

MAKING INTERNATIONAL LAW RELEVANT: MYANMAR WORKSHOP

The third stop for 'TRILA on the Road' was Myanmar. CIL partnered with the Department of Law of Taunggyi University in organising a workshop on 24–25 July 2019. The 49 local participants were teachers and students mostly from Taunggyi University, with lean delegations from Panglong University and Dagon University. The success of this workshop was made possible through the dynamism, hard work and vision of Dr Yin Yin Win, with the support of her staff, and the Rector and Pro-Rector of Taunggyi University.

CONNECTING INTERNATIONAL LAW TO LOCAL HISTORY

by Professor Antony Anghie

One of the most striking findings of TRILA 2018 was that teachers of international law find their students uninterested in the subject. Participants suggested that this was largely because international law was seen as an alien subject, and that this impression was reinforced by the Western-oriented materials used to teach the subject. This point was also made by Judge Raul Pangalangan in his opening address at TRILA 2018.

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by Professor Antony Anghie*

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- Dr Yin Yin Win
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Building a Course Syllabus



In TRILA Myanmar, I attempted to address some of these issues by examining the materials used to teach international law which were invariably Western textbooks. I then focussed on different aspects of Myanmar history to demonstrate how international law could be taught using them—The Treaty of 1757 between the British East India Company and the King of Ava, and the work of U Thant as Secretary-General of the United Nations. Participants found it interesting to study the law of treaties by analysing the terms of the Treaty of 1757. U Thant was Secretary-General of the United Nations for ten years, and the session discussed both the general structure and work of the United Nations, and the crises it faced at the time, including the Cuban Missile crisis. These exercises demonstrated how locally relevant materials, history and personalities could be used to study international law.



U Thant, former UN Secretary General

CHALLENGES FACED BY MYANMAR SCHOLARS

Dr Yin Yin Win

Head, Department of Law, Taunggyi University



In my experience, the common challenges in teaching international law in Myanmar are the lack of translation from English to local language, and the difficulties of students in remote areas, such as Panglon and Dawei, in adapting to that translation. In other words, English language proficiency has to be enhanced. Other challenges include limited human resources and teaching aids.

Through TRILA Myanmar workshop, I realised the need to focus on history and politics of Asia in teaching international law. We have to trace our own history in international law. With regard to research writing, the participants learned the different stages from preliminary research to submitting a paper for publication. For capacity development, the participants understand that reading is essential. TRILA has definitely given us a roadmap for teaching and researching international law in Myanmar.

'We have to trace our own history in international law.'



'We should apply the knowledge that we learned from this workshop to overcome the difficulties in teaching and researching international law.'

'The session on research was particularly useful because now I understand more the process from writing an abstract to how to conduct the research, find materials online, and searching for information.'

PLANNING FOR A BETTER LEGAL EDUCATION

Mr U Moe Myint Aung

Assistant Lecturer, Department of Law, Taunggyi University



The agenda of the workshop was very good and useful for our legal education here in Myanmar. We learned how to teach using a critical-thinking approach. We shared different ideas in the activity on developing a course syllabus on international law. In the future, we have to do a training programme on international law. We will invite students and teachers from other universities in Myanmar to discuss teaching and researching methodologies, and create an international law syllabus to be presented

to the Board of Legal Studies. In this way, we can make our syllabus better than before.

Through this workshop, we also learned about our weaknesses: our Myanmar teachers and students should read more. We will apply the knowledge learned from this workshop to overcome the difficulties in teaching and researching international law. We are thankful to the NUS Centre for International Law and Dr Yin Yin Win for this valuable experience.

APPLYING RESEARCH TO THE CLASSROOM

Nang Kalyar Woon

Assistant Lecturer and PhD student, Department of Law, Taunggyi University



During this workshop I learned about different teaching methodologies, and the importance of setting learning objectives for the students. I got ideas on how to draw the interest of students and how to connect international law and its history with the history of Myanmar.

I am researching on plastic waste management. The session on research was particularly useful because now I understand better the process from writing an abstract to how to conducting the research, finding materials online, and searching for information. I plan to share all the techniques and methods discussed here with other faculty members in Myanmar universities.

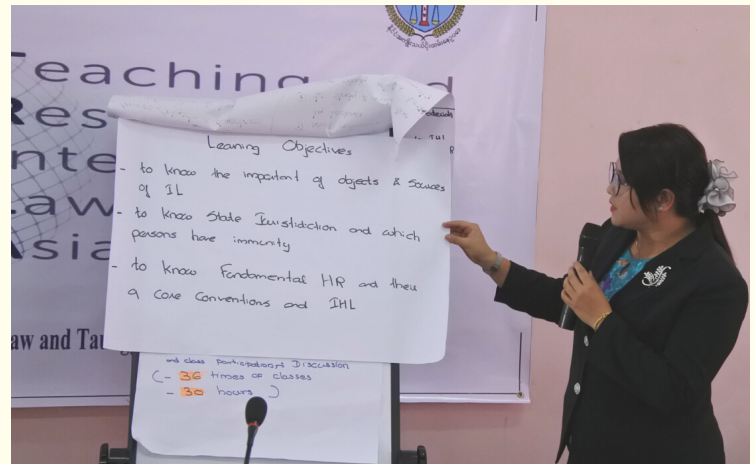
BUILDING A COURSE SYLLABUS



Participants showed the most interest in building a course syllabus. In this session, they discussed the following questions:

- What topics would you like to cover?
- What would you add or subtract from the sample syllabus?
- How would you draft the learning objectives for your syllabus?
- Would you involve case studies (eg, from Abass)?
- What skills are you trying to test in your assessment?

Participants suggested a range of ideas, such as having a course syllabus for introductory public international law, and one specifically for the Law of Treaties. Some of them noted the importance of stating clearly the learning objectives for every topic. Several of them agreed that the use of case studies could help the students to better understand and appreciate the concepts of international law. On textbooks to be prescribed in class, several participants preferred Abass, Dixon and McCorquodale, and Khin Maung Sein (Abdul Ghafur Hamid). When it comes to assessment of students, closed-book examination was the most prevalent method.



CIL TRILA TEAM



Professor Antony Anghie
Head of Programme



Eugenio Gomez-Chico
Research Associate



Amiel Ian Valdez
Research Associate

CONNECT WITH US



/groups/CIL.TRILA



@CIL_TRILA



cil.info@nus.edu.sg



cil.nus.edu.sg/teaching/international-law-and-asia/



469A Bukit Timah Road, Tower Block,
#09-01, Singapore 259770