

CHINLONE

**Connecting Higher education Institutions for a New
Leadership in National Education**

External Evaluation

**WP 2, 3, and 4:
Management, Teaching, and International Relations Platforms**

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank those who gave their time and their contributions throughout the evaluation. Staff at the University of Bologna, Dagon University, University of Mandalay, University of Yangon, Yangon University of Economics, and Yezin Agricultural University, University of Granada and University of Uppsala for their time and energy in fielding my many questions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

i. Evaluation Purpose and Scope

Funded by the European Union through the framework of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building Key Action 2, CHINLONE is a three-year project (2017-2020) coordinated by the University of Bologna. The project is a partnership between European Higher Education Institutions (University of Bologna, University of Granada and University of Uppsala) five Myanmar Higher Education Institutions (Dagon University, University of Mandalay, University of Yangon, Yangon University of Economics, and Yezin Agricultural University), and the Department of Higher Education of Myanmar's Ministry of Education.

CHINLONE'S aim is to contribute to the innovation and internationalization of Myanmar's Higher Education System, so as to facilitate the country's transition toward a knowledge economy. Specifically, the project seeks to create a lasting impact capable of encompassing the following:

- 1) the modernization of Myanmar's university management, through the introduction of innovative and internationally recognized principles;
- 2) a reinforced capacity to design programs, teach, and produce innovative knowledge by local faculty members, according to an approach based on students' learning outcomes;
- 3) the implementation and/or empowerment of International Relations Offices (IROs) in Myanmar's universities;
- 4) a strengthened cooperation between EU countries and Myanmar for the exchange of academic knowledge at all levels.

This formative evaluation seeks to provide relevant information concerning the CHINLONE project experience in relation key progress made across the three Work Packages (WPs) of WP2: management, WP3: education and WP4: international relations. This study aims to determine the extent to which capacity building, and processes related to it, has been effective in generating the desired results with a particular focus on the aforementioned.

The primary purpose of this evaluation is to provide evidence of the relevance, effectiveness, immediate impact, efficiency and sustainability of the project that can be used for both learning and accountability.

The final evaluation, carried out from December 2019 to February 2020, consisted of three phases:

Desk review - This phase's aim was to plan and establish the framework for the evaluation process, including the identification of objectives, indicators and an initial gathering of information.

Consultation process – This phase aimed to gather feedback of key informants, such as the coordinating team (University of Bologna), the European partner universities and the Myanmar partner universities. Data gathering for this phase relied on qualitative research with coordinators, partners and participants of the CHINLONE project.

Consolidation - The results of the desk review and the consultation process were compiled and analysed in this phase. Information was examined and crosschecked in light of the evaluation matrix defined during the desk phase. As a result of this process, the final report was drafted and finalized.

ii. Findings

It is important to note that the kinds of cultural renovation hoped for through the CHINLONE project will take more time than the three-year lifespan of the project. But by testing the three-pronged approach of the WP 2, 3, and 4 on a few pilot curricula deemed central to Myanmar's changing economic needs, it is hoped that Myanmar's HEIs can scale the process and the results throughout the country.

Through the implementation of Work Packages 2, 3, and 4, the project directly contributed to updating and improving the quality of degree programs and teaching; quality assurance for learning and teaching with a conscious effort to instil a student-focused approach, and building and fostering a more international outlook in key Myanmar universities throughout the country.

The project in general, and WP 2, 3 and 4 specifically, were effectively built around contextually relevant needs. The project has generated important tangible and intangible achievements that have the potential to be impactful in the long-term at multiple levels within Myanmar High Education Institutions and Myanmar society, more broadly. The CHINLONE project does well to take into account the complexities of the Myanmar context and the gaps related to a lack of investment in infrastructure and human capital and the isolation of the knowledge industry from developments outside the country. The packages have been **relevant** to the current needs of the of the target group as the country undergoes significant political, economic, and social changes.

The evaluation results have found that the WP2, 3 and 4 have been **effective** in developing several activities, from knowledge exchange between EU and Myanmar partners and the

subsequent cascade training, to the development and implementation of new teaching units; the implementation of new teaching and learning methods in which students are engaged in the pedagogical process, and fostering the exchange of academic knowledge by means of workshops and trainings that have culminated in the creation of the infrastructure and knowledge required for the integration of local Myanmar HEIs' into a regional and network education network. All data gathered indicate that the project has taken steps to effectively address the lack of opportunities for Myanmar students to study abroad; the gap between HE learning and the needs of the Myanmar labour market, and the lack of program coherence nationally, between Myanmar HEIs' and internationally, between Myanmar HEI and HEI in Asia, Europe and beyond.

This evaluation aimed to analyse the extent to which capacity building results have been impactful at different levels, though the report could only assess immediate **impact** due to the limited scope of the study. The project's WP 2 and 3 acknowledge the universities' lack of innovative teaching modalities and the problems associated with a highly centralised governance system in which decisions have traditionally been made within government ministries before percolating down to the institutions themselves. Specifically, WP 2 has increased the capacity of Myanmar university leadership – the Rectors, Pro rectors and Heads of Departments – in the building of structured degree programs that better connect to the country's job market.

WP 3, the Education Platform, focused on capacity building of teaching staff to design programs, teach and produce knowledge through innovative research. It was clear to this evaluator, through discussions with Myanmar staff, the focus group discussion and key informant interviews that local staff feel more confident with their teaching methods, more informed on best practice for designing and facilitating active learning in the classroom, and more connected to each other through nation-wide professional networks.

WP 4 recognises that capacity building in the management and pedagogical aspects of Myanmar HEIs needs to be accompanied by a coherent internationalization strategy, specifically, building relationships at both the local and international levels. WP 4 aimed to establish International Relations Offices at flagship Myanmar HEIs. The purpose of these offices, and the equipment and training that have accompanied, has been to strengthen collaborations between EU partner HEIs and local universities for academic knowledge exchange.

The CHINLONE project put into place **efficient** working modalities that have used resources proficiently to achieve the desired results. Activities were achieved within budget and on time.

While this project is not yet concluded, there are a number of indicators that speak to the long-term **sustainability** of the project's Work Package goals to build capacity among the

management and teaching staff of key Myanmar universities, while building relationships with HEI in the Southeast Asia region, Europe and beyond that will benefit HE staff and Myanmar students.

iii. Conclusions & Recommendations

Myanmar is at an important junction in its history, as it emerges from decades of authoritarian rule, isolation and economic stagnation. The reform of Myanmar's National Education System aims to put the country on a path towards sustainable development and contribute to national goals of turning Myanmar into an upper Middle-Income Country by 2030.

Investment and reform of Myanmar's HE industry is driven by the desire to build human capital, specifically, the production of young, qualified human resources who can further guide the country towards a knowledge-based economy.

The partnership between European and Myanmar HEIs, and the Myanmar Ministry of Education promotes the modernization and internationalization of HE in the country by working with HEI managers, rectors, Heads of Departments, teaching and research staff and staff of International Relations Offices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations should be read with an understanding that this project was a short-term project, limited in both time and goals to piloting the reform and implementation of the management, teaching and learning, and International Relations offices of a select number of Myanmar HEIs. Given the results achieved thus far, the following is a consolidated set of specific recommendations and suggestions based on areas for potential improvement identified throughout the evaluation:

- The evaluation recommends follow up trainings. Specifically, based off discussions, Myanmar partners feel it would benefit them if European academic staff were to provide seminars and/or training workshops to Myanmar HEI staff – in Myanmar – on relevant pedagogical practice and course design.
- The inclusion of minority groups is identified as a point to build into future iterations of the project. As it stands, the project has focused on flagship HEIs and the voices of the majority Bumar ethnic group have been disproportionately represented. It is likely that the educational needs and challenges of minority ethnic groups in Myanmar differ from the majority.

- In terms of scalability, it is recommended that the project include HEI beyond the Myanmar's flagship institutions. Future iterations of the project should engage with a larger number of HEIs, so that a broader, more representative selection of universities are encouraged to shape and lead education reform in Myanmar.
- Myanmar partners recommended lengthening Mobility Trainings. Specifically, it would be helpful for the aim of fostering a more vibrant "campus culture", if Myanmar partners were exposed to European partner institutions' campus life and given a chance to discuss teaching and learning matters with European students.
- Adding to the above point, future iterations of an HE reform project in Myanmar would do well to give a greater voice to Myanmar students. CHINLONE has been focused on management, educators, and building IROs; students' voices are also required.
- With regard to moving towards a model of institutional academic autonomy, this evaluation recommends creating a roadmap for the implementation of academic teaching staff training courses in curriculum and syllabus design. Such trainings should promote standardised, best-practice approaches to curriculum design that can be replicated throughout Myanmar's HE institutions.
- Further to the previous recommendation, future iterations of the project should provide implementable solutions for institutional and personal accountability, with a focus on quality assurance by means of continuous assessment and updating of degree programs in line with national and international standards.
- Further to a mapping of Myanmar's current and projected labour market needs, it is recommended that external stakeholders from the private sector are identified, contacted, and encouraged to consult on shaping degree programs. Already, Myanmar partner institutions are aware of the importance of connecting HE to civil society. This report suggests further development of this point.
- With regard to the matching of Myanmar HEI with EU HEI, respondents expressed satisfaction with the multilateral approach. Two points, however, need mentioned: first, EU partners need to be given time by their institutions to meet and speak with Myanmar partners. Second, Myanmar partners requested more time to get a feel for the local culture, including campus life.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

I. The Project

Funded by the European Union through the framework of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building Key Action 2, CHINLONE is a three-year project (2017-2020) coordinated by the University of Bologna. The project is a partnership between European Higher Education Institutions (University of Bologna, University of Granada and University of Uppsala) five Myanmar Higher Education Institutions (Dagon University, University of Mandalay, University of Yangon, Yangon University of Economics, and Yezin Agricultural University), and the Department of Higher Education of Myanmar's Ministry of Education.

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- 2) a reinforced capacity to design programs, teach, and produce innovative knowledge by local faculty members, according to an approach based on students' learning outcomes;
- 3) the implementation and/or empowerment of International Relations Offices (IROs) in Myanmar's universities;
- 4) a strengthened cooperation between EU countries and Myanmar for the exchange of academic knowledge at all levels.

The CHINLONE project is comprised of six Work Packages, spread over three years of the project life. WP 1 is a mapping exercise and needs assessment of Myanmar's national and institutional education priorities. WP 2, 3, and 4 are capacity building platforms that target HEI management, HEI teaching and learning and International Relations of Myanmar HEIs, respectively. WP 5 includes the use of custom-made posters, social media and websites to disseminate the results of the aforementioned WPs. WP 6 is focused on the scalability and sustainability of the project, beyond the lifespan of CHINLONE and the current stakeholders, while WP 7 and WP 8 are measure for quality control and project management.

CHINLONE consortium comprises 3 EU universities, 1 EU university association, 5 Myanmar universities and the Myanmar Ministry of Education as project partners. The full commitment of the Ministry guarantees sustainability to the project actions and a positive impact on the general modernization of MM HE system.

The 3 EU universities, Bologna (UNIBO), Granada (UGR) and Uppsala (UU), have participated in several EU funded projects and are experienced in managing capacity building projects. The Coimbra Group (CG) was also asked to join as a full partner.

In Myanmar, the University of Yangon (YU) and the University of Mandalay (MU) are the main comprehensive, metropolitan universities and the first established in the Country. Due to their academic profile, the Ministry of Education regards them as leading institutions in the ongoing HE reform. Dagon University (DU) is also a comprehensive institution and the largest in terms students population. These 3 partners offer course programs covering the project fields except agriculture. The Myanmar consortium includes also two specialised universities: the Yangon University of Economics (YUEco) and Yezin Agricultural University (YAU).

II. Evaluation Purpose and Scope

This formative evaluation seeks to provide relevant information concerning the CHINLONE project experience in relation key progress made across the three Work Packages (WPs) of WP2: management, WP3: education and WP4: international relations. This study aims to determine the extent to which capacity building, and processes related to it, has been effective in generating the desired results with a particular focus on the aforementioned.

The primary purpose of this evaluation is to provide evidence of the relevance, effectiveness, immediate impact, efficiency and sustainability of the project that can be used for both learning and accountability.

Report Structure

The report starts by illustrating the methodology and approach employed. The report then presents key contextual information and briefly highlights the project's and the relevant Work Packages' objectives.

The report then presents the findings of the evaluation by analyzing aspects of the Work Packages, such as the operational strategy/approach and implementation. Every aspect of the WPs are linked to relevant evaluation criteria ranging from relevance to effectiveness, and from immediate impact and sustainability to efficiency.

Finally, conclusions and a set of recommendations are provided. An overview of the report's content is provided in the executive summary.

III. Methodology

The final evaluation, carried out from December 2019 to February 2020, consisted of three phases:

Desk review – The purpose of the Desk Review was to plan and establish the framework for the evaluation process, including the identification of objectives, indicators and an initial gathering of information. Relevant documentation in relation to the project in general and Work Packages 2,3, and 4 specifically were gathered and reviewed, including the project proposal, minutes of meetings, PowerPoint presentations from conferences, and reports from the universities and from each stage of the project as it has progressed. A list of key staff members, partners and representatives of direct target groups was completed. The timeline and conditions for delivery and presentation of the final report were agreed upon. The overall methodology of the evaluation relies on a selected number of criteria such as: relevance of the work package to the needs of the target groups and to the context, coherence of the work package against the overall project design and logical framework, and effectiveness of the activities (trainings), immediate results & sustainability.

Consultation process – This phase aimed to gather feedback of key informants, such as the coordinating team (University of Bologna), the European partner universities and the trainees. Twelve individuals took part in the consultation process. The full list of the key informants interviewed is available in Annex I. The consultation process employed a qualitative data gathering methodology through a focus group discussion, semi-structured interviews on an individual basis or small group settings and informal discussions over two days in January 2020.

Consolidation - The results of the desk review and the consultation process were compiled and analysed in the Consolidation phase. As a result of this process, the final report was drafted and finalized after incorporating the inputs of the coordinating team. The methodology used throughout the evaluation exercise primarily focused on analysing the process to achieve the expected outcomes and to determine the immediate effects of the work packages. Particular attention was given to the level of participation of all partners in the design and implementation of the capacity building activities and changes generated.

SECTION TWO: FINDINGS

i. Relevance and Coherence

In the last decade, Myanmar has experienced significant social, economic and political changes. Since the military government agreed to political reforms, in particular, permitting multiple parties to contest elections in 2010 and 2012, followed by the first openly contested

elections in 2015, the international community has loosened economic sanctions that have contributed to decades of economic stagnation. With the victory of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy in 2015 hopes have been raised both in Myanmar and outside of a democratic transition that would open the way for the country to join the international community after years of isolation.

It is not just the Myanmar economy that has stagnated under military leadership. Seen as a hotspot for political descent, Myanmar's HEIs have been singled out by the government, suffering from intermittent forced closures and starved of resources. The reform of Myanmar's National Education System is of vital importance for contributing to the democratic and economic gains made in the last decade. Specifically, the following three steps have been significant for moving the country towards a lasting and sustainable development:

- 2012: Myanmar's Ministry of Education (MoE) launched a "Comprehensive Education Sector Review" (CESR). The CESR had the aim of analysing the country's education system, shaping new policies and drafting a comprehensive education plan by 2014.
- 2014: Myanmar's Parliament approved the new "National Education Law (NEL), amended in 2015. The NEL and amendments which followed provided a national framework for implementing a range of complementary reforms across the national education system. Such reforms (still under debate) included: recognizing the right of all citizens to free, mandatory primary level education; establishing a standards-based education quality assurance system; expanding the basic education system to 13 years; supporting the learning of nationalities' languages and cultures; and great decentralisation within the education system with the attendant increased autonomy for HEIs.
- 2015: building on the reforms of 2012 and 2014 the government launched a new five-years "National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) – 2016-2021. The NESP aimed for overarching reform across the entire Myanmar Education Sector.

At the heart of the push for HE reforms starting in 2012 was the need for a decentralized education system. In particular, the government's endorsement of allowing HEIs "institutional autonomy," meaning a shift from state-controlled to state-guided, is meant to allow universities to reach an autonomous state on different levels: organizational, academic, staffing, and financial.

With Myanmar HEIs requested to put their efforts into capacity building, there is a need for support for the reorganization of the Myanmar HES at the managerial level; for better trained

staff to teach and carry out research, and for the creation of International Relations Offices and the building of networks between Myanmar HEIs and international HEIs.

The CHINLONE project has sought to address these needs through formulating viable and constructive recommendations on the methods with which Myanmar HEIs can be effectively modernized, while also organizing capacity-building technologies and knowledge-sharing experiences specifically designed for Myanmar educational staff.

ii. Results Achieved (Effectiveness)

This evaluation finds the Work Packages 2, 3, and 4 to be **effective**. The projected outputs were achieved in a timely fashion and to the satisfaction of the various stakeholders involved. Focus groups discussions and key informant interviews with local Myanmar partners highlighted a number of particularly successful aspects of the aforementioned WPs.

WP2: management platform

WP2 was designed with Myanmar's academic leaders in mind (rectors, deans, heads of departments). The idea being that through extensive teaching and exposure to European HES as a whole, Myanmar HE leaders will be able to draft revised and updated versions of mission statements, strategic plans, and MoUs templates. These tools would be further promoted in the country through spillover activities and cascade trainings.

During focus group discussions, interviewees expressed a high level of satisfaction with with WP 2. In particular, participants opined that the CHINLONE project was a suitable fit with the Myanmar government's NESP reforms that aim for overarching reform across the entire Myanmar Education Sector by the end of 2021. Discussants expressed that their initial concern at having to change their management style turned to confidence with the realization that current methods were less than effective for what was being asked of them by the government, in terms of greater autonomy in decision making. Specifically, Professor Soe Thu, a Head of Department at Myanmar's Yangon University of Economics, explained,

Because of Chinlone, I realized why we need to change our old teaching system and curriculum. Because of a lack of [appropriate] skills and insufficient knowledge, our students and our graduates will [struggle] to find employment.

Indeed, the capacity building among upper level management and an updating of the curriculum was well received by Myanmar partners, receiving the required 'buy-in' to implement new teaching methods and course design passed on through the mobility trainings and subsequent cascade trainings. "Personally, in my department," Professor Soe Thu

explained, “I developed two new Master’s programmes; Master of Banking and Finance (MBF) and Master of Tourism and Hospitality Management (MTHM).”

Representatives from Yangon’s Dagon University also voiced confidence in the training received, explaining that Dagon had also updated its curriculum by incorporating student feedback. “But we need further training, such as how to carry out research,” remarked one discussant. Indeed, while there appears to be a consensus that the Mobile Training was a success and that participants at the management and education levels understand and are currently able to implement curriculum reforms in line with student needs and national reforms, a number of discussants requested further trainings going forward: “Chinlone identified priorities for capacity building, but not enough people have benefitted from the mobile trainings and cascade trainings,” voiced one discussant from University of Mandalay. Discussants and key interviewees emphasized that they would like to see booster trainings conducted by visiting trainers from EU partner institutions.

In a key informant interview, Professor Soe Win of Yezin Agricultural University (YAU) noted the difficulties of the mobility trainings: “It seemed like our academic contacts at the University of Bologna was too busy to meet us. Both partners need enough time for to engage with the training process,” he suggested. Having said that, Soe Win praised the project, telling me, “While we’ve experience a quality assurance process in previous projects, Chinlone was very detailed and practical with regards to developing curriculum and quality assurance systems. We feel confident about what we need to do.”

WP3: Education platform

The WP 3 education platform focuses on the formation of three distinct task forces in the fields of humanities and cultural heritage, economics of tourism, and agricultural sciences. The three fields have been composed by Myanmar faculty members who traveled to Europe in order to receive the training in degree courses designing, innovative teaching methods, and quality assurance processes. The aim of WP3 is stated as the renovation and modernisation of the approach that Myanmar institutions take to designing degree programs and curricula— from a degree approach to a student facing approach.

It appears that the need for student-facing teaching and learning, and connecting course design to the demands of the labour market are points that have resonated with Myanmar partners. “My students are more engaged and speak during classes. They’re now giving presentations,” one discussant told me. “We’ve changed the traditional, teacher-led mode of teaching and learning: There’s a balance of formative and summative assessment; we have pre-class readings and group work during class time,” explained Professor Kyawt Kyawt Khine, from the University of Mandalay. “Overall, approximately 70% of the students appear very interested in these new approaches and are demonstrating capacity,” she said during a key informant interview.

A concerted effort by Myanmar educators to foster a student-led learning and teaching experience appears to be complimented by an acknowledgement that what is taught in class needs relevance to the fast changing national labour market: “Chinlone asked us what competencies we’d like to gain and I did the same thing with my students. I asked and listened to my students so I could tailor courses with clear outcomes,” explained a discussant from Dagon University. “We have three new master’s courses in hospitality, each responding to the labour market,” a Yangon University of Economics’ discussant said, echoing the feelings of Professor Soe Thu. A third discussant, from University of Mandalay, told the group, “It’s been a struggle for us to help students find employment with an Oriental Studies degree. But the University of Bologna gave us training and advice on how to link course studies to finding a job.”

Indeed, the consensus from Myanmar partner HEIs seems to be that the trainings were a success and those who received said trainings have made an effort to put what they have learnt into practice. A final quote from Yangon University of Economics’ Head of Department Soe Thu illustrates this point,

The things I saw [in Europe], the creative ideas and the outcome-based learning and teaching systems I studied; how they developed their creative and innovative curriculums are totally different from what we do in our universities. My old ideas were refreshed, replaced with a new ideology and knowledge...on how to improve our teaching methods and repair our curriculum to upgrade Myanmar’s education system.

WP4: International Relations Platform

The WP 4 platform was devoted to fostering a more international outlook in Myanmar’s HEIs, through the empowerment and restructuring of local international relations offices and by means of intensive trainings held in European partner institutions.

On the second day of my visit to the CHINLONE event in Yangon, I observed the opening of the University of Yangon’s International Relations Office. The newly equipped office will be key for UoY’s efforts to align itself with partner institutions overseas and facilitate the exchange of students between UoY and foreign HEIs. But establishing the infrastructure is only part of WP 4. As well as contributing to supporting Myanmar HEIs with computer technology, WP 4 focuses on building human resources. During the Focus Group Discussion, respondents spoke of the value of trainings they received in EU partner institutions for practical matters like, how to use PowerPoint or the value of visual resources such as YouTube in lectures.

Partners from institutions other than UoY expressed concern that their institutions did not yet have International Relations Offices, while explaining that, once established, they would

need training on the equipment and how to connect with foreign institutions. Having said this, Professor Soe Win of Yezin Agricultural University (YAU) spoke in positive terms: “We only have a small International Relations Office and staff in our university don’t know about it. So, our IRO person was sent to Uppsala and learnt how to better connect with people in the university and outside of it.” Professor Kyawt Kyawt Khine (University of Mandalay) expressed similar sentiments, “Previously our IR Office only existed on paper. Chinlone actually supported us to establish space, equipment and human resources. Chinlone has filled a distinct gap by building IR offices and encouraging us to build relations with other higher education institutions.”

iii. SUSTAINABILITY

In the last decade, Myanmar has experienced significant social, economic and political changes. With the victory of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy in 2015 hopes have been raised both in Myanmar and outside of a democratic transition that would open the way for the country to join the international community after years of isolation.

At the heart of the push for HE reforms starting in 2012 was the need for a decentralized education system. In particular, the government’s endorsement of allowing HEIs “institutional autonomy,” meaning a shift from state-controlled to state-guided, is meant to allow universities to reach an autonomous state on different levels: organizational, academic, staffing, and financial.

With Myanmar HEIs requested to put their efforts into capacity building, there is a need for support for the reorganization of the Myanmar HES at the managerial level; for better trained staff to teach and carry out research, and for the creation of International Relations Offices to work towards the building of networks between Myanmar HEIs and international HEIs. The CHINLONE project has sought to address these needs through formulating viable and constructive recommendations on the methods with which Myanmar HEIs can be effectively modernized, while also organizing capacity-building technologies and knowledge-sharing experiences specifically designed for Myanmar educational staff.

As a result of this project (**impact**), management level staff understand the importance and benefits of autonomy for HEIs; at the teaching and learning level, educators feel invigorated with the new tools for institutional and personal accountability, specifically the training courses in curriculum and syllabus design and quality assurance methodologies that include student feedback; while stakeholders recognise that a clear internationalisation strategy-- establishing cooperative ties with international institutions—requires training staff who will hold specific responsibilities in this field and the autonomy to make decisions.

In terms of **sustainability**, the impact of the analysed WPs has been immediate, especially in terms of building the capacity of teaching staff so as to ensure long term sustainability. Mobility Trainings appear to have made a distinct impression on Myanmar partners and the knowledge received through these trainings will outlast the project. Discussants in the FGD told me that they had, from an early stage, worked hard to incorporate new approaches to curriculum and course design, ensuring that student feedback informed new approaches to teaching and learning. Discussants further told me that they were now aware of the importance of bridging the gap between HEIs and the employment market and, in some cases, respondents were already making efforts to connect course design to labour market demands. The nascent link between civil society and Myanmar HEIs is certainly a sustainable element of the project and one that is important to build on in the future.

Interviewees and discussants were enthusiastic about the academic networks that have been forged through CHINLONE and a new awareness of the role of HEIs in fostering skills and knowledge that contribute to improving the lives of the Myanmar's next generation. In many cases, educators expressed a new enthusiasm for teaching, feeling that their efforts would have a clear **impact** in connecting the student in their class to the labour market that is driving many changes in the country.

As well as building capacity, the immediately tangible aspects of CHINLONE will outlive the project and act to raise the bar as to what is required if HEIs are to modernise and align themselves to international HEIs. Creating brochures, booklets and a functioning online presence for the partner HEIs has fostered a sense of pride in the Myanmar educators with whom I spoke. Such material representations of the HEIs can be deployed to both domestic and international audiences to help build the profile of the HEIs and attract students. Of course, having these things is not enough; one interviewee explained, "We uploaded all the information to the website, but it's been challenging to get people to use the site because everyone uses Facebook."

Perhaps one of the most striking points from discussing CHINLONE with Myanmar partners is the confidence levels expressed by staff. During the FGD and key informant interviews, respondents stated that the open lines of communication with EU partner institutions, the trainings received and the clear alignment of CHINLONE project aims with MoE aims has instilled in them a confidence with regard to the changes unfolding. As long as this sense of enthusiasm and confidence can be upscaled within the country's HEI, and include the student body, the impact of CHINLONE is expected to last well into the medium and long-term.

SECTION THREE: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The CHINLONE project had a number of tangible benefits for Myanmar HE, some of which were, perhaps, unexpected. For example, during the early stages of the project, the CHINLONE team conducted a mapping exercise of Myanmar's HEIs. According to Professor Soe Win (YAU), academics at his institution had no idea of the number of HEIs in Myanmar, nor the education remit of each HEI. CHINLONE provided data on the institutions and their teaching capacity. Professor Soe Win and staff at other HEIs in the Chinlone project have used the data to connect with each other and begin building HE networks within the country. "We feel more connected to other HEIs in the region and we're now sharing information with each other." Professor Soe Win gave an example of such knowledge dissemination: "Yangon University needed advice on rice breeding, so we worked with them to build capacity."

Other unexpected, positive outcomes have derived from exposure of Myanmar partners to European methods of presenting information and conducting seminars. One interviewee, for example, commented that she had learned how to use PowerPoint and how to structure a seminar from observing EU partners during the Mobility Training.

From both the FGD and the key informant interviews, it is the opinion of this evaluator that CHINLONE has been effective in attaining its objectives. The success of the project rested on the clearly stated **relevance** of the project goals, the **effectiveness** of the outputs (this report has focused on the **qualitative** outputs) in achieving objectives on time and gaining the required buy-in from all stakeholders, and the impact of the positive changes produced by this development intervention, both directly and, as illustrated above, indirectly. In the long term, given the opportunities for professional development competences and skills offered through CHINLONE, Myanmar partner universities will be able to assess whether their degree programs respond to the needs of their society and economy.

Recommendations

The following recommendations should be read with an understanding that this project was a short-term project, limited in both time and goals to piloting the reform and implementation of the management, teaching and learning, and International Relations Offices of a select number of Myanmar HEIs. Given the results achieved thus far, the following is a consolidated set of specific recommendations and suggestions based on areas for potential improvement identified throughout the evaluation:

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- The inclusion of minority groups is identified as a point to build into future iterations of the project. As it stands, the project has focused on flagship HEIs and the voices of the majority Bumar ethnic group have been disproportionately represented. It is likely that the educational needs and challenges of minority ethnic groups in Myanmar differ from the majority.
- In terms of scalability, it is recommended that the project include HEI beyond the Myanmar's flagship institutions. Future iterations of the project should engage with a larger number of HEIs, so that a broader, more representative selection of universities are encouraged to shape and lead education reform in Myanmar.
- Myanmar partners recommended lengthening Mobility Trainings. Specifically, it would be helpful for the aim of fostering a more vibrant "campus culture", if Myanmar partners were exposed to European partner institutions' campus life and given a chance to discuss teaching and learning matters with European students. Perhaps a half day set aside for rest and cultural exposure.
- Adding to the above point, future iterations of an HE reform project in Myanmar would do well to give a greater voice to Myanmar students. CHINLONE has been focused on management, educators, and building IROs; students' voices are also required.
- With regard to moving towards a model of institutional academic autonomy, this evaluation recommends creating a roadmap for the implementation of academic teaching staff training courses in curriculum and syllabus design. Such trainings should promote standardised, best-practice approaches to curriculum design that can be replicated throughout Myanmar's HE institutions.
- Further to the previous recommendation, future iterations of the project should provide implementable solutions for institutional and personal accountability, with a focus on quality assurance by means of continuous assessment and updating of degree programs in line with national and international standards.
- Further to a mapping of Myanmar's current and projected labour market needs, it is recommended that external stakeholders from the private sector are identified, contacted, and encouraged to consult on shaping degree programs. Already, Myanmar partner institutions are aware of the importance of connecting HE to civil society. This report suggests further development of this point.
- With regard to the matching of Myanmar HEI with EU HEI, respondents expressed satisfaction with the multilateral approach. Two points, however, need mentioned:

first, EU partners need to be given time by their institutions to meet and speak with Myanmar partners. Second, Myanmar partners requested more time to get a feel for the local culture, including campus life.

ANNEX: METHODOLOGY & INTERVIEWS

Focus Group Discussion:

A focus group discussion took place on January 10, 2020. The FGD ran for 2.5 hours and included representative from each of the Myanmar partner HEI. The evaluator had a number of questions to guide the discussion, but emphasized to participants that they could speak about any aspect of the project they wished.

Key informant interviews:

The evaluator carried out three key informant interviewees with representatives from three different Myanmar HEIs.

Semi-structured discussions:

The evaluator met with EU partner HEI representatives in the days leading up to the aforementioned FGD. Conversations were focused on providing a background to the CHINLONE project and gaining insight into the views of EU partners as to the strengths and weaknesses of the project.