



27 November 2015 – for immediate release

Myanmar's National Right to Information Coalition Expands to Shan State

On 24 November 2015, over 70 representatives from the Eastern Shan State Civil Society Network met in Tachileik to discuss the right to information (RTI) in Myanmar. The workshop was hosted by Pyi Gyi Khin, a Myanmar-based NGO working on this issue, along with the Centre for Law and Democracy, with the support of International Media Support, USAID and FHI 360. It featured in in-depth discussion of the benefits of RTI and the elements of a strong RTI law.

"It is great to see support for RTI growing across Myanmar," said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *"We hope to see formal progress on this issue, in the form of a draft RTI law, in addition to growing public awareness of its importance."*

The workshop was the third in a series, following successful events in Yangon and Mandalay. A fourth workshop is scheduled to take place on 29 November in Lashio, with workshops in Patheingyi and Taunggyi planned for December. The idea is that, at the end of the series of workshops, representative from each workshop will meet to form a National RTI Working Group.

"We see strong right to information legislation as fundamental to Myanmar's democratic transition and we are committed to working to make this right a reality," said Nwezin Win, Executive Director of Pyi Gyi Khin.

The workshop participants unanimously endorsed the Joint Statement on the Right to Information in Myanmar, which was drafted at the first workshop in Yangon in November 2014, and subsequently endorsed by the participants of the Mandalay workshop.

"We are happy to support civil society in their efforts to support right to information legislation in Myanmar," said Esben Harboe, Programme Manager for IMS' work in Myanmar. *"We see this right as crucial to guaranteeing democratic accountability."*

The Joint Statement is available at: www.law-democracy.org/live/myanmars-national-right-to-information-coalition-expands-to-shan-state/.

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