2012) <sup>45</sup>	-100000	-400570	-316785	100000	-200002
Age dependency ratio (2013) <sup>46</sup>	43	66	51	39	41

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<sup>43</sup> [http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/Pages/Activities/Reports/CPH\\_2012\\_5Per\\_Rpt.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/Pages/Activities/Reports/CPH_2012_5Per_Rpt.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> [http://www.gso.gov.vn/default\\_en.aspx?tabid=467&idmid=3&ItemID=15668](http://www.gso.gov.vn/default_en.aspx?tabid=467&idmid=3&ItemID=15668)

<sup>45</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.NETM>

<sup>46</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.DPND>

## Annex 2: Barcamp and Hackathon participation data

Event	Participants	Year	Reference
Barcamp Yangon	4,700	2010	<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BarCamp">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BarCamp</a>
Barcamp Yangon	3,137	2011	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/notes/barcamp-yangon/barcamp-yangon-2011-opening-day-day-1-a-great-success/10150192531731521">https://www.facebook.com/notes/barcamp-yangon/barcamp-yangon-2011-opening-day-day-1-a-great-success/10150192531731521</a>
Barcamp Yangon	6,400	2012	<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BarCamp">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BarCamp</a>
Barcamp Yangon	6,000 (online and offline)	2013	<a href="https://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/01/22/myanmar-barcamp-yangon-2013/">https://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/01/22/myanmar-barcamp-yangon-2013/</a>
Barcamp Yangon	6,300 +	2014	<a href="http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/5th-barcamp-attracts-thousands-technology-lovers.html">http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/5th-barcamp-attracts-thousands-technology-lovers.html</a>

Event	Date	Participants	Reference
Code for Change	September 5-7, 2013	117	<a href="http://www.codeforchangemyanmar.org/business-solutions-hackathon/">http://www.codeforchangemyanmar.org/business-solutions-hackathon/</a>
Business Solution	March, 2014	76 developers	<a href="http://www.mizzima.com/business/technology/item/12026-hackathon-heralds-myanmar-s-technology-revolution/12026-hackathon-heralds-myanmar-s-technology-revolution">http://www.mizzima.com/business/technology/item/12026-hackathon-heralds-myanmar-s-technology-revolution/12026-hackathon-heralds-myanmar-s-technology-revolution</a>

### Annex 3: Simplified Theory of Change

