



Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning  
(MEAL) report

February, 2026

# Executive Summary

**IMSRS 2025 was implemented through a partnership between the Asian Institute of Technology's GenderLab, the SecDev Foundation, and Spring University Myanmar**, with funding from Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Numun Foundation (Taiwan), and the Myanmar Research Centre (MRC) at the Australian National University.

**The programme integrated three core components: an outreach campaign reaching over 1,000 young scholars, capacity-building workshops on research writing and digital security, and a mentorship programme pairing presenters with established researchers.** Capacity building was integrated throughout the programme lifecycle, enabling participation of many underrepresented scholars. The symposium was conducted bilingually (English and Burmese) and entirely virtually, deliberately designed to remove common barriers to international participation including language, travel constraints, and geographical isolation.

**The programme received nearly 100 applications from early-career researchers (ECRs) in and from Myanmar.** Following a round of peer review and revisions, 88 presentations were accepted. The March 28th earthquake caused disruption and only 44 participants were ultimately able to present in May. In the months leading up to the Symposium, we organised five capacity-building workshops on ethics, research writing, digital security, and presentation skills. We also created a one-on-one mentorship programme for 30 presenters, with priority given to ECRs located within Myanmar with lower access to support.

**An average of 38 participants joined each of our six capacity building workshops**, including the post-Symposium workshop on research publishing. During the Symposium, **we had an average daily attendance of 110 unique people**, including presenters, mentors, panel chairs, Myanmar CSOs, and invited guests. The organising team prioritised digital safety and data handling throughout all activities, based on bespoke digital security protocols developed in collaboration with SecDev's DigiSec team.

**Post-symposium surveys revealed strong overall satisfaction among participants**, with 80% rating the symposium as either 4 or 5 out of 5 for usefulness. Participants appreciated the organisers for presentation support, clear communication, robust security protocols, engaging keynote speakers, and peer interaction. However, feedback identified three areas for improvement: organisational logistics (particularly breakout room arrangements and time management), more substantive feedback from panel chairs, and enhanced networking opportunities. A notable positive outcome was that 4 out of 5 respondents indicated they were likely or very likely to attempt publishing their presented papers, demonstrating the symposium's effectiveness in encouraging scholarly output among Myanmar ECRs.

**IMSRS 2025 succeeded in creating visibility for Myanmar ECRs, fostering diversity among presenters from various geographic locations, delivering high-quality keynote speeches, and providing rare peer-sharing opportunities strengthened by effective capacity-building activities.** However, the event faced significant challenges including ongoing safety concerns affecting planning and execution, including unstable funding arrangements and a worsening security situation inside Myanmar. For similar events, we recommend professionalising mentorship (with fewer but better compensated roles), implementing stronger upfront administrative capabilities, and developing clearer ToRs and project management processes for core team members. Future events may also wish to experiment with hybrid formats and formal networking events.

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# 1. Background

The February 2021 military coup in Myanmar plunged the country into political, social, and economic disarray. In response, national and international civil society groups have mobilised to create a vast new network of alternative institutions and support mechanisms for democratic stakeholders in Myanmar. Among these efforts, various educational programmes have emerged to support university-aged students in Myanmar participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). These programmes include fellowships, scholarships, certificate courses, teacher training programmes, diploma programmes, and summer schools.

However, the alternative education sector remains fragmented, and there is a concern that the disruption in education and research activities caused by the conflict will create a “lost generation” of young scholars who do not have sufficient institutional support to develop their careers. A second concern is that young scholars hesitate to seek feedback or find collaborators due to security concerns and low levels of trust in the education landscape. Although they have the potential to conduct research, publish in academic journals, and advise on public policy, many of these students lack mentorship and face social barriers to access these output avenues.

With this in mind, an informal group of international researchers, academics, and practitioners from various organisations began to work together in 2024 to develop new collaborative initiatives. Based on hands-on experience working with both traditional and alternative education programmes for Myanmar youths, we developed a proposal to host the first-ever research symposium specifically designed for Early-Career Researchers (ECRs) in/from Myanmar. Given that many Myanmar youths cannot access established academic conferences abroad, we decided to create a research symposium with the aim of providing Myanmar ECRs with a platform to present their research, engage in scholarly discussions, and build networks with other researchers. The first-ever International Myanmar Student Research Symposium (IMSRS 2025) was held on May 17-18, 2025 and was both bilingual and entirely virtual, thus lowering built-in access barriers in international higher education, including language, inability to travel, and historical lack of access to higher education for Myanmar youths, even before the coup.

In addition to the two-day Symposium, we created a series of mechanisms to support its successful implementations, including: (i) an expansive outreach campaign, (ii) a series of capacity building workshops, and (iii) a mentorship programme. The complete programme was designed and implemented by a coordinating team of independent academics and development actors in collaboration with three institutional partners, as detailed in the next section below.

## 2. Project Management & Partners

IMSRS was spearheaded by Anders Kirstein Moeller, former director of the Institute of Human Rights & Democratic Governance (IHRDG),<sup>1</sup> and Prof. Kyoko Kusakabe, director of GenderLab at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT). The implementing partner institutions were:

- AIT's GenderLab (responsible for administrative coordination and logistics)
- The SecDev Foundation (responsible for digital security)
- Spring University Myanmar (responsible for marketing)

The core team that implemented the programme represented a cross-section of academics and development actors. They are detailed in table 1 below.

**Table 1:** IMSRS 2025 programme team.<sup>2</sup>

Name	Role
Kyoko Kusakabe	Co-convenor
Anders Kirstein Moeller	Co-convenor
Hannah Russell	Mentorship coordinator
Dipannita Maria Bagh	Marketing Coordinator
Balawansuk Lynrah	Programme Coordinator
Zar Chi	Admin Coordinator
Khant	Admin Coordinator
Aye L.	Admin Assistant

IMSRS 2025 was funded by multiple donors active in the civic and academic education sectors, with seed funding provided by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) through its Knowledge for Myanmar's Development (K4DM) programme. It is worth noting that mid-way during the project's implementation, we were met with significant funding challenges due to exceptional and unforeseen circumstances, although two donors stepped in to provide emergency funding, namely Australia National University's (ANU) Myanmar Research Centre and the Numun Fund.

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<sup>1</sup> IHRDG is an interdisciplinary, postgraduate training center under Spring University Myanmar (SUM).

<sup>2</sup> Some names have been partially redacted for security reasons.

### 3. Planning and outreach

IMSRS was born out of an informal collaboration between various stakeholders active in the wider Myanmar education landscape which began in 2023. A proposal to organise a research symposium was first tabled on 30 April 2024 by Anders Moeller and Hannah Russell. Once core funding was secured, the coordination team began meeting on a bi-monthly basis to plan the programme. The formal call for papers (CFP) was launched at the end of October 2024.

Prospective participants had two months to submit a proposal through a secure online form, with a deadline of 31 December 2024. We marketed the call through various platforms:

- Stakeholder email campaign
- The Burma Studies Group listserv
- Posts on facebook, incl. the creation of an [event](#)
- A dedicated website ([www.imsrs.com](http://www.imsrs.com))
- IHRDG newsletters<sup>3</sup>
- Word-of-mouth

### 4. Application process

The on-going conflict in Myanmar presents unique security threats to an academic event like ours. The so-called State Administrative Council (SAC) junta in Myanmar has completely removed the space for freedom of speech within Myanmar. Furthermore, it actively opposes civilian-controlled, alternative education institutions that operate online, and monitors international academic events. It is therefore not safe for early career scholars in (or even from) Myanmar to share their identities online. Although more than half of our participants were physically located outside of Myanmar, most of them have filial and legal connections to their home country which can become the target of repression by the SAC.

In light of this, we developed stringent privacy and data handling policies. We first partnered with the SecDev Foundations' DigiSec team to create bespoke security protocols, focusing on two aspects of IMSRS 2025: (i) data collection and handling, and (ii) the actual running of our online events. The full protocols can be viewed in Appendix 1.

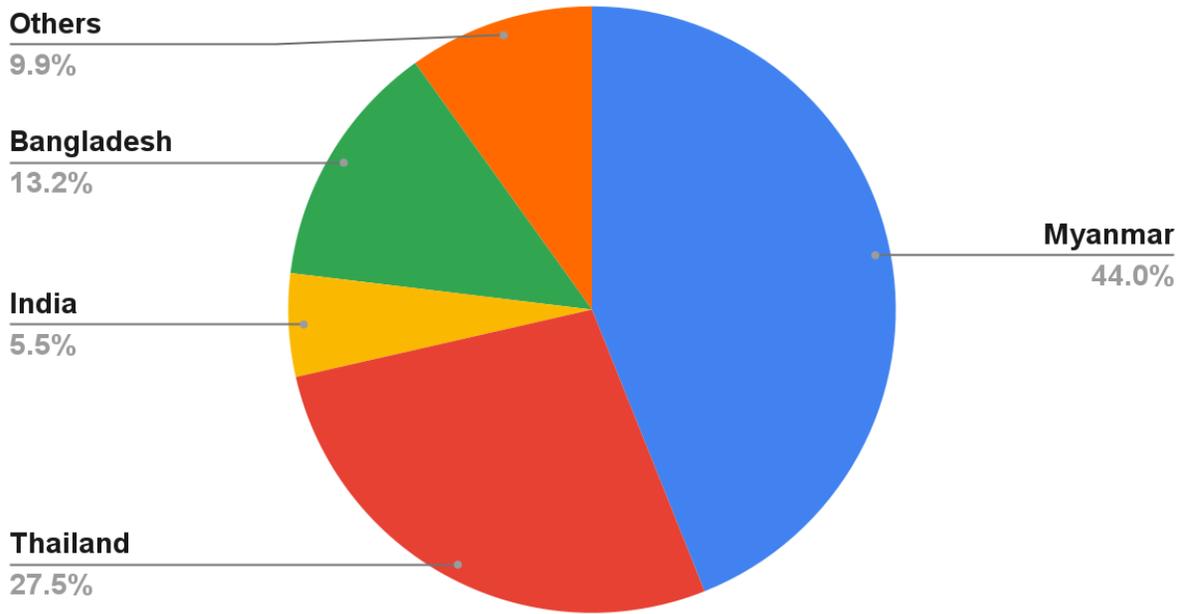
During the application stage, the most important security principle was that all applicants had the option to apply and participate anonymously. This meant using a pseudonym and an email address that did not demonstrate any personal details. Anonymity was a requirement for people based in Myanmar and optional (but highly encouraged) of people based outside of Myanmar. For a breakdown of where participants were located, please refer to figure 1 below.

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<sup>3</sup> Their weekly telegram newsletter has a reach of over 1,000 Myanmar youths and their monthly academic newsletter has a reach of over 300 researchers and scholars.

We received a total of 107 applications, out of which 91 were complete with a full abstract (see demographic breakdown table 1 below). After an initial screening, we distributed the completed abstract among all the mentors with a view towards providing constructive feedback and accepting as many presenters as reasonably possible. All applications were sorted into three categories: Accepted, Accepted (with optional revisions), Accepted (with mandatory revisions).

## Location of Participants



**Figure 1:** Geography of applicants, by country (N = 91)

Applicants		Gender identity	
Started	107	Male	50
Completed	91	Female	31
		Others <sup>4</sup>	10

**Table 1:** Demographic breakdown of applications, by gender

<sup>4</sup> The application form phrased this option as “Others, or prefer not to say”.

## 5. Capacity building

To help promote capacity building among early-career researchers, and to support students who have never participated in an academic research conference, we organised six different capacity building workshops (summarised in table 2 below). Five of them were in the lead-up to the Symposium in May and focused on topics related research ethics, research praxis, presentation skills, and aligning research with the needs of local civil society organisations in Myanmar. We also organised one post-Symposium panel to help presenters turn their research presentations into publishable articles, with speakers from IJBS (International Journal of Burma Studies) and Tea Circle plus a scholar-activist with experience writing analytical op-eds.

Although these workshops were not mandatory for Symposium participants, they were highly recommended and promoted through regular email notifications and a separate Zoom sign-up form. 25-52 people (or 27-57% of sign-ups) participated in each workshop.

Event	Date	Presenter(s)	Attendants
Through the gender lens: Gender Sensitivity and Gender-Inclusive Research Practices	20 Feb, 2025	Hannah Russell	52
Security and Research Ethics	24 Feb, 2025	DigiSec Team	41
Literature reviews: Gathering, Reviewing and Writing.	10 March, 2025	Dr. Elliott Prasse-Freeman	33
Tips on Preparing a Strong Research Presentation	7 April, 2025	Ms. Franchesca Morais	25
Needs of Civil Society Organisations in Myanmar: How to Provide Support Through Research	12 May, 2025	Ms. Yin Min	38
How to Publish Your Research	16 June, 2025	<i>Various</i>	39

**Table 2:** Overview of IMSRS' capacity building programme

During the application process, the Symposium team included a question to applicants on whether or not they would benefit from academic mentorship in the production of their research and presentations as part of the Early Career Researcher (ECR) programme, with 89 applicants responding positively. The Symposium team recruited 11 PhD-level academic colleagues, 10 of whom are fluent Burmese speakers, to provide mentorship as part of the ECR programme. The

Symposium team and Mentors worked together to review the abstracts submitted as part of the application process, and a criteria for acceptance, rejection and conditional acceptance was authored by the Symposium team.

IMSRS was initially funded in part by USAID's Diversity and Inclusion Scholarship Programme (DISP), which had stipulated that 20 of the 40 ECR participants be existing recipients of the DISP programme. However, upon the cancellation of DISP, the reduced Symposium budget was only able to accommodate 30 ECR participants, 26 of whom would be allocated to the Mentorship team, and 4 of whom would be allocated to members of the Symposium team. To identify these participants, ECR applicants were provided with a follow up survey that asked the applicant to provide more information on what stage their research had reached, their current level of access to academic support, what kind of support they expected from the ECR programme and if they had any current impairments with mobility, hearing, seeing or remembering. The Symposium team and Mentorship team reviewed the 84 responses and identified 30 candidates for the ECR programme, priority given to applicants inside Myanmar, with limited access to existing support. The 30 candidates were then allocated to the mentors, mainly based on gender and language confidence. For example, the majority of applicants spoke fluent Burmese but had authored their research in English, but were most comfortable with receiving feedback in Burmese.

Following the allocation, the Symposium team connected each ECR participant with their mentors via Signal or protonmail, with the majority of mentors and mentees using pseudonyms for increased security. The mentors and mentees were provided with guidelines detailing expectations, specifying that mentees could arrange four 30 minute meetings with their mentors between March and May, and were responsible for arranging and preparing for the meetings. The mentor was tasked with collaborating with the mentee to identify clear objectives for supporting their research progress, and encouraging open dialogue with constructive feedback. While mentors were not obligated to review full research papers, they were encouraged to read samples of up to 1000 words, and provide guidelines for the draft paper. There were initial challenges with coordinating mentor/mentee meetings due to communication limitations on the mentee side, the majority of whom were living inside Myanmar or in the border areas. Four of the mentees were displaced due to conflict between March and May, providing further challenges with internet access, and the devastating earthquake of March 28th meant half the mentees were temporarily out of contact, however all eventually were able to get back in contact with their mentors.

## 6. Symposium

In preparation for the Symposium, the team kept in regular communication with all participants via a secure protonmail account. We shared a detailed safety handout on two separate occasions to ensure that all presenters followed our security protocols before, during, and after the Symposium. We also developed a Symposium booklet which had detailed information about the two-day event, the pre- and post-Symposium workshops, and the abstracts of all presentations. Each abstract was accompanied with presenters' pseudonym and anonymised

email address, with a view towards promoting excitement about the presentations as well as potentially fostering future research collaborations.

The Symposium booklet was only shared with presenters, with a note firmly requesting not to share it with anyone else. Furthermore, the Symposium itself was made semi-open, meaning that only invited guests (by organisers, presenters, or partners) could attend by signing up through a secure form. Together with the capacity building activities outlined above, these preparations helped generate significant excitement among participants, many of whom had never joined academic conferences before. However, a massive 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck Myanmar on 28th March, which made it difficult for some participants to complete their research, especially since most young Myanmar people spent the following weeks organising to support earthquake victims. We therefore had a spike in drop-outs in the final weeks leading up to the Symposium in mid-May, and out of the originally scheduled 88 presentations across 16 panels, 42 presenters turned up.

IMSRS 2025 was officially a bilingual event, with presenters freely choosing whether they wanted to present in Burmese or English. A slight majority of presenters used Burmese language. However, given that some participants (including some of the coordinators, mentors, and presenters from the Bangladesh border area) are not fluent in Burmese, we requested that Burmese-language presentations use English-language slides. Similarly, four out of the six capacity building workshops were presented in Burmese<sup>5</sup> while two of them were conducted entirely in English. To support non-English speakers, we had one assistant coordinator translate slides from English to Burmese in advance of the two English-language sessions, as well as provide running summary notes in Burmese in the zoom chatbox.

During the Symposium itself, we had roughly a hundred people join on each day (including 20 organisers, volunteers, panel chairs, keynote speakers, and guests): 121 unique individuals participated on 17th May, and 99 unique individuals participated on 18th May.<sup>6</sup> The programme was half-day long on day 1 and a full day of events on day two, as detailed in Appendix two. We sought to maximise opportunities for people to join regardless of time zone duration (and to take into account the intermittent availability of electricity inside Myanmar) by splitting day two into a morning session and an evening session. During the Symposium, we were fortunate to have three distinguished keynote presentations by Ardeth Thawngmung (Professor, UMass Lowell), Aye Lei Tun (PhD Candidate, McMaster University), and May Sabe Phyu (Executive Director, Gender Equality Network). We also heard opening remarks by the co-convenors, Prof. Kyoko Kusakabe and Dr. Anders Kirstein Moeller, as well as a closing note by Prof. Kusakabe.

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<sup>5</sup> One of the three panelists on 16th June spoke in English while the other two spoke in Burmese.

<sup>6</sup> We were unable to ascertain how many among these joined on both days. However, all presenters were vetted as having come for at least one whole day to qualify for their certificate of appreciation.

## 7. Awards

The presentations given by participants were of an overall high quality, and session chairs reported fruitful and interesting question and answer sessions following a number of the presentations. Initially, the IMSRS budget was planned for awarding three presenters, however the Symposium team was able to re-allocate some funding to expand the prize pool to six. To identify award recipients, each session chair nominated their own pick for best presentation among the presenters from their respective sessions, and the Symposium team narrowed it down to six final recipients (based on overall comments, scholarly potential, and diversity of topics). The final awardees were as follows:

1. Post Coup Issue and Challenges for Myanmar refugee in Mizoram regarding Legal Status and Safeguarding (presented by IMSRS\_19)
2. Rethinking Public Administration Reform in Myanmar: A Social Equity Perspective (presented by IMSRS\_36)
3. Challenges to Climate Resilience of Irrawaddy River's Lower Basin Communities (presented by IMSRS\_37)
4. Integrating Knowledge Management in Continuous Professional Development for Teachers in conflict impacted regions of Myanmar: teachers' perspective, general challenges, and alternative approaches (presented by IMSRS\_44)
5. The Art is Mightier than the Swords: A Study of Khat Ti's and K Za Win's Poetry during the Spring Revolution (presented by IMSRS\_54)
6. Women's Economic Empowerment through Digital Literacy: Resilience of SMEs in Myanmar's Post-2021 Coup (presented by IMSRS\_64)

## 8. M&E data

To gain insight into the effectiveness of the 2025 Symposium delivery and how the team could improve in future iterations, a survey was shared with each participant who successfully participated and presented. To ensure a high response, it was made mandatory to fill the survey form to receive a certificate of participation, and a total of 41 participants filled out the form.

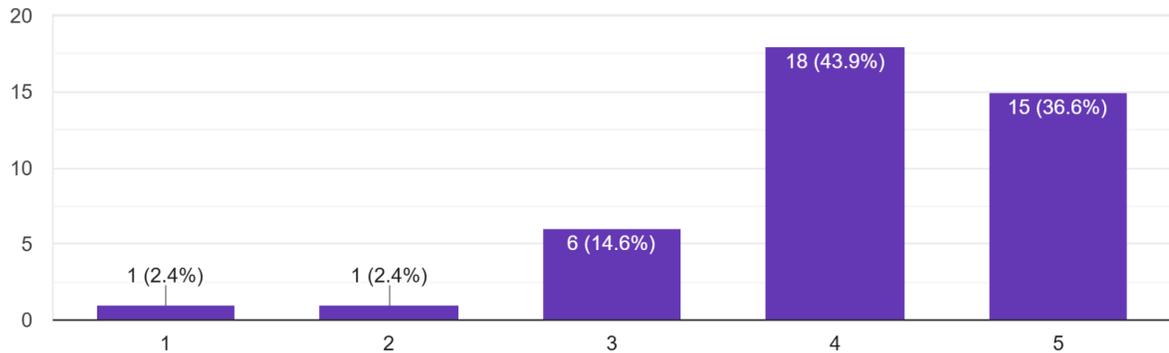
### **Overall effectiveness:**

Four out of five respondents felt that the Symposium was very useful for them, selecting either 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale (from “not at all useful” to “extremely useful”). This indicates that the

programme achieved its core goals of creating a platform for Myanmar ECRs to share their work and upskill their research & presentation skills.

How useful did you think the Symposium was?

41 responses



### Specific strengths and weaknesses:

We also asked respondents to rate various aspects of the Symposium on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The results indicate that the organisers were particularly effective in the following areas:

- I. Support for preparing presentations
- II. Communicating with participants
- III. Implementing clear security protocols
- IV. Having engaging keynote speakers
- V. Creating opportunities for interacting with other presenters.

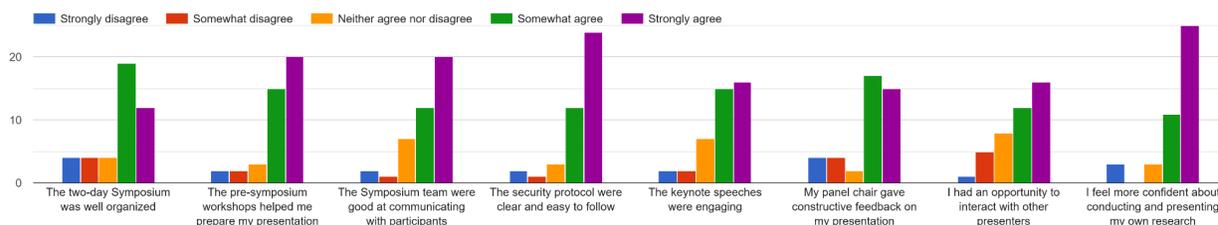
There were no factors where a majority of respondents selected 3 (neither agree nor disagree) or below. However, there were several areas (where a majority of respondent selected 4 out of 5) where we could improve, which are:

- I. Better organisational logistics during the Symposium itself
- II. Panel chairs providing more feedback to presenters
- III. Creating more opportunity for presenters to interact with one another<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Although the most common response to this question was 5 (strongly agree that they had sufficient opportunity to interact with other presenters), this is the question that saw the widest heterogeneity with a relatively high number of respondents (14 in total, or 1/3 of the sample) selecting 1-3. No other questions had as many people select a lower value than 4, which indicates that it is actually our biggest area of improvement for future events even though two-thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

Please rate the following statements based on how much you agree with them

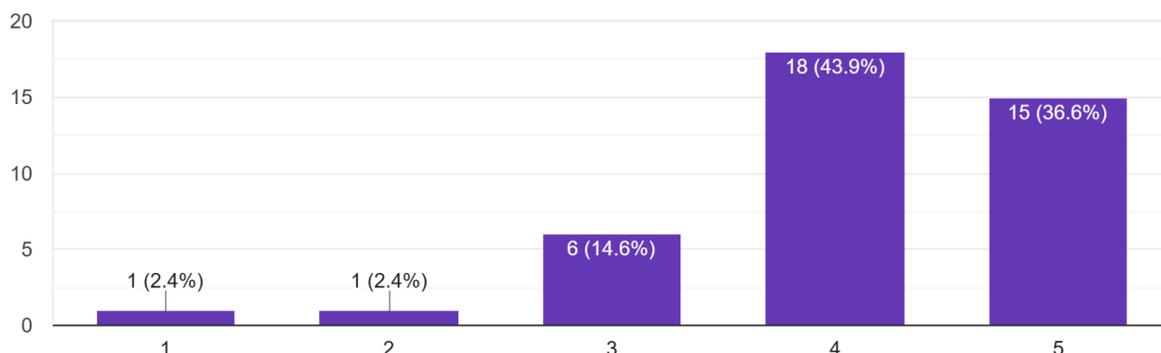


### Potential publications:

Another positive outcome was that the Symposium made a high number of participants consider publishing their research in the future. When asked “how likely are you to attempt to publish the paper you presented?,” four out of five of respondents (33) said that they were either “likely” or “very likely.”

How useful did you think the Symposium was?

41 responses



### Other feedback:

What the organisers did well (select comments):	What could the organisers improve (select comments):
“interacting with participants and handling the complaints”	“I think it need to be well arranged for the breakout panel rooms. It's need to be more clear information.”
“The organizers managed the symposium very well even though there were lack of participations by some presenters.”	“should provide equal time for all the speakers and should organize the presentation in advance. I think it would be good if you have standard slide [instructions, such as] 10 or 12.”

<p>“The organizers effectively maintained clear and consistent communication throughout the research symposium and capacity-building workshop series. They provided timely updates and detailed agendas to engage participants actively. This proactive approach ensured that attendees remained well-informed and fully engaged during the events.”</p>	<p>“It would be more helpful, organizers created network for presenters for discussing their experiences and opinions with ongoing research. It also should provide internet support for collecting the data as it will completely beneficial for completing the research.”</p>
<p>“We have engaged with [a] lot of people from different backgrounds and areas... It was a remarkable experience, and I feel honored to have participated in such a secure, confidential, and intellectually vibrant space. The organizers did an outstanding job in facilitating an environment that encouraged learning, collaboration, and scholarly expression across diverse perspectives and backgrounds.”</p>	<p>“zoom timing, some presentations were cut short and we still had plenty of time afterward.”</p>
<p>“... arrange the pre-conference trainings and during conference [was done well]”</p>	<p>“The organisers can think of providing a publishing platform to the young scholars.”</p>
<p>”I think workshops are very helpful and having my mentor was very useful as he helped me a lot starting from framing research and crafting key points for presentation”</p>	<p>“When the speakers present in Burmese, we should have the simultaneous interpretation service for non-Burmese speakers.”</p>

This data provides valuable information for how to improve future iterations of ISMRS, or similar events organised by other stakeholders. The coordinating team also organised an internal debriefing session to gather additional feedback two weeks after the Symposium, which together with the feedback survey data were distilled into the lessons presented in section 10 below.

## 9. Lessons

The 2025 International Myanmar Student Research Symposium was overall a successful event that generated a lot of positive energy and feelings of empowerment among Myanmar early-career scholars (ECRs). As one presenter noted, “IMSRS [was] a good and strong platform for academic research... facilitating an environment that encouraged learning, collaboration, and scholarly expression across diverse perspectives and backgrounds.” Many participants also noted the benefit of the capacity building efforts leading up to the Symposium. Our most notable success factors include:

1. **Improved visibility of the research being conducted by Myanmar ECRs**

2. **Diversity among presenters**, with people inside Myanmar, in border areas, and top international universities (including Harvard) sharing their research with one another.
3. **High-quality keynote speeches** from internationally acclaimed public thinkers
4. **A rare opportunity for peer-sharing** among Myanmar ECRs
5. **Strong appreciation for the capacity-building activities** leading up to the Symposium
6. **Creating networking opportunities**, including between presenters and their mentors who were all PhD students or PhD graduates
7. **Including Myanmar keynote speakers strengthened visibility**, and in the words of one participant, “was thoughtful and inspiring, offering us a truly global and inclusive learning experience.”
8. **Effective communication of security features**, which made participants feel safe
9. **Opportunity for upskilling by our volunteers**, especially panel chairs, most of whom were Myanmar graduate students attending university in Thailand
10. **Encouraging cross-pollination with civil society**, with several Myanmar CSO representatives expressing deep appreciation that we highlighted their needs for action-oriented research before and during the Symposium
11. **Having a strong coordinating team** who communicated and shared tasks effectively

However, the event faced significant challenges. On-going safety concerns significantly complicated the work of planning and executing the many events surrounding the Symposium. This was further compounded by the sudden withdrawal of funding from our main donor in February 2025, which required another round of urgent fundraising in the middle of executing the programme. Although we were eventually able to meet our funding gaps from the entrance of two new donors, as noted above, the uncertainty and extra workload put significant strain on the coordinating team. From the post-Symposium feedback survey, it also became clear that the team did an exceptional job of communicating with participants on various facets of the Symposium and accompanying activities, although several noted that the Zoom breakout rooms during the Symposium itself were not well and had some delays.

**For future events, we thus draw the following lessons and recommendations:**

1. Academic mentors serve a key role in facilitating the effective training of inexperienced presenters. To deepen their involvement and effectiveness, future events should hire fewer mentors (3-4 instead of 8) to serve the same number of mentees and compensate them significantly better. In summary, our PhD-level mentors should be treated as part-time employers instead of semi-volunteers that received a modest honorarium.
2. The administrative workload of coordinating applicants and effective communication with applicants was more upfront-heavy than we expected. For future programmes, a core administrative coordinator should be hired and onboarded sooner (before applications open instead of after they close).
3. Although the core team had a strong working relationship, the lack of documentation about roles and responsibilities made it harder to onboard volunteers and part-time

assistants at later stages in the programme as they were needed. It is therefore advisable to develop formal TORs for each role and a more formalised project management flow.<sup>8</sup>

4. The coordinating team should invest more time in planning zoom logistics for the two-day Symposium with volunteers and panel chairs, and set up breakout rooms in advance.
5. Many presenters, mentors, and organizers positively described the joy of interacting with the presenters (and several presenters explicitly asked for more time set aside for discussion during the panels). We therefore recommend that future events should experiment with a hybrid format to create opportunities for in-person networking while still maintaining the opportunity for scholars in Myanmar and displaced persons to participate. Regardless of the format, future events should also (i) set aside more time for open discussion in each panel, and (ii) include informal networking events in the official programme.
6. Some participants expressed a desire for follow-up activities, including opportunities for submitting full papers with a view towards eventual publication in a conference. This is advisable but would require an expanded budget.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, it would be better if the team had shared check lists and Gantt charts instead of maintaining their own individual task lists. Suitable project management tools that can facilitate this include Trello.

# Appendix 1: Digital security protocols

## Overview

This manual outlines essential digital security practices for all symposium participants. While we recognise that meaningful networking and collaboration are essential components of this symposium and encourage participants to build professional relationships to engage in scholarly discourse, we must balance these opportunities with security measures. These have been developed by The SecDev Foundation in collaboration with the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and Spring University Myanmar (SUM) to facilitate safe interaction while maintaining necessary precautions. The conference organisers have thoroughly reviewed the areas of security concern for each activity undertaken as part of the symposium and analysed the risk mitigation actions accordingly.

## Personal Data Storage

We implement data protection protocols to safeguard participant information, with access strictly limited to the organiser committee. We employ end-to-end encryption for all digital communications and maintaining secure backup systems. Personal identifying information is stored separately from research and presentation materials to minimise risk in case of any security incidents. All personal details were removed before sharing data with mentors and editors, and only pseudonyms and code numbers were used to identify the participants.

## Note on Phishing

All participants must be cautious of unsolicited emails. Mentors have been instructed to use safe and secure emails to communicate. All emails from Symposium organisers we sent from [imsrsregistration2025@proton.me](mailto:imsrsregistration2025@proton.me). If participants received emails from any other email address(es) pretending to be from the organiser committee, they were asked to immediately report it to the organisers.

## During the Symposium

For participants based in Myanmar, anonymisation was mandatory for all symposium activities. For other participants, anonymisation was optional but recommended. Our anonymisation requirements include:

- Using an email address that does not include personal details
- Using pseudonyms throughout the symposium
- Using Zoom Avatar in place of the display picture
- Avoiding any personal identifying information in public forums
- Maintaining anonymity in all documentation and presentations

Although participants outside Myanmar could choose to share their identities, we recommend carefully considering privacy implications before sharing personal information. In the conference booklet, we included pseudonyms and anonymised email addresses together with each abstract so that participants could safely communicate with each other over shared research interests.

Throughout the symposium and the pre and post-conference workshops, we implemented the following security measures:

- The SecDev Foundation provided mandatory pre-symposium digital security training through a research safety workshop on data handling and SOPs for organisers and participants before the symposium.
- Regular security audits and monitoring throughout the event.
- A technical support team participated throughout the symposium and other workshops and double-checked that Zoom participants had registered.
- Clear incident response procedures for any security concerns.
- Emergency contacts readily available through secure channels.
- Quick-response protocols for potential security breaches.

By participating in the symposium, all attendees agree to follow these security guidelines and attend the mandatory security training sessions.

## Appendix 2: Full Programme Schedule

### International Myanmar Student Research Symposium Dates: 17 -18 May 2025

17 May 2025				
Time	Online Room 1	Online Room 2	Online Room 3	Online Room 4
09.00 – 09.15	<b>Welcome Note</b> <b>Speaker: Anders Kirstein Moeller</b>			
09.20 – 10. 20	<b>Keynote 1</b> <b>Speaker: Professor Ardeth Thawngmung</b> <b>Chair: Anders Kirstein Moeller</b> <i>Perception, lived experiences, and coping strategies: How Myanmar residents perceive and respond to risks and insecurity in post-coup Myanmar</i>			
10.20-10.30	<b>BREAK</b>			
10.30 – 12.30	<b>Session I – The Social and Political Consequences of Violence</b> Panel 1	<b>Session II - Human Rights, Peace, and Solidarities: Building Resilient Societies</b> Panel 1	<b>Session III – Education: Access, Disruptions, Resistance, and Reform</b> Panel 1	<b>Session IV – Education: Access, Disruptions, Resistance, and Reform</b> Panel 2
12.30-13.00	<b>BREAK</b>			
13:00 – 15:00	<b>Session I – The Social and Political Consequences of Violence</b> Panel 2	<b>Session II – Human Rights, Peace, and Solidarities: Building Resilient Societies</b> Panel 2	<b>Session III – Education: Access, Disruptions, Resistance, and Reform</b> Panel 3	<b>Session IV – Infrastructures, Resources &amp; Resilience</b> Panel 1

18th May 2025				
Time	Online Room 1	Online Room 2	Online Room 3	Online Room 4
09.00 – 10.00	<b>Keynote 2:</b> <b>Speaker: Aye Lei Tun</b> <b>Chair: Hannah Russell</b> <i>Transnational Networks and CSO Resilience in Myanmar and Thailand</i>			
10.00 – 10.10	<b>BREAK</b>			
10.15 – 12.30	<b>Session I –</b> Migration, Identity, and Resilience Panel 1	<b>Session II –</b> Media and Digital Activism Panel 1	<b>Session III –</b> Myanmar Refugees and Post – Coup Challenges Panel 1	<b>Session IV –</b> Myanmar Refugees and Post – Coup Challenges Panel 2
	<b>BREAK</b>			
18.00-19.15	<b>Session I –</b> Everyday Activism and Resistance Panel 1	<b>Session II –</b> Women’s Political Participation Panel 1	<b>Session III –</b> Women’s Political Participation Panel 2	<b>Session IV –</b> Women’s Political Participation Panel 3
19:15 - 19:30	<b>BREAK</b>			
19:30 – 20:30	<b>Keynote 3</b> <b>Speaker: May Sabe Phyu, Executive Director of Gender Equality Network</b> <b>Chair: Zar Chi</b>			
20:30 – 21:00	<b>Closing Note: A Way Forward for Myanmar Researchers?</b> <b>Speaker: Professor Kyoko Kusakabe</b>			

## Appendix 3: Team Bios

- **Prof. Kyoko Kusakabe** is a professor of Gender and Development Studies (GDS) at the Department of Development and Sustainability (School of Environment, Resources and Development) at the Asian Institute of Technology. She is a co-PI of the GenderLab project, a platform for activists, researchers, /practitioners, and other concerned people who are working on or interested in gender equality and democratic justice in Myanmar. GenderLab has a reach of over 50,000 people through its social media, and has a proven track record of building networks through its workshops, discussions and research publications related to gender and democracy in Myanmar. GDS-AIT also works directly with various organisations on research and outreach on gender equality in Myanmar.
- **Dr. Anders Moeller** is an educator and adviser to Spring University Myanmar (SUM), an alternative education institution founded in the aftermath of the February 2021 military coup in Myanmar. From 2022 to 2024, he founded and led IHRDG, a postgraduate training institute under SUM offering diploma programmes in applied social sciences. He previously worked in Myanmar as a policy researcher and entrepreneur, and recently completed a PhD in Urban Geography. As chair of the 2022 and 2023 IHRDG seminar series, he has organised discussions featuring both national and international scholars on key topics in Myanmar Studies, including the marginalisation of the Rohingya, the military's digital repression tactics, the impact of conflict on communities, and local governance responses to post-coup violence.
- **Hannah Russell** is a researcher focused on disability and inclusion in the Myanmar context, and previously lived in Yangon for three years. In 2021 she co-founded Myanmar Action Group Denmark, a volunteer CSO made up of Burmese and Danish activists and academics, and currently manages a higher education program for displaced scholars in Mizoram. Alongside her research work, she volunteers supporting displaced people on the Thai and India borders through fundraising and technical writing support.
- **Dr. Balawansuk Lynrah** is a researcher focused on children and youth geographies in northeastern India. She is an adjunct lecturer at the University of East London (UEL) and a visiting faculty member at Spring University Myanmar (SUM)'s Institute of Human Rights and Democratic Governance. Prior to joining academia, she was a development worker with a community-based organisation in Bodoland, India. Her work was mainly focused on conducting action-based research, workshops, monitoring and evaluating projects for various NGOs in the northeastern Indian region.
- **Dr. Dipannita Maria Bagh** is a foreign affairs expert and policy researcher based in Mumbai, India. She has been editor at IHRDG since July 2023 where she oversees the publication of its quarterly, monthly, and weekly newsletters. She previously worked as Research Assistant at the Netaji Institute for Asian Studies, Kolkata, on a Department of Higher Education, Government of West Bengal funded project 'The Transformation of Myanmar Politics and the Implications for Regional Cooperation', examining Myanmar's higher education policy

landscape. She completed her PhD in Political Science in North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) in 2025 and has since 2024 been a guest lecturer at IHRDG where she teaches the annual elective course 'Diplomacy for a Democratic Myanmar.'

- **Zarchi** is the GenderLab-K4DM project coordinator at AIT, GDS. She completed a specialised course in Gender and Politics through a collaborative effort between AIT, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and Gender Equality Network (GEN) in August 2021. Her academic background includes a postgraduate diploma in Development Studies from the Yangon Institute of Economics, Myanmar and a Bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Dagon, Myanmar. Throughout her career spanning over a decade, she has been actively engaged with international organisations and civil society organisations, working to advance the rights and opportunities of marginalised communities, particularly women and key populations.
- **Khant** is a Project Officer for a collaborative project between K4DM and SecDev under a small grant research initiative at AIT, GDS. She has researched on labour rights issues, focusing particularly on the rights of female workers in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone. Khant earned a Master's Degree in Social Science (Development Studies) from Chiang Mai University in 2022.
- **Aye Aye Aung** is an aspiring international development professional with a strong commitment to advancing gender equality and inclusive socio-economic and educational development, particularly for women and young people. She is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Gender and Development Studies at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), where she has built a solid academic foundation in gender theory, social research, and intersectional analysis. She has professional experience working with international organisations including Mercy Corps, International Republican Institute, and Plan International. In 2024, Aye Aye was selected as a YSEALI Professional Fellow by the U.S. Department of State and completed a six-week professional placement with the United Women of East Africa Support Team in San Diego, California, and has since January 2026 been working as a Research Fellow under the Myanmar–Australia Visiting Fellowship Program in Australia.