

BLC/DTP Bangkok Training  
26 September-9 October 1999  
Thammasat University, Rangsit Campus

**Funder and sponsor:**

Diplomacy Training Program, Australia

**Local organisers:**

Thammasat University

Burma Lawyers' Council (BLC)

Thai Action Committee for Democracy in Burma (TACDB)

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum-Asia)

**Aims:**

1. To empower those in leadership roles or with leadership qualities with the requisite knowledge, skills and networks to further effectively recognise, document and act on breaches of people's human rights in Burma,
2. To widen the network of Burmese democracy activists working within a common international lobbying framework to have Burma dealt with on a daily basis,
3. To train the activists in country-specific and international media presentation and understanding,
4. To have a core group of the activists able to document violations of human rights, and follow through with appropriate action within the appropriate legal (international and domestic) framework,
5. To have the participants confident to take their place in the local, regional and international scene, furthering the debate about Burma's human rights and political, legal, economic, social and civil crisis.
6. To further understanding of the world of politics, diplomacy, law and how these intersect and can be used to wrest changes in Burma's situation.

### Objectives:

At the end of the program, participants will:

- understand the nature of leadership and team-building, and the knowledge and skills which are necessary to support them,
- know and be able to apply the skills needed to identify, document and follow-through with appropriate action related to violation of legal/human rights at domestic and international law,
- be confident in applying strategies to focus the activities of democracy activists in order to work together within a common international lobbying framework,
- have developed skills and understanding in media presentation for target audiences,
- demonstrate the ability to clearly and concisely explain intended meaning for presentation in media and similar public situations,
- be able to demonstrate appropriate knowledge about Burma's human rights and political, legal, economic, social and civil crisis,
- be able to confidently and competently demonstrate appropriate knowledge of the world of politics, diplomacy, law and avenues where coordinated action might hasten changes to Burma's crisis.

In order to achieve these objectives, participants will:

- demonstrate the ability to analyse national and international documents which impact on Burma's situation, and to develop strategies in leadership and team situations for applying those analyses,
- show, through role-play, dialogue and discussion, a knowledge of basic political concepts, including the nature of federalism and constitutionalism, and the essential characteristics of democracy at the individual, community, State and national levels,
- be able to demonstrate a knowledge of the vocabulary and concepts of international NGOs, human rights law and framework and of diplomacy, and
- be able to demonstrate a knowledge of how to grow and consolidate democracy, including building civil society.

BLC/DTP Training  
Bangkok, Thammasat University  
3 26 Sept - 9 Oct 99

**Program**

**Sunday**

**26 September**

5 pm

Registration

7pm-9pm

Welcome party and ice-breaking activities

**Monday**

**27 September**

9 am

Opening ceremony

Rector, Thammasat University

Ms. Carol Devine, DTP

~~U Thein Oo~~, BLC Aung Htoo BLC

9.30am -12 pm

Introduction to international relations and global economics

Mr. Chariwat Santabut, Foreign Ministry, Thailand, and Mr. Sukhumb

2pm-5pm

Human rights concepts: history and development of human rights  
Professor Chalermgiat (Thammasat)

7pm-9pm

Participants sharing their organisations' human rights activities  
Ms. Carol Devine to lead discussion/ presentations

**Tuesday**

**28 September**

9am-12pm

International law and human rights protections

Professor Noppanid, Thammasat University

2pm-5pm

Universality and indivisibility of human rights

Dr. Mark Thamthai, Chulalongkorn University

7pm-9pm

Human rights film

**Wednesday  
29 September**

- 9am-12pm Economic, social and cultural rights (ICESCR): a perspective and strategies for protection  
Associate Prof. Lae Dilokwittayarat, Chulalongkorn University and Ms. Carol Devine (DTP)
- 2pm-5pm Workshop on ICESCR violations and experiences on protection  
Ms. Carol Devine
- 7pm-9pm media skills workshop

**Thursday  
30 September**

- 9am-12pm Civil and political : a perspective and strategies  
Mr. Somchai Homloar and Ms. Carol Devine
- 2pm-5pm Workshop on ICESCR  
Ms. Carol Devine
- 7pm-9pm Media skills workshop  
Ms. Debbie Stothard, Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma

**Friday  
1 October**

- 9am-12pm Introduction to the UN and its agencies and procedures  
Mr. Clarence Dias, Centre for Law in Development
- 2pm-5pm Introduction to the UN and its agencies and procedures  
Mr. Clarence Dias
- 7pm-9pm activity

**Saturday  
2 October**

- 9am-12pm Ethnic nationalities rights, self-determination and international law  
Professor Noppanid, Mr. Max Ediger (Burma Issues) and Ms. Pompirnom Trichot
- 2pm-5pm Labour, migrant workers' rights and women trafficking  
Dr. Voravit Charoenloet, Ms. Siriporn Skrobanek
- 7pm-9pm Workshop -documenting human rights violations  
Ms. Auxiliam Toling-Olayer  
Co-ordinator, ANFREL

**Sunday  
3 October**

Optional city tour?

**Monday  
4 October**

- 9am-12pm Children's rights  
Ms. Srisuk Thai-a-ree, Ms. Sudarat Sourat
- 2pm-5pm Women, rights and gender  
Ms. Ruengrawee Tichaikul, Dr. Malee, Thammasat University
- 7pm-9pm Film -"The impossible dream: Women in power"

**Tuesday  
5 October**

- 9am-12pm Human rights mechanisms  
Mr. Chris Sidoti (Human rights Commissioner, Australia)
- 2pm-5pm Public participation and monitoring  
Ms. Evelyn Serrano (Forum-Asia), Dr. Pirun Chatvanitkul,  
Amnesty International Thailand representative
- 7pm-9pm Workshop: Thai-Burma relations  
Burmese facilitator

**Wednesday  
6 October**

- 9am-12pm Armed conflict, refugees and internally displaced persons: a Burma perspective
- 2pm-5pm Armed conflict, refugees and internally displaced persons: a global perspective, and the work of UNHCR  
Ms. Naoko Obi, Senior Regional Protection Officer, UNHCR
- 7pm-9pm Conflict resolution  
Mr. Andrew Mcleod

**Thursday  
7 October**

- 9am-12pm The environment and international environmental documents  
Dr. Amnat Wongbandit, Thammasat University, Mr. Steve Thompson, Images Asia
- 2pm-5pm Public participation on environmental issues  
Mr. Steve Thompson
- 7pm-9pm Burma's place in the world  
Professor Josef Silverstein

**Friday  
8 October**

- 9am-12pm Federalism and human rights  
Professor Josef Silverstein
- 2pm-5pm Constitutions and human rights  
U Aung Htoo, BLC
- 7pm-9pm Lobbying and negotiation  
Hon. Janelle Saffin, Member of Parliament, Australia

**Saturday  
9 October**

- 9am-12pm The media and human rights Mr. Kavi Chongkittavarn, Executive Editor, The Nation, Dr. Ubonrat Siriyervasak, Chulalongkorn University
- 2pm-4pm Reflection and evaluation by participants
- 5pm Closing ceremony  
Rector, Thammasat University
- 7pm Farewell party



The Honourable  
Janelle Saffin, M.L.C.

Legislative Council, Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
Tel: 61-2-9230 2111 • Fax: 61-2-9233 3661 • Email: CSAFFIN@PARLIAMENT.NSW.GOV.AU

PO Box 139 Lismore NSW 2480 • Tel: 61-2-6622 2019 • Fax: 61-2-6622 0350 • Email: JASAFFIN@NOR.COM.AU

## **BURMA LAWYERS' COUNCIL DTP INDIA PROJECT REPORT**

### **Background:**

The Burmese democracy movement in India is active and has managed to partially engage some of India's political, legal, academic and social leaders, but they have as yet to engage the Indian community and the broader international community and work strategically with their colleagues in other countries. The support that they have attracted from the INGOs is marginal and needs to be strengthened.

This contrasts sharply with that of the Burmese Diaspora in Thailand. Thailand has long been a base for Burmese activists, especially from Burma's ethnic nationalities people. Until recent changes, notably through ASEAN political support from successive Thai governments and the Thai Army has been provided, which gave the movement a strong base.

When Burma was colonized by the British it was annexed into India, then a major British colonial outpost. Thailand at various times had been occupied by the Burmese.

Many Chin people, a major ethnic nationality people from Burma (Chin State) have fled to India and continue until this day an armed resistance to the Tatmadaw (Burmese Army). Chin State is one of the poorest in Burma according to the World Bank's most recent report. It is a similar situation with the Arakan. Both Arakan and Chin States border India.

### **Course duration:**

The course operated over six (6) weeks, with the thirty-nine (39) participants undertaking an intensive English training and preparatory course for the first four (4) weeks. (See attached list of participants with some names still to be forwarded). It commenced on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 1999 and finished on 27<sup>th</sup> november 1999.

Twenty Burmese organizations including from the Thai-Indian Border represented were:

- All Arakan Students & Youths Congress (AASYC)
- All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF)
- All Burma Students League (ABSL)
- All Burma Young Monks Union (ABYMU)
- All Kachin Students & Youths Union (AKSYU)
- Arakan League for Democracy (ALD-Exile)
- Arakan Liberation Party (ALP)
- Burma Lawyers' Council (BLC)
- Burma Women's Union (BWU)
- Chin Nation Front (CNF)
- Chin National League for Democracy (CNLD-Exile)
- Chin Students' Union (CSU)
- Chin Women's Union (CWU)
- Chin Women's Organization (CWO)
- Women's Rights & Welfare Association of Burma (WRWAB)
- Federation of Trade Unions Burma (FTUB)
- Kuki Students' Democratic Front (KSDF)
- Members of Parliament Union (MPU)
- National League for Democracy-Liberated Area (NLD-LA)
- People's Liberation Front (PLF)



**BLC Report:**

Please find enclosed a summary of the course content and resource persons topics prepared by Louise Southalan, BLC staff lawyer, assisted by Timo Knaebe law student University of Frankfurt, on assignment to the BLC.

**Resource persons:**

Saya Maung Thara Famous Burmese Writer who recently fled Burma  
Professor I.J. Mukherjee Head of South East Asian Studies Jawaharlal Nehru University  
Professor G.N. Jha as above  
Mr Kavaljit Singh Economist Public Interest Research Group and as above  
Professor K. Matthews Department of African Studies as above  
Ms Usha Ramanathan Legal Research Scholar as above  
Ms Shalimi Nataraj Officer with UUSC (NGO international conflict resolution, legal & development issues)  
Professor Manoranjan Mohanty Department of Political Science Delhi University  
Ms Emilie Wiinblad Protection Officer UNHCR  
Ms Sumbul Rivzi Khan Protection Officer UNHCR  
Mr Sanjay Sanghvi Director Free Namada Movement previously politics lecturer University of Pune  
Mr Ravindra Bhat Supreme Court Advocate  
Mr Hiranmy Karlekar Editor of PIONEER newspaper  
Mr Gautam Navalkha Journalist Economic and Political Weekly  
Ms Jaya Jaitley General Secretary Samata Power (political party which is a coalition ruling party)  
Ms Joystna Chatterjee Executive Director Joint Women's Program NGO  
Ms Rati Bartholomew Freelance Theatre Director  
Mr Timo Knaebe Law Student University of Frankfurt  
U Aung Htoo Secretary BLC  
Dr Tint Swe Minister for South Asian Affairs NCGUB

**Venue:**

The venue for the English training was the Burmese Community Centre Vikas Puri New Delhi and the DTP was the School of international Studies (SIS) Jawaharlal Nehru University Delhi.

**Participants' selection criteria**

**English**

The DTP requirement of a working knowledge of English was problematic in both Thailand and India, but most serious in India. In the Thai course there were interpreters, however the majority of the participants comprehended the resource persons whose delivery was in English. Without English training this would not have been possible in India.

It proved essential to do conduct a four (4) week intensive English course. The Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) teachers were also able to contextualise the training within the DTP course. The participants could not have comprehended the English resource persons even with interpreters, without the intensive English course.

The BLC attempted to identify local teachers in Delhi who would be able to do this, but could not find any who had the broad background of political and diplomatic experience, and who importantly were native speakers of English, a must.

The TESOL resource persons Dr Jim Gallagher and Ms Marjorie Devine (see their enclosed reports) are to be commended for their forbearance, and their role, which was strategic and intense. They had thirty-nine (39) participants for six (6) full days per week for four (4) weeks. Dr Gallagher covered three (3) weeks, with Ms Devine one (1). Their teaching was excellent by all accounts, with the evaluation glowing.

The participants all received certificates signed by Dr Jim Gallagher and Dr Tint Swe that they had undertaken a TESOL course with a Cambridge accredited teacher. They were also graded.

#### Leadership

Some level of leadership experience or ability is necessary for the participants so that they can apply their new skills and knowledge. This is always a challenge, because many leaders do not recognize that they could benefit by additional training, and very few women are in leadership positions or identified as having the ability for leadership.

The DTP correctly inculcates the principles of inclusion and it is necessary to have women join the course.

The Burmese democracy movement like other democracy movements and governments has an absence of women at all levels of leadership. The BLC has an equal opportunity policy of inter alia a target of one-third women participants, with the ultimate aim of one-half. It cannot however enforce this in an authoritarian way and seeks to inform and educate participating organizations and individuals about the need to be inclusive. This also applies to ethnic nationalities representation.

Participants were selected through their representative organizations with a letter of invitation inviting them to nominate people with requisite skills and abilities. Some significant individuals were also invited to participate. The Indian course had eleven (11) women out of thirty-nine (39), which is a good result.

#### Organizing Committee

The BLC strive to practise democracy as well as espousing it. They seek broad involvement in any training activities they undertake and have been extremely successful in implementing the multiplier principle in their work. In continuing this principle the BLC established Organising Committees with both the Thai and the Indian courses. The Organizing Committee was chaired by Dr Tint Swe and U Thein Oo the Chair of the BLC travelled from Australia to maintain an oversight role.

The BLC delegated the preparation to the BLC India office operated by BLC Executive Member Daw Molly Thin. Her husband U Nyunt Hla, previously a High School Principal in Burma helped her with this task, as did a local well renowned Burmese activist Ko Soe Myint. Their role was to seek collaborating partners, secure resource persons and oversee curriculum content.

As in Thailand the BLC delegated participants selection, travel, accommodation, etc, to the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB) this time its Western Region group led by Dr Tint Swe. Dr Tint Swe is also an elected MP and Minister for South Asian Affairs in the government in exile, the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB). He is a long time resident of India.

#### Collaborating Partners

The BLC was hoping that the South Asian Human Rights Documentation Centre (SAHDRC) directed by Mr Ravi Nair, would be able to collaborate. He was unfortunately unable to, but offered some resource persons from SAHDRC.

Individual academics from Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University, who are active supporters of the Burmese democracy movement did collaborate and assisted the organizing committee. The timing of this was unfortunate in that it coincided with a general crackdown by Indian authorities on NGOs operating in India and coming to run one-off courses. SAHDRC was also under intense political pressure because of its rightful role in the protection of a Kashmiri activist.

#### Curriculum

Curriculum topics:

Strategic Planning and Advocacy

Democratization of Burma

Indo-Burma Relations

Human Rights and International Law

International Organizations

United Nations Agencies and Procedures including specific detail vis-à-vis the UNHCR  
Regional Human Rights Mechanisms  
Civil Society and Campaigning to Promote Human Rights  
International Criminal Court  
Political Lobbying  
Militarisation and Democracy  
Women and Human Rights  
Concepts of Democracy and Right to Self-Determination  
The Role of the Media in Indian Democracy  
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the Indian Context  
Grassroots Street Theatre as a Tool for Activism  
Germany's Federal and Democratic System and World War 1  
Globalization

Field trip to an NGO (Delhi Science Forum) and Outlook Magazine (leading current affairs weekly)  
Independent Media and Democracy (this was a public lecture given by Saya Maung Thara, who is over 70 yrs, a world class Burmese writer, who walked to India very recently and said that he had had enough-the SPDC visited him at home and asked him to stop writing, this was after their subtle attempts to censor him- he proved a challenge as the people loved him and the SPDC were concerned not to harm him)

**Positive Evaluation:**

The participant's knowledge and skill base expanded regarding the international world of diplomacy, politics and the media.

The participants said that they now felt better equipped to lobby for the restoration of democratic rule to Burma.

The participant's networks were strengthened, within the Burmese democracy movement and the Indian, regional and international politics.

**Negative Evaluation:**

The participants wanted more particularization with fewer topics.

The participants wanted the resource persons to do more role-play, hands on activities.

The participants wanted more on lobbying.

**Writer's Comments:**

The Indian course could have been improved if both a DTP staff person and myself had been able to have more input into the resource persons and their delivery. In Thailand we were able to choose more carefully and they came with recommendations from Professor Malee who knew which were the teachers better suited to the participants' needs. We are both experienced in dealing with issues like the crowded curriculum, which could have been altered in a 'friendly' way by combining some sessions into multi-topic plenary, making the sessions more interactive. The funder's completion deadline of 1999 was problematic, because key people were not able to be so heavily involved in the planning and delivery. This also included U Aung Htoo who had other long standing commitments regarding the provision of training. Ms Louise Southalan was instrumental in the success of the Thailand course. She also attended and helped to make the Indian course a success, but it was the first time that she had met and worked with the Burmese democracy movement resident in India.

At the time many Burmese refugees were also under threat (most of them are stateless) and it was a major political problem. This required Daw Molly Thin, Dr Tint Swe and Ko Soe Myint's attention. They were constantly drawn away to resolve a multiplicity of problems including the Arakan people who are prisoners in India. U Aung Htoo has been active on this matter on behalf of the BLC. It is a major political issue in India involving the Defence Minister Mr George Fernandes, who is under heavy political attack from the SPDC.

Indian telecommunications frequently do not work for example the e-mail. Sometimes the contact would be down for up to two weeks. When Dr Jim Gallagher was there, staying in the BLC office/residence I managed to receive two emails and he received two of mine. I actually sent ten. I also tried to maintain telephone contact, which suffers from our different languages. The best laid plans are always subject to the vagaries of political life and this is more so for the Burmese in India.

Given the above constraints it was exciting to watch all the organizers and participants develop the course, execute and evaluate it, and follow up with reporting. They were overwhelmed that people like the DTP, Dr Jose Ramos-Horta, Philip Smyth and myself would arrange such a fantastic opportunity for them. They all expressed their sincere thanks and gratitude. Much praise was heaped on Dr Jose Ramos-Horta.

In summary it was a major success, included broad representation, further skilled thirty-nine (39) Burmese activists, strengthened their networks internal and external and facilitated strategic alliances, with the participants asking for more training.

Janelle Saffin  
Honorary Secretary  
BLC (Australian Section)

27<sup>th</sup> December 1999