**Minutes - Information Management Network Meeting, 5th February 2020**

**Open Data and Big Data**

Chair: Shon Campbell, MIMU Manager.

Participants: See list below.

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| **1** | **Open Data & Big Data: their relevance and impact on Myanmar’s development and humanitarian sectors**  Cing Don Nuam (Data Community Coordinator) and Siddarth Chaudhary (Data Scientist) Phandeeyar  OPEN DATA is data that can be freely used, shared and built-on by anyone, anywhere for any purpose. It can be used to inform the public and helps start the conversation on social issues between the public, policy makers, and CSOs, NGOs, INGOs and tech experts. In this way it increases collaboration.  There are a number of challenges for humanitarian and development sectors to use Open Data inMyanmar:   * Data literacy (limitations on who has the ability to read the data and understand it) * Working with data (gaps in the capacity to create, acquire, clean, manage) * Analyzing data (low capacity to filter, sort, aggregate and compare) * Arguing with data (limited experience in using data to support a larger narrative)   Lack of Internet Infrastructure in conflict and rural areas and language barriers may also limit the extent to which Big Data reflects the whole population, or can be used by the whole population. It is important to ensure such limitations don’t lead to data inequalities (i.e. empowering those who are already in a better situation rather than those most in need). Opportunities for open data in the humanitarian/development sector include the capacity to build a data-driven story, creating a storytelling component to communicate your data to the wider public (data journalism, data visualization, infographics, etc.)  BIG DATA is a term applied to datasets whose size or type is beyond the ability of traditional relational databases to capture, manage and process the data with low latency. It includes data sources such as satellite data and mobile data, and can be used to make data-driven decisions. It’s important to recognize however that big data may come from both reliable and unreliable sources. Big data is used in the humanitarian, development, and peace-focused activities to support activities around disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Big data has been used successfully to support humanitarian aid, such as in responding to the Haiti 2010 earthquake, the Philippines 2012 typhoon, Turkey migration, measuring poverty via satellite images, etc.  DISCUSSION   * **The Ethics of Big Data**: big issues with big data are around user consent (when data is collected on a large scale, the user has not consented to use of the data by a private corporation for their business, or for its use for government surveillance. Without regulation and accountability, there are risks. The only international standard is the European Union’s GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) however this does not cover all required aspects. There seems to be a negative correlation between legislation and innovation when it comes to big data. If policy decisions are made based on data collected digitally, those who are not connected and who are often most vulnerable are not considered. People can become invisible when data is collected in this way, counter to the UN goals of leaving no one behind. This emphasizes the need to consider different sources. For example, transport data is often collected to determine bus routes – generally it is collected at peak commute times, however it has been found in Asia and in Latin America that this type of big data is not capturing information on the commutes of women who often travel outside of the peak times. * **Coordination with government**. What is the role of the government, as the largest data-collector, in terms of big data and how can organizations work more closely with the government as an implementer? Myanmar did not meet the criteria to be included in the Open Government Partnerships as a result of certain issues (freedom of speech, civic engagement, etc.). * **What Big Data misses**. When data is gathered on such a large scale, it can miss detail. Use of Big data often results in engaging visuals however these tend to be used without context or much explanation – the result is a simplistic representation without adequate information on the methodology. It remains important for humanitarian and development agencies to raise attention to these issues to encourage a focus on those who may be invisible in big data initiatives. * **Information Coordination**. More attention is needed to better coordinate data initiatives in emergencies – for example, Phandeeyar noted their recent flood mapping using big data sources, and MIMU is also regularly providing mapping of flooded areas - how to bring these together? The IM Network provides a venue for these discussions – the GIS Working Group discussed 5 different ongoing flood mapping initiatives in late 2018 however none of them would produce information for response. The newly released Myanmar Unified platform for Disaster Risk Application (MUDRA) provides information on risk which will be helpful for planning but not so directly useful for response <https://www.mudra-ddm.info/> |
| **2** | **Digitizing Parliamentary Transcripts**  Nyan Lynn Myint (Data Scientist), The Ananda  Turning Data into Impact: As part of a project on data transparency, The Ananda has used big data and machine learning to digitize parliamentary transcripts to support public access to parliamentary data and digital documents. Parliamentary transcripts are provided in different paper-based formats as PDF documents which are not searchable, and not easily accessible by the general public. By making them digital and searchable, civil society can tap into and engage in more targeted reform processes.  Steps to digitize the transcripts included scraping and classifying the transcripts; converting PDF documents to text; concatenation and cleaning OCR junk; normalization (picking up misspelled words, or Myanmar-language variations on spelling and word segmentation, irregular whitespaces). Structuring and Validation: building XML skeleton; processing documents; the documents are validated “by hand”. There are over one million lines of raw text, so in the past working on these types of projects has been avoided by government and private sector. This initiative is a by-product of an action research done by the Ananda in digitizing parliaments. The digitised transcripts are now available on a Myanmar language website and can be searched by topic. <https://transcripts.theananda.org/#/> On their main website, The Ananda also features a Budget Dashboard, by sector, financial year, and region: [mmbudgets.info](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fmmbudgets.info%2F&data=02%7C01%7Cmanager.mimu%40undp.org%7C62a6b676bc0f4c08f21808d7aa2eb7ba%7Cb3e5db5e2944483799f57488ace54319%7C0%7C0%7C637164989949472302&sdata=3Nfamc2bQnEteR35GSG66h1JsJs%2FCIYpqqQR4CuKn%2FM%3D&reserved=0), and a Blog on Bills and Budget: [theananda.org](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Ftheananda.org%2F&data=02%7C01%7Cmanager.mimu%40undp.org%7C62a6b676bc0f4c08f21808d7aa2eb7ba%7Cb3e5db5e2944483799f57488ace54319%7C0%7C0%7C637164989949472302&sdata=hgdr9tKZtLekjxIAAfmn%2BLYK1ERmeqDod11v8D9%2BS7A%3D&reserved=0)  DISCUSSION   * **Coordination and collaboration with government**. The government perceives these types of initiatives as “competition,” which is not necessarily a bad thing, since it encourages more transparency. It is an ongoing challenge to try to achieve collaboration; there is still high resistance to open data in Myanmar. However, there are encouraging signs of progress, especially with the Parliament Office in Mandalay, which is slowly embracing open data. * **Peace Process**. The Ananda has been contacted by student groups from Yangon University who want to collaborate on the project in the subject of Myanmar’s peace process. They encourage student volunteers to develop their own websites. * **Origin of the project**. The broad idea is to show parliament what can be done with this type of platform. This project was originated based on its success in Malaysia for informing parliamentary discussions. Specifically, gender violence policy reform was achieved in Malaysia through opening-up the parliamentary discussion data, as a real use case on how things are discussed, and how policies are made. |
| **2** | **Updates on National Initiatives**  **National Indicator Framework for the MSDP and SDGs:**   * Myanmar’s Sustainable Development Plan covers the period from 2018-2030 and includes 3 pillars, 5 goals, and 28 strategies. It brings together 251 action plans across various sectors. The Central Statistics Organization is leading on development of the National Indicator Framework (NIF) with support from UNDP. The NIF has 286 indicators - 74% of these indicators can be measured. 41% of the NIF indicators measure SDGs. * Myanmar’s implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals / SDGs is also partly covered in the MSDP. 232 SDG indicators are theoretically measurable for Myanmar, and 92% can be measured. 58% of the SDG indicators are included in the MSDP.   **Myanmar Living Conditions Survey (2017):**   * The Socio-economic report will be released this week. The survey covers 296 of the 330 Townships in Myanmar is representative of all States and Regions in Myanmar. The Socio-economic report describes living conditions of the population in 2017 and assess the potential drivers of welfare. |
| **3.** | **Updates on cluster/sector/agency initiatives**  **Phandeeya**r - working on creating an election dashboard in collaboration with CSOs, data providers.  **EWMI-ODI** - women in data research to be launched shortly; handbook on parliamentary systems and gender; published a toolkit on data sharing risks, available online.  **FAO** - current activities include work in the Dry Zone (livestock raising), Ayeyarwady, Chin, and northern and central Rakhine with a focus on resilience. 6000 beneficiaries are receiving agricultural support northern Rakhine State.  **SWISSAID** - implementing Agroecology and Livelihood projects in Kachin and Southern Shan states. Focus on peace program and women’s empowerment.  **CARE** - is seeking resources to support proposal development – MIMU and Open development Myanmar were suggested.  **Malteser International** - implementing a project in Eastern Shan, Northern Rakhine and Kayin – activities include surveys and analysis on gender.  **People in Need** - social cohesion project in Kachin; Food security and livelihood project in northern Rakhine; and emergency project in Mrauk U.  **Jhpiego** - Currently working in MNCH projects funded by USAID, DFAT, Chevron in Yangon and Ayeyarwady region, potentially in Rakhine. Midwifery pre-service education and HRH projects funded by Access to Health, and Defeat Malaria project.  **UNFPA** - providing technical support to the Dept. of Population for work on the inter-census. Data was gathered in December.  **OneMap Myanmar** - 2nd working committee meeting under the Land Use Council – planning 3 working groups. Concern about maintaining momentum after elections. Digitized EITI datasets to visualize mining licenses – platform is still password protected but looking at making it more available. Community forestry database – with data from the forest department, not yet publicly available. Certificates, management plans, and essential data will be available in excel version, many issues with the boundaries, but a first step to inventorize what is there already.  **Mercy Corps** - main areas of work are Social Cohesion, Governance, Market Systems Development, Climate Change Resilience and Emergency Preparedness and Response. 15 ongoing projects in 6 regions and 5 states. Recently working on a project funded by LIFT that will be implemented in Chin state, especially on livelihood and business development. Projects implemented for governance and agriculture are in South East funded by USAID. A report has been completed on Community-based Mediation considering especially the role of women in dispute resolution. Sharing reports via MIMU.  **Joint Peace Fund** - provides support to the peace process, technical support to various initiatives including negotiations.  **NRC** - ongoing activities in various states/regions in the sectors of education, information counseling and legal assistance for displaced populations. Currently planning a data infographic with the POWER BI profile, and using mobile applications for collecting data.  **UNHCR** - collecting data on the situation and needs of IDPs, returnees and stateless persons through activities such as camp profiling. UNHCR’s work on refugee response in other countries is very relevant to the discussions on Big Data, especially through the UN ProGres database supporting coordination in the Middle East (as mentioned in the Phandeeyar presentation). UNHCR is advocating for accountable data collection, ensuring processed information is shared with those from whom it is collected.  **WWF** - working in various regions. Can support agencies with review of the environmental impact of their activities. Major event coming up in March: Earth Hour 2020.  **HelpAge** - focused on older people and those with disabilities. Pointing out the risk that older people are excluded from big data initiatives though being less tech-savvy and perhaps less mobile. Working with WHO on mapping of prevalence of non-communicable diseases – making up 68% of deaths in Myanmar. Also working with others in registration and certification process of people with disabilities and the services that need to be provided.  **MRCS** - initiative with American Red Cross and other societies on developing a platform for mobile data collection using ODK.  **The Ananda** - recently launched the transcripts website presented at this meeting – this is now being updated with the 2019-2020 data. Ananda conducted a Health expenditure review on Universal Health Coverage Day and is now aiming to do something similar on Education Capital Expenditure Overview also to the facility level aggregated to township level. For the purpose of promoting engagement between Parliament, stakeholders, and public: the upcoming legislation presented to parliament are Prevention of violence against women, Public Procurement and Legislation on rural development and on microfinance. With microfinance organisations becoming more technology-based, it will be important for civil society to engage in ensuring the new bill includes privacy protection.  **MA-UK** - implementing development activities since 2012 in central and northern Rakhine state. HARP project: assessments and trainings. Planned consultation meetings with the communities in order to make decisions on resource allocation for the activities of education, livelihoods and health.  **MIMU** - has conducted a pilot exercise with GAD to confirm the coordinates of villages in Kengtung and Tachileik districts and is reviewing how this can be scaled up to enable the inclusion of geo-coordinates in the National Coding System. MIMU released 2 online technical training courses in Myanmar language late September (Basic Excel and Basic QGIS) – these have been very well received with close to 28,000 downloads of the materials in just over 3 months since their release. MIMU encouraged other agencies to provide online training materials given the high level of interest. The School mapping platform developed by MIMU with support from UNESCO has been handed over to the Ministry of Education and the EMIS and School Mapping Platform were publicly launched in early December. This included the gathering of coordinates – twice – for 47,000 formal sector schools and institutions across Myanmar. Following requests from IM Network members, MIMU has developed a one-day Power BI training which will be offered to 15 participants from IM Network agencies (one per agency only). The application forms will be sent out through the IM Network mailing list.  **Data literacy training** – contact Yan Naing Oak (Senior Advisor, Phandeeyar) for more information on the courses being developed. |
| **4.** | **Next Meeting**  4th March, 2020 – to be confirmed. Suggested themes for forthcoming meetings are Gender (EWMI presentation of a gender study which is currently under peer review); UNHCR Progress initiative from the Middle East as an example of accountable use of big data in humanitarian crises; OMM presentation on Oil palm concessions in Tanintharyi and links with the MEITI; and WWF activities supporting review of environmental impact. |

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|  | **Participants** | **Designation** | **Agency/ Organization** |
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| 2 | Catherine Lefebvre | Information Management Specialist | MIMU |
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