Towards A New Generation of Environmental Scientists in Myanmar

Initiative

The team led successful capacity building training on research skills for environmental science to students and academics across diverse and under-represented parts of Myanmar. The education system in Myanmar has been facing severe challenges, such as lack of resources and access to information, for decades. Developing research skills and knowledge in cross-disciplinary topics like environmental science was locally-identified as a critical training priority. With support from the Myanmar Ministry of Education and collaboration with Dagon, Maubin, Loikaw, Kalay and Mandalay Universities, the team designed and delivered bespoke one-day capacity building events at each of five universities, representing an academically and culturally/ethnically diverse spectrum within Myanmar. Topics ranged from research skills like communication and problem solving to subject knowledge like water pollution. University events were followed by several days of in-field training for selected participants to gain real-world experience as research field assistants. Women students and academics were strongly involved in all activities. This combination of hands-on classroom and field training with real-world relevance to Myanmar is a very innovative approach in Myanmar, and led to a number of students and academics, particularly in more rural and under-represented parts of the country, to gain new knowledge and international exposure for the first time.

How Laura, Gianfranco and Yin have made a difference

The University-based capacity building events reached around 500 diverse students and academics across Myanmar, with approximately 80 of those gaining further field-based research experience. Reported impacts included changing views by increasing exposure to international professional practice, improving awareness, building new knowledge, and encouraging English language development. Two Myanmar-based MSc projects at Dagon University have been completed based on the ideas generated and activities undertaken. The team have been invited to run further events and are very keen to do this should further financial support become available; the team is very grateful for support from the Leverhulme Trust (ECF2015-657) and EPSRC Improving Diversity Award.