

Minutes of the 3rd Steering Committee Meeting of MuEuCAP
27-28 November, 2019 at University of Natural Resources and Natural Sciences (BOKU), Vienna



Figure 1. The twelve Myanmar Steering Committee members and Associate members, together with Dr Marcela Suarez-Rubio and Dr Lutz Freeman at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna.

Present:

Dr Marcela Suarez-Rubio, Project Coordinator, University of Natural Resources and Natural Sciences, Austria

Dr Paul Bates, Project Manager, University of Natural Resources and Natural Sciences, Austria

Dr Sai Sin Lin Oo, National Project Coordinator, University of Mandalay

Ms Saw Myat Ohnmar, Project Outreach Officer, Myeik University

Professor Dr Aung Myat Kyaw Sein, Rector of Mawlamyine University

Dr Ni Ni Oo, Rector, Myeik University

Dr Mie Mie Sein, Pro-Rector, Mawlamyine University

Dr Thein Aung, Chairman, MBNS (Myanmar Bird and Nature Society)

Dr Alfonso Marzal, Associate Professor, University of Extremadura, Spain

Dr Lutz Fehrmann (representing Prof. Christoph Kleinn), University of Göttingen, Germany

Absent/Regrets: Dr Thida Win, Rector, Mandalay University

Temporary associate members of the Steering Committee (who were in Europe for training in aspects of the new BioCEP curriculum), also in attendance for various parts of the discussion:

Dr (Mr) Nay Myo Hlaing (University of Mandalay: Zoology)

Dr Zin Lin Khine (Myeik University: Marine Science)

Dr Khin Swe Oo (Myeik University: Zoology).

Professor Soe Soe Aung (University of Mandalay: Botany)

Dr Kyu Kyu Mar (University of Mandalay: Geology)
Dr (Mr) Aung Aung Aye (Myeik University: Marine Science).



Figure 2. Some members of the Steering Committee with Dr Sabine Baumgartne, The Vice Rector of Teaching and Continuing Education (BOKU) and Dr Margarita Calderón-Peter, Director for the Centre of International Relations (BOKU).

Approval of the Minutes of the Second Steering Committee meeting: the minutes of the 2nd meeting of the Steering Committee had been circulated previously and approved.

Item 1: Call to order/Opening Remarks: At 09.30 hours, Dr Marcela Suarez-Rubio (BOKU), the Chairperson and newly appointed Project Coordinator (1 October, 2019) welcomed all members to the 3rd meeting of the Steering Committee. She presented the Agenda (Annex 1) and outlined the scope of the meeting and the highlighted the various outputs that she wished to see achieved, particularly with respect to the future strategy of workshops, the purchase of equipment and the budget.



Figure 3. Dr Alfonso Marzal-Reynolds (UEx) with members of the Myeik University team at the Steering Committee meeting.

Item 2: EU's assessment of the MuEuCAP's Technical implementation Report - Dr Paul Bates (BOKU) presented a summary of the EU's assessment of the MuEuCAP's Technical implementation,

mid-term report (Annexes 2 and 3). Noting that the overall assessment was 'Good', he highlighted areas that still required further work. Some of these have been already actioned, namely:

- Information on external quality advisors
- Providing information on the accreditation process of the new curriculum
- Ensuring that there is clarity about partners and other stakeholders on the website.

Action Points – important areas requiring further work include:

- EU approval and subsequent purchase of equipment for the 3 MUPs
- the addition of hyperlinks to the MUP/EUP partners websites that cross reference to the MuEuCAP website
- providing links on the MuEuCAP website to all press and outreach items concerning the project
- updating the Erasmus+ project Results Platform to include the University of Mandalay.

Item 3: Meeting the Vice-Rector of BOKU – The Vice Rector of Teaching and Continuing Education (BOKU), Dr Sabine Baumgartner, gave a 30 minute presentation entitled 'Profile of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU)' to all members and associate members of the MuEuCAP Steering Committee; also in attendance was Dr Margarita Calderón-Peter, Director for the Centre of International Relations, BOKU. In return, Ms Saw Myat Ohnmar, MuEuCAP's Outreach and



Figure 4. Ms Saw Myat Ohnmar (MuEuCAP Communications and Outreach Officer) making a presentation about the progress of MuEuCAP to the Steering Committee and Dr Sabine Baumgartner and Dr Margarita Calderón-Peter (BOKU).

Communication's officer gave a presentation on the aims, objectives and outputs of the MuEuCAP project (available as a pdf, on request).

Item 4: Equipment list for the three MUPs – Dr Marcela Suarez-Rubio stressed that since the EU's Erasmus+ rules stated that 'the equipment should be for the implementation of the curriculum', there could be no further delay in drawing up and seeking approval for a revised list (Annex 4). Dr Sai Sein Lin Oo, MuEuCAP's National Project Coordinator, presented a draft list to all members of the committee. Detailed discussions were had and were subsequently adjourned until the following day – see Item 9.

Item 5: **Budget** - Dr Marcela Suarez-Rubio gave a detailed introduction into the current status of the budget and the financial statements to the full-time committee members only (associate members were not present). She particularly stressed:

- the importance of maintaining a substantial financial ‘buffer’, which equals the difference in monies claimed from the EU (for staff time, cost of stay and travel), and the actual costs that are repaid to staff and students
- the need to be aware that the EU can ask for money to be returned if the paperwork does not support any particular claim
- that the EU will retain the final allocation of money until after the final audit.

She reiterated the need to:

- obey strictly the rules concerning what is and what is not eligible for claiming from the EU
- the avoidance of professional fees that are not matched by relevant paperwork
- the avoidance of paying VAT
- the importance of rigorous book-keeping supported by documentation.



Figure 5. Members of the European and Myanmar teams in discussion during the Steering Committee.

Dr Paul Bates provided working examples to clarify any misunderstandings concerning the workings of the budget (Annex 5) and a document that included general advice from the EU Erasmus+ office concerning ‘Budget Finance, and Financial Reporting’ (Annex 6). Dr Marcela and Dr Paul also discussed with the Committee three documents that are available as downloads on the MuEuCAP website, namely: Claims Information Sheets 1 to 3. They noted that some of the example pages need to be updated.

Outstanding Action Points:

- A systematic review of all paperwork to ensure all is correctly completed and compliant with the needs and rules of the EU.

The meeting was adjourned at 18.00 hours

The meeting resumed at 09.30 hours on 28 November

Item 6: **Open Discussion** - An open discussion was held concerning all aspects of the MuEuCAP project.

- **Staff transfer system in Myanmar Higher Education** - Professor Dr Aung Myat Kyaw Sein led a conversation concerning the impact of the transfer system on the continuity of training within the MuEuCAP programme. This was particularly relevant to Dr Sai Sein Lin Oo and Dr



Figure 6. Project coordinator, Dr Marcela Suarez-Rubio (left) and senior staff of Mawlamyine University, Dr Mie Mie Sein and Dr Aung Myat Kyaw Sein.

Khin Swe Oo who have both been promoted and are about to be transferred. Dr Marcela outlined the EU rules that clearly state that only those employed by the 3 EUPs, 3 MUPs and MBNS can claim staff time or any travel/cost of stay monies. Hence Dr Swen Renner was no longer eligible to attend meetings, although in 2020, he would have a part-time contract with BOKU and may re-join the training team with respect to EIA/Protected Areas Management. Dr Alfonso Marzal also outlined the impact of these rules.

- **Adoption of the curriculum** – After Dr Marcela Suarez-Rubio presented the revised curriculum (WP2.4), Dr Paul Bates asked Myanmar members of the committee how realistic it was to deliver a new curriculum (Annex 7) based on current levels of training. A general discussion was held with both MUP and EUP committee members contributing. Dr Sai said that the training will be used but not all could be adopted at once and in full. Dr Lutz Fehrmann suggested that it was impossible to teach a whole new subject based in a short training period and it would be a long-term goal to implement a full teaching curriculum. Dr Thein Aung reiterated the long-term goal. Dr Nay Myo Hlaing stated the need for a full understanding of the subject to ensure the correct delivery of a new course. The discussion then looked at the needs for considerable additional ‘home-work’ for Myanmar staff based on access to good text books and articles. This view was supported by Dr Lutz, Dr Soe Soe Aung and Dr Kyu Kyu Mar, amongst others.
- **Accreditation of the curriculum** – the above discussion led to a further discussion of the accreditation process. Dr Mie Mie Sein stated that some core courses, including ‘Ecology, Biodiversity and Conservation Biology’ (BioCEP 611) have already been approved by the Board of Studies for Marine Science. It was also noted that the MSc in Conservation Biology (Zoology) now includes EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) (BioCEP 612). Possible approaches to facilitate the accreditation process were discussed. Both Dr Mie Mie Sein and Dr Ni Ni Oo put forward suggestions concerning the Department of Marine Sciences taking the lead in this matter.

Item 7 – **Strategy for future MuEuCAP workshops (2019-2021)** – Dr Marcela introduced the proposed new strategy for the completion of the project. She discussed in detail:

- the structure of the ongoing implementation and testing of the new curriculum
- dates of future workshops

- the need for a decision on any application to the EU for an extension (3, 6, or 12 months) of the MuEuCAP project since this would have implications for the budget and the timings of the workshops.

Action point

- Decide on an extension period (if any) and apply to EU Erasmus+ for permission.

Item 8 – **Dissemination event** – A general discussion was held concerning the role, scope and outputs of the proposed dissemination event. To maximise the impact of the event, it was suggested that:

- it should be hosted in Yangon (costs permitting) or Mandalay (backup)
- include international as well as national speakers
- include a broad range of topical issues.

Action points

- Draw up a list of possible hosting institutions in Yangon and investigate costs
- Review budget, with a possible increase in resources allocated
- Each departmental team to draw up a list of topics/invited speakers that they might like to see included

Item 9 - **Equipment list for the three MUPs** – Working in three teams, a final list of equipment was drawn up for each of the Myanmar universities (Annex 7). This has now been submitted to the EU for approval.

Action points - once permission has been approved:

all three universities to obtain proforma invoices for equipment (working together wherever possible to maximise discounts)

purchase equipment in the most cost-effective way

follow the strict EU rules concerning the marking equipment as being donated through the EU Erasmus+ programme.

There being no other business the 3rd Steering Committee meeting was adjourned at 18.00 hours on the evening of 28 November, 2019.

Study visit to the Department of Ornithology, Naturhistorisches Museum Wien (Natural History Museum, Vienna).

On the 29 November all Myanmar members of the Steering Committee together with Temporary Associate Members of the Steering Committee and various European team members undertook a study visit to the Department of Ornithology, Naturhistorisches Museum Wien (Natural History Museum, Vienna).

The visitors were shown the extensive collections of birds exhibited to the public and the scientific collections, which are maintained for the benefit of the scientific community. The Museum has the



Figure 7. Study visit of Steering Committee and Associate members to the Natural History Museum, Vienna.

potential to be an important future scientific collaborator with the Myanmar universities through the new curriculum of BioCEP. The curator of birds, Dr Swen Renner, has/is working extensively in Myanmar on a series of biodiversity projects. These have included research, training and capacity building and have focused on (*inter alia*):

- the bird (and other vertebrate fauna) of Hkakobo Razi Landscape, Upper Myanmar with a mandate to discover, describe and disseminate information about this fauna in relation to promoting the area as a World Heritage Site under UNESCO

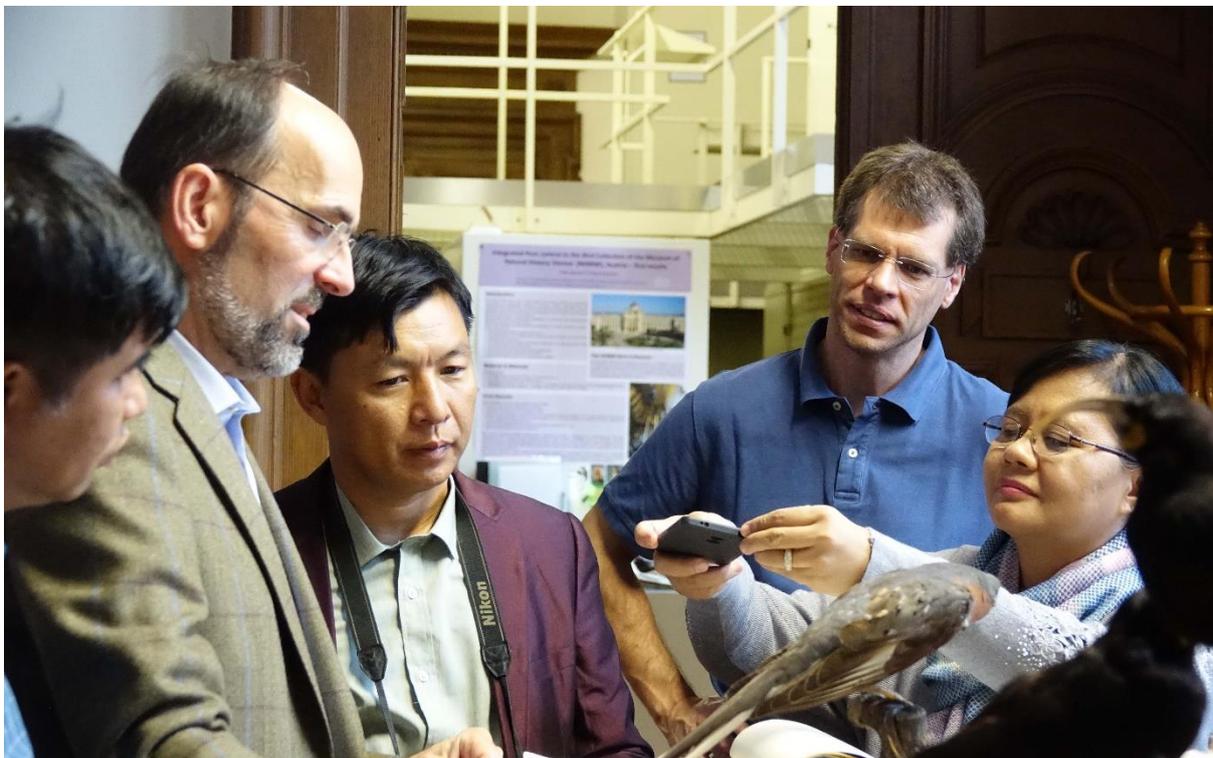


Figure 8. Members of the Myanmar Steering Committee (and an Associate member) with Dr Swen Renner (Curator) and Mr Hans-Martin Berg (Collections Manager) in the Department of Ornithology, Natural History Museum, Vienna.

- studying the impact of environmental change/temporal change on bird diversity within forests and other intact and fragmented habitats
- forest-urban gradients in bird diversity
- bird taxonomy and the description of new species/subspecies to science.



Figure 9. Dr Swen Renner explaining about the bird collection to the Myanmar delegates.



Figure 10. Further more detailed discussions about possible future collaboration.