

## IFES' 2016 Charles T. Manatt Awards

Charles T. Manatt Democracy Awards for 2016 awardees included Nay Lin Soe, a disability rights advocate and Founder and CEO of the Myanmar Independent Living Initiative (MILI). Charles T. Manatt Democracy Awards, recognizes the exceptional work of individuals who demonstrate an unwavering commitment to freedom and democracy. IFES presents the awards annually to three individuals – one Republican, one Democrat and one member of the international community .

Myanmar's 2015 election was a historic moment for democracy in the Southeast Asian nation. Ahead of the elections, Soe's collaboration with Myanmar's Union Election Commission, government, civil society and media was critical to ushering in a new and inclusive era for Myanmar and serves as an exemplary model of how to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities in nascent democracies. A video co-produced by Voice of America and IFES, which was played at the ceremony, explained how Soe and MILI faced immense challenges, yet achieved remarkable advances for the rights of persons with disabilities. Introducing Soe, Sweeney detailed the extensive collaboration between IFES and Soe over the years, and noted that Soe has been a regional leader in advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities and participated in several international disability movements, including the IFES-supported Association of Southeast Asian Nations General Election Network for Disability Access (AGENDA).



## Myanmar Independent Living Initiative (MILI)

Myanmar Independent Living Initiative – MILI (Registered at Ministry of Home Affairs of Union of Myanmar: Registration No. 1/Local/0651) is a non-government organization led by disabled persons run for persons with disability (PWDs) and has been working for equal rights, inclusion and independent living of people with multiple types of disability in Myanmar. MILI specifically works for the areas of community-based inclusive livelihood, inclusive employment, inclusive education, inclusive health, inclusive disaster risk reduction, inclusive social-business, inclusive political participation, barrier-free environment, empowerment and capacity development of persons with disability and their organizations.

### Organization Founded Date (8<sup>th</sup> May 2011)

### Organization Structure and Coverage Sectors

MILI Head Quarter is based in Yangon with a network of 28 local branches operating in 10 out of 14 regions and states through Myanmar and functioned by three pillars: Development Pillar, Social Business Pillar and Political Pillar with the supports of Executive Director Office, Administration, HR & Finance Department and Monitoring & Evaluation Department.





## MILI Branch Offices



Kachin State	1	Bhamo Branch
	2	Mohnyin Branch
Sagaing Region	1	Chaththin Branch
Bago Region	1	Kyaukkyi Branch
	2	Gyobingauk Branch
	3	Taungoo Branch
	4	Pelwegone Branch
	5	Oatwin Branch
Magway Region	1	Magway Branch
	2	Megyaungye Branch
Mandalay Region	1	Kyaukpadaung Branch
	2	Mogok Branch
	3	Yamethin Branch
Mon State	1	Yinnyein Branch
	2	Lamine Branch
Rakhine State	1	Sittway Branch
	2	Ponnagyun Branch
	3	Myauk U Branch
Yangon Region	1	Oakkan Branch
Shan State	1	Taunggyi Branch
Ayeyarwady Region	1	Kyonpyaw Branch
	2	Ngaputaw Branch
	3	Myaungmya Branch
	4	Yekyi Branch
	5	Wakema Branch
	6	Thapaung Branch
	7	Thingangone Branch

## **The Situation of People with Disabilities in Myanmar**

According to the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, 4.6% of the populations (about 2.3 million) are persons with disabilities. Among them, 1.5 million, two third of the population are citizens with disability who are eligible to vote.

- In 2008 Myanmar Constitution, it states that Union shall care for mothers and children, orphans, fallen Defense Services Personnel's Children, the aged and the disabled.
- For the political and electoral participation of PwDs, there was statement in article (29) of UNCRPD in which Myanmar became member in 2011 December.
- To ensure and protect the rights of PwDs in Myanmar, there was a statement in Chapter (8) – Myanmar Disability Rights Law (2015) and also in Chapter (6) – Myanmar Disability Rights By-law (2017).

### **Background Situation on Political and Electoral Participation of PwDs in Myanmar**

Disability movements are stronger and stronger after Nargis cyclone in 2008 with the collaboration movement of disabled people organizations and INGOs in Myanmar. But these movements are initial progress of Health, Education, Business, Job Opportunities and Rehabilitation of PwDs in Myanmar but in other sectors.

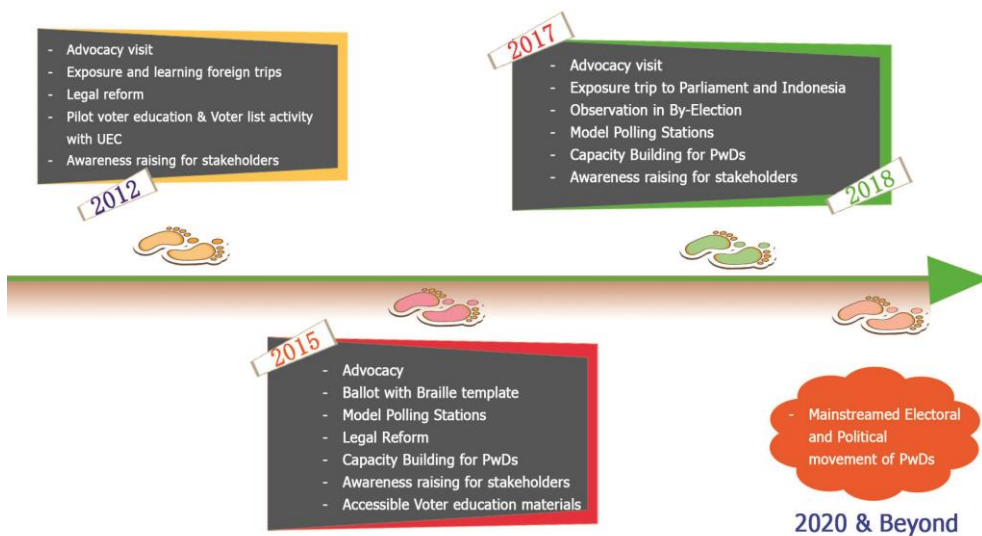
As Persons with Disabilities are citizens of Myanmar and they need to involve in multi-sector development and the issue is the main one which related to all society jut not to Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Ministry of Health and other non-private and charity organizations.

In along with the movement towards a country with justice, equality and inclusive democratic nation and transition period of Myanmar, citizens with disabilities and their organization acknowledged the participation of diversity groups in mainstreamed movement in all development sectors. Moreover, it is visible that

disability inclusive elections and legal reform process are much more potential for the achievement of our goals rather than development movements.

Hence, Myanmar Independent Living Initiative (MILI), started to involved in political and electoral participation of PwDs in 2012 By-Election, 2015 General Election, 2017 & 2018 By-Elections to promote the rights to vote, rights to be elected, accessible polling stations, law, strategic plan and policies, capacity building for PwDs. And these efforts acknowledged MILI as very first DOP who involved in electoral and political process.

*(MILI's Experience on Political and Electoral Journey)*



## Movements of MILI (2012 By-Election)

### Advocacy Visit

#### Advocacy Meeting with Union Election Commission



Advocacy meeting with Union Election Commission

#### Advocacy Meeting with Union Parliament



Advocacy Meeting with Union Parliament

## Exposure & Learning Foreign Trips

Exposure trip to Philippines and Indonesia to study good practices of electoral system together with UEC



Exposure trip to ASEAN countries to study good practices of Inclusive Elections



Exposure trip to ASEAN countries to study good practices of Inclusive Elections

## Legal Reform

### Collaboration with UEC in Electoral Process

- Collaboration to develop 5-year strategic plan of Union Election Commission
  - ❖ 8 disabled people organization and UEC conducted meeting to add input and suggestion on developing 5-year strategic plan of Union Election Commission (2014-2018) on November 8-9 , 2014 in UEC office at Naypyitaw.

## Consultation Meeting with DPOs on Inclusive Electoral and Voting process



Consultation Meeting with DPOs and Special Schools



## Presentation to Union Election Commission on the result of consultation meeting with DPO



Presentation to UEC for feedback and suggestion from consultation meeting with DPO & Special Schools



## Pilot Voter Education & Voter List Activity with UEC

### Voter education and campaign to check voter list at designated area (Ahlone Township, Yangon Region)



Participation in UEC Pilot project on voter education and voter list at Ahlone tsp







Participation in UEC Pilot project on voter education and voter list at Ahlone tsp

## Awareness Raising for Stakeholders

### Bridge Training for Facilitators: Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections



Bridge Training for Facilitators: Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections

## Movements of MILI (2015 General Election)

### Advocacy Visit

#### Advocacy Meeting with Union Election Commission



Advocacy Meeting with UEC



### Ballot with Braille Template

Collaboration with UEC for developing Braille template to vote by visually impaired person independently and secretly



Braille Template for Amyother Hluttaw Constituency (4) - Sagaing Region (2015)



Casting by visually impaired person at Kyeemyindine Polling Station (2015)

## Model Polling Stations

Meeting with Sub-UEC to implement Model Polling Stations



Model Polling Station at Yekyi tsp (2015)



Advocacy Meeting with township Sub-UEC

## Legal Reform

Disability Inclusive Election Law, By Law, Polling Worker Manual and UEC Strategic Plan



## Capacity Building for PwDs

### Civic Education and Voter Education Training for PwDs



3 Days Civic Education Training for PwDs



Voter Education Training at Kawmhue

### Inclusive Voter Education Campaign and Training



Voter Education Campaign with mobile car



Voter Education Campaign with mobile car



Voter Education Training at Magway tsp



Voter Education Training with Braille Template

## TOT for Inclusive Political and Electoral Training for PwDs



TOT for Inclusive Political and Electoral Training for PwDs (2015)



## Awareness Rising to Stakeholders

## Disability Inclusion Training for Union Election Commission



Disability Inclusion Training for UEC



Disability Inclusion Training for UEC

## Workshop with candidates for rights of PwDs



Workshop with candidates for rights of PwDs (Mandalay)



Workshop with candidates for rights of PwDs (Yangon)

## Accessible Voter Education Materials

### Radio Program on Electoral and Political Rights of PwDs



Radio Program on Electoral and Political Rights of PwDs



Radio Program on Electoral and Political Rights of PwDs

### Production of short video and voter education materials on rights of PwDs



Filming Precious Ballot Short Video



Inclusive Voter Education Materials on how to vote in Election

## Movement of MILI (Beyond 2015 General Election – Present)

### Advocacy Visit

#### Advocacy workshop for Union Parliament and State & Region Parliament



Advocacy Visit to Sagaing Regional Parliament



Advocacy Visit to Union Parliament

### Exposure Trip to Parliament and Indonesia

#### Exposure trip to Union Parliament by PwDs and their organizations



Exposure and Excursion Visit to Union Parliament (2016)

## Exposure Trip to Indonesia by PwDs and Minorities group



Myanmar Team for Exposure trip to Indonesia



Meeting with KPU



Meeting with KPU

## Observation in By-Election

### Observation Training and make observation in 2017 & 2018 By-Elections



Observation by PwDs in 2017 By-Election



Observer Training



Polling Station at Tarmwae tsp (2018 By-Election)



Observation at Tarmwae tsp Before Election Day (2018 By-Election)



## Model Polling Stations

### Model Polling Stations in Collaboration with Sub-UEC



Model Polling Station at Kyee Myin Dine Township (2017)



Model Polling Station at Htantalang Township (2017)

### Providing assistive devices to PwDs and polling stations (2017 & 2018 By-Elections)



Providing Assistive Device to PwDs (Htantalan, Chin State)



Providing Assistive Device to PwDs (Htantalan, Chin State)

## Capacity Building for PwDs

### Inclusive Voter education campaign



### Political Science and Peace Training for PwDs and Marginalized people



Political Science Training for PwDs and Marginalized People (2018)



Peace Building Training for PwDs and Marginalized People (2018)

### Political and Electoral Training for PwDs



# Awareness Raising to Stakeholders

## Inclusive Electoral Article, News and Photo competition

### Political and Electoral Training for PwDs (2017-2018)



Winner's news (2<sup>nd</sup> runner up)



Winner Photos

**Multi-Stakeholder Forum : Promoting Minorities' Rights in Political Transition in Myanmar**



**Gp Photo on Multi-Stakeholder Forum: Promoting Minorities' Rights in Political Transition in Myanmar (2018)**



**Opening Remark by Chairperson of UEC**



**Panel Discussion on Minorities rights**

(Members of Parliament with disabilities who were elected in 2015 General Elections)



Saw Thura Aung  
Bago Regional Parliament  
Oakpho Constituency - 2  
Physically Impaired Person

U Aung Kyaw Myaing  
Irrawaddy Regional Parliament  
Eain Me Constituency- 2  
Physically Impaired Person



U Kyaw Thu Han Tun  
Sagaing Regional Parliament  
Kant Ba Lu Constituency-2  
Physically Impaired Person





**U Kyi, Voter with visual impairment cast his vote on Election day (2017)**

I have voted in 2015 general election. It is more convenient for me to vote in 2017 by-election because the polling station is closer to my place. I decided whom I should vote in through accessing the information from the radio although I haven't experienced the election campaign of a candidate. I could vote independently in secret using Braille template

without bringing my personal assistant. I do expect the candidate who won the election will do something for better quality of lives of persons with visual impairment."

**U Kyi, Voter with visual impairment & Principal of Young Chi Thit Blind School, Monywa**

**Source: Myanmar Light Newspaper published on April 2<sup>nd</sup> , 2017**

I observed at some polling stations in Hlaingtharyar Township. Some of polling staff treated us strangely on our observing the elections because of we are observers with disability."



**Htet Htet Aung, observer with disability on Election Day (2017 By -Election)**

**Ms. Htet Htet Aung, Person with physical impairment, Observer in 2017 By-election**

## **Union Election Commission and Special Award for International Day of PwDs**

Every 3<sup>rd</sup> December, we celebrate international day of PwDs (IDPD) to raise awareness on rights and inclusion of PwDs. In Myanmar, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement awarded some stakeholders who put their strong effort to make inclusiveness of PwDs in their respective fields. In 2017, there were 4 awards.

- 1) Outstanding award on the rights of PwDs
- 2) Special award for IDD day
- 3) Outstanding award on the employment of PwDs
- 4) Award for media inclusiveness. Among them, Union Election Commission got special award for IDD day (2017) for their effort and implementation on inclusive election processes together with DPOs in Myanmar since 2012 until now.



