

Smile



Smile Education &
Development Foundation

Statement on US Speaking Tour

15 November, 2017, New York City, USA

Smile Education and Development Foundation (“Smile”) works on interfaith harmony, social cohesion and human rights awareness by offering educational training for youth across Myanmar.

Executive Director U Myo Win was in the United States (U.S.) showing the documentary film, *Sittwe*. Events were held at major universities across the U.S., at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations with Ambassador Kelley Currie and Special Rapporteur for Human Rights to Myanmar Professor Yanghee Lee and at Congress with Representative Eliot Engel.

The primary message of the *Sittwe* film is calling for equitable access to education for *all* youth in Myanmar, regardless of ethnicity, race, religion or gender as a foundation of reconciliation. The film tour is designed to engage discussions with students, policy makers and the American public about fostering tolerant and inclusive societies in not only Myanmar but globally.

Smile firmly believe that education is particularly vital for Myanmar’s future. A fully integrated education system for elementary, high school and university will ensure that young people are able to study together, have daily interactions, and gain critical thinking skills. Furthermore, building friendships across different religious and ethnic groups will lead to better understanding on one another and our shared history as people of Myanmar. Ultimately, it will lead us to a stronger nation built upon values of unity, tolerance, and strength through diversity.

The cycle of mistrusts, violence, discrimination, and divisive politics will remain without education. As Sayadaw Bedanda Thireinna states in our film, *“In order to develop character, people need to be educated. Then they can become aware of conflict, and learn how to build peace.”*

We want our youth to emerge from the darkness of fear and into the light of understanding. We believe that education will sow seeds of peace and cultivate reconciliation and create a brighter future for all in Myanmar.

U Myo Win
Founder and Executive Director,
Smile Education and Development Foundation