



**Myanmar Technology Community
Launch MaePaySoh (Let's Vote) Hack Challenge**

Yangon, Saturday 12TH September 2015 -- With less than two months until Myanmar's historic election, the country's technology community are mobilizing to help voters through the MaePaySoh (Let's Vote) Hack Challenge. Over 200 of Myanmar's best developers have signed up to participate in the competition designed to build the best apps, websites, and other digital products to provide voters timely and accurate information. The initiative was created by The Asia Foundation in collaboration with Myanmar Innovation Lab Phandeeyar, with co-funding from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Held at Phandeeyar, located in downtown Yangon, the initiative taps talented local Myanmar developers to provide voters access to essential, non-partisan information in order to better understand the electoral process and make informed choices on the November 8 general elections. Other organizations supporting the MaePaySoh Hack Challenge include tech community groups Geek Girls Myanmar and Google Developer Group Yangon and civil society organizations like Charity Oriented Myanmar and Open Myanmar Initiative.

"Having access to information is incredibly important for people to participate meaningfully in civic activities like elections. By making election information available digitally, we hope to create the opportunity for people to come up with innovative ways to distribute such information to the public in a country with such a fast growing rate of Internet access. It is also about engaging a younger, tech savvy generation in the issues impacting the country," said Kim Ninh, The Asia Foundation's Country Representative in Myanmar.

Knowledge and awareness of the electoral process, the political parties, and the candidates is fundamental to ensure informed civic participation. As the Foundation's recent [*Civic Knowledge and Values in a Changing Society*](#) survey revealed, voter and civic education remain crucial needs, with 76% of the public unaware that Myanmar's parliamentary bodies make laws, and only 12% of the public aware that the president is elected by the Union Parliament.

Ko Yan Naung Oak, Program Manager of Phandeeyar and one of the organizers of the competition, said: "Tens of millions of people in Myanmar now have access to mobile phones, many of which are smartphones. Apps and websites are a great way to provide voters with the information they need to participate in this election. The purpose of this competition is to build those apps and websites".

Hack challenge participants will build tech products featuring detailed information about all the candidates and parties contesting the election. This is possible as a result of the creation of a public database of important election information. The Foundation worked closely with the Government of Myanmar's Union Election Commission to digitize all candidate and party information, and collaborated with two local technology startups, Zwenexsys and Hexcores, to make this data available to developers.



The database also holds information about the parliamentary performance of members of parliament who are seeking reelection, gathered by Open Myanmar Initiative. Developers will also be able help people check if and where they are registered to vote using the database built by the Union Election Commission and the International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES). Mapping data have been provided by the Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU). Voters' frequently asked questions about the elections were also compiled for the database by The Asia Foundation and Charity Oriented Myanmar. Read the [MaePaySoh frequently asked questions](#) to learn more.

The MaePaySoh Hack Challenge begins today and participants will have two weeks to build the best app or website that they can. On Sunday 27th September, the teams will demonstrate their products to the judging panel. The judges will then determine the winner of the competition. First prize is \$4,000 and entry into the "Accelerate Track" of Facebook's "FBStart" Program, which provides technology companies with mentorship and \$80,000 worth of services.

Mobile and web applications developed using the MaePaySoh API will be showcased at MaePaySoh.org and available for download on the GooglePlay store. Engage with us at <https://www.facebook.com/MaePaySoh> and www.maepaysoh.org.

-----ENDS-----

The Asia Foundation

Susan Lee, Program Manager
Mobile: +95 9254228255
susan.lee@asiafoundation.org

Phandeeyar: Myanmar Innovation Lab

Yan Naung Oak, Program Manager
Mobile: +95 925499181
yan@phandeeyar.org



Background Information

The Asia Foundation in Myanmar

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. In 2013, the Foundation re-established a resident country office in Myanmar after an absence of more than 50 years. The Foundation works with partners in government, the private sector, and civil society to build the country's capacity for regional and global integration, strengthen the core institutions and processes of democratic governance at national and local levels, support initiatives for inclusive economic development, promote women's empowerment and political participation, and increase public access to information through policy research and dissemination. Our Books for Asia program has operated in Myanmar since 2007. The work of the Foundation can be found at www.asiafoundation.org

Phandeeyar: Myanmar Innovation Lab

Phandeeyar is an ICT hub that supports the development of Myanmar's technology and social innovation ecosystem. Phandeeyar brings the tech community together with others who are moving Myanmar forward - such as civil society organizations, social enterprises and independent media - to build the digital tools, platforms and content to accelerate change and development.

Phandeeyar, which means "creation place", was born out of *Code for Change Myanmar*. *Code for Change Myanmar* organized the country's first-ever hackathons in 2014. These "coding marathons" highlighted the potential for ICT4D, M4D and civictech in Myanmar. Phandeeyar, which is located in a 6000 square foot space in the heart of downtown Yangon, serves as a permanent space for this kind of collaboration. Phandeeyar operates a co-working facility and runs events, workshops and meetups to expand the pool of tech talent and to help organizations use technology to increase their impact.

Phandeeyar is supported by Omidyar Network, Open Society Foundations, Schmidt Family Foundation and Internews. For more information please visit: <http://www.Phandeeyar.org>.