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Emerging Social Entrepreneurs in Myanmar

YANGON – Small and medium-scale businesses help to build communities, focusing on social needs in health, education, environment and cultural heritage. The ground is fertile for ‘social enterprises’ to continue growing in Myanmar, catalyzed by fellow business leaders, investors and capacity-builders throughout Asia and Europe.

To this end, the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) cooperated with the British Council and the Myanmar Business Executives on a “Skills for Social Entrepreneurs” workshop in Yangon, Myanmar (21-23 May 2012). Sponsored by the governments of Japan and the United Kingdom, this was ASEF’s first initiative in the country.

A dynamic group of 30 emerging social entrepreneurs from Asia and Europe participated in the **“Skills for Social Entrepreneurs”** workshop in Yangon. Besides Myanmar representatives, social entrepreneurs from Denmark, Indonesia, Philippines, Poland, Singapore, Sweden, Thailand and Vietnam were part of the workshop. “There’s a growing business community here in Yangon that has prioritised societal needs over profit,” remarked Sol Iglesias, ASEF’s Director for Intellectual Exchange department.

The three-day programme included networking, in-depth discussions, group activities and field visits within the city and outskirts of Yangon. Participants were divided into four groups as they visited a few local social enterprises in the fields of public health, education, environment and tourism and heritage. Shwe Minn Tha Foundation was one of the organisations visited by the participants in the public health group. The Foundation was set up in 2008 and works towards sustainable development for people with disabilities.

“The Yangon city development authority is willing to mainstream disability. Such positive changes will enable inclusive social development,” shared Mr Myat Thu Winn, President of the Foundation and Director of Shwe Minn Tha Enterprises.

This workshop created a space for Asian and European social entrepreneurs to connect with each other, sharing knowledge and ideas. This dialogue exchange will facilitate future business opportunities, cooperation, capacity and learning how to develop policies to encourage and promote social enterprises.

The next workshop will be in Hanoi, Vietnam (18-20 June 2012).

ABOUT THE ORGANISER



Asia-Europe Foundation

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes greater mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Through ASEF, civil society concerns are included as a vital component of deliberations of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), which currently comprises of 46 member states plus the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat (www.aseminfoboard.org) ASEF was established in February 1997 by the participating governments of ASEM and has since engaged over 17,000 direct participants through more than 550 projects in the realms of economy and society, environment, education, public health, arts and culture, human rights and governance, and inter-communal dialogue. www.asef.org

In 2012, ASEF is commemorating its 15th Anniversary and invites everyone to take part in celebrating **Connected Histories, Shared Future**.
