

Myanmar Guideline on Freedom of Association

An exemplary approach to ensure respect for workers' rights

In November 2019 an agreement was signed between the Industrial Workers Federation of Myanmar (IWFM) and employers supplying a number of garment brands: "Myanmar Guideline on Freedom of Association (FOA)" or FOA Guideline. The purpose of this report is to motivate and inspire for similar collaborations and agreements in other sectors and countries. The report is a product of the MYPOD project, a Danida Market Development Partnership. (see box).

MYPOD – WORK ENVIRONMENT, PRODUCTIVITY AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN MYANMAR GARMENT INDUSTRY

The MYPOD project is a Danida Market Development Partnership between Danish Ethical Trading Initiative, 3F (the United Federation of Danish Workers), the Danish fashion company BESTSELLER, and SDU (University of Southern Denmark).

The project was launched in 2017 with the objective of improving the quality of jobs and create sustainable increased value addition and participation of Myanmar in the global garment value chain. Project activities included training and capacity-building on sector level of workers' representatives, workers, factory management and industry stakeholders on freedom of association, social dialogue productivity and occupational health and safety.

Upon the military coup in Myanmar in 2021 the project entered into an exit phase focusing on supporting local trade unions and capturing learnings from the project.

The Freedom of Association Guideline in Myanmar – an exemplary collaboration

The right to form and join a trade union is a human right under the ILO core principles and the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, however in many countries workers are subject to retaliation when engaging in union activities. This is also the case in Myanmar, and the FOA Guideline is a novel bottom-up approach to ensure respect for Freedom of Association, taking point of departure at the factory floor.

The FOA Guideline details the conditions and processes at factory level enabling workers to exercise their right to freedom of association, as well as the obligations of both workers and management to cooperate in good faith and engage in social dialogue. Moreover, with the FOA Guideline the parties committed themselves to establish a dispute resolution mechanism, which was agreed during the summer and piloted at the end of 2020 and to develop a collective bargaining mechanism in the future.

The FOA Guideline was the result of a process facilitated by the ACT Initiative (see box), and as of April 1st 2020, compliance with the FOA Guideline is a business requirement for all factories producing for ACT Member brands in Myanmar.

Purpose of this report

This report describes the process behind the agreement of the FOA Guideline and its dispute resolution mechanism with the objective of identifying the factors that instigated and enabled it. The achievement is credited to the key actors in the process, including the president of IWFM Ma Khaing Zar Aung, the employer working group, representatives of ACT brands and the ACT secretariat.

The military coup of February 1st 2021 altered the conditions for the fulfillment of the potential of the FOA Guideline and the unique cooperation between the actors behind it. The trade unions are not able to operate freely under military rule, and the future of the garment sector and the role of the country in international trade is currently unknown.

However, The FOA Guideline remains a model example of a novel approach to ensure respect for workers' rights in global value chains, with engagement and ownership of trade unions and employers and actively promoted and supported by buying brands.

THE ACT INITIATIVE

ACT is a ground-breaking agreement between 20 global brands and retailers and the global union federation IndustriALL Global Union in pursuit of living wages in textile and garment supply chains.

ACT members agree that a living wage should be reached through collective bargaining between employers and workers and their representatives, at national industry level. In order to exercise their right to bargain collectively, workers must be free and able to organize in accordance with ILO Conventions.

ACT members and retailers have committed to link purchasing practices to collective bargaining, so that payment of the negotiated wage is supported and enabled by the terms of contracts with global brands and retailers.

ACT supports negotiation between national parties, and is currently operating on four key garment producing countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Turkey and Myanmar. The work is based on collaboration between global brands and retailers with suppliers, trade unions and governments.

For more on ACT, see the webpage: actonlivingwages.com

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- **3F** – The largest Danish trade union, provides direct support and advisory assistance to sister organisations around the world, including in Myanmar
- **ACT** – (Action, Collaboration, Transformation) is an initiative between international brands & retailers and trade unions to address the issue of living wages. See further description in box
- **DRM** – Dispute Resolution Mechanism
- **EWG** – Employer Working Group
- **FOA Guideline** – “Myanmar Guideline on Freedom of Association (FOA)”
- **GIZ** – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
- **ILO** – International Labour Organization
- **IWFM** – Industrial Workers Federation of Myanmar

Why was there a need for FOA Guideline?

The work on the FOA Guideline started as a response to the lack of protection of workers engaged in trade union activities in the country.

Myanmar is a relatively new country in terms of industrial relations. In 2010 Myanmar held its first elections in decades years. After decades of economic isolation due to trade sanctions under military rule, the country was gradually reintegrated into international trade after 2010. Alongside general political reforms, the laws and rules regulating employment underwent a much needed initial upgrade.

The first Labour Organization Law was enacted in October 2011 enabling workers to form and carry out labour organizations systematically and independently.

However, local unions experienced that existing labour laws and their enforcement was not sufficient to protect organized workers and contained provisions that contradicted international labour standards. There was a need for providing joint guidance on how to comply with Freedom of Association at the factory level for sound industrial relations. The President of IWFM, Ma Khaing Zar Aung, found that a guideline developed with the support of brands sourcing from suppliers in Myanmar could to some extent compensate for the gaps in the labour laws in the country.

This was achieved in November 2019 as an FOA Guideline was agreed by IWFM and employers supplying ACT brands. As of April 1st 2020, compliance with the FOA Guideline has become business requirement for all factories producing for ACT Member brands in Myanmar. This means that there is zero tolerance from brands for breaches of the FOA Guideline.

The Myanmar Guideline on Freedom of Association

Based on International Labour Standards, the FOA Guideline has 10 sections, specifying e.g. how meetings between trade union representatives and management representatives shall take place; how workers cannot be dismissed for trade union activities, and what rights and responsibilities workers and employers have during strikes and lock-outs. It is thus a very practical guide on how freedom of association is exercised and respected.

THE ROLE OF THE PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOA GUIDELINE OF MYANMAR

IWFM – is the trade union representing workers interest.

3F – Supported IWFM. Participated as observer at negotiations meetings.

Employer Working Group – factories producing for ACT brands established an employer working group, which nominated delegates to negotiate the FOA Guideline with IWFM.

ACT brands – discussed the need for and role of the FOA Guideline with IWFM and urged suppliers to engage in negotiations. Participated as observer at some of the negotiation meetings.

ACT secretariat – Coordinated negotiations and provided overview, summaries and kept all parties well-informed to ensure transparency. Coordinated technical support from ILO and GIZ to ensure the FOA Guideline was in accordance with International Labour Standards.

The FOA Guideline also emphasizes the obligation of both union members and management to act in good faith and with respect towards each other, and cooperate to achieve a successful business development e.g. achieve worker motivation, improve efficiency and product quality. It is mentioned, that increasing factory profitability can increase workers income, thus stressing the joint interests of management and worker.

“Workers want to have a job – with decent salary and decent conditions. If the workers are on strike, the factory will go out of business – losing the jobs for the workers, and losing the investments for the factory owners. Having a FOA-guideline and DRM can allow for organization of workers in a trade union which is a reliable partner for social dialogue at factory level.”
– Khaing Zar Aung, President of IWFM.

The FOA Guideline also contains agreement and timelines for further negotiations and time limits for mechanisms to supplement and ensure enforcement of the Guideline. Section 5 of the FOA Guideline outlines a negotiation process between the parties to agree on a collective bargaining mechanism. This negotiation process was set to start in June 2020 with the goal of having a final version no later than December 2020. Section 9 of the FOA Guideline introduces a dispute resolution procedure to be developed by 31 March 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, negotiations did not keep to the schedule. While a Framework Dispute Resolution Mechanism was agreed and piloted (see below), the collective bargaining mechanism was not developed, before the military coup drastically changed the conditions for the cooperation around the FOA Guideline.

The full text of the FOA Guideline can be found [here](#).

THE MILITARY COUP IN FEBRUARY 2021

On 1 February, the military in Myanmar took power through a coup, arresting Aung San Suu Kyi, the president, and other elected politicians.

The military claims that it took power due to fraud at the general elections on November 8 2020, but a majority of the people in Myanmar do not accept this and have engaged in strikes and demonstrations for the restoration of democracy.

Activists advocating for democracy, including trade unionists have been imprisoned and more than 1000 civilians have been killed by military forces.

Dispute Resolution Mechanism

The Framework Dispute Resolution Mechanism (DRM) supports the resolution of disputes in relation to the application of the Myanmar FOA Guideline. It is central in making the FOA Guideline binding and enforceable. The outcome of the DRM is binding for dispute parties and identified violations of workers right to freedom of association shall be remedied – e.g. if workers have been unlawfully dismissed, they shall be reinstated and compensated for any loss of salary. Non-compliance by an employer will ultimately result in termination of the business relationship between the employer and the ACT member brands.

The DRM only applies to labour rights disputes related to the right to freedom of association; it does not apply to disputes on labour interests such as wages or leave beyond the law.

“The negotiation process in the Dispute Resolution Mechanism is used for rights issues only. Rights issues mean that we have a law written very clearly about what is a workers’ right and what is an employers’ right. There will be a clear yes or no answer to whether a right has been violated.”

– Khaing Zar Aung, President of IWFM

The Framework DRM on the FOA Guideline was developed and operated as a three month pilot starting in late August 2020. Central to the DRM is the establishment of a Guideline Monitoring Committee (GMC) of 10 people, five representing IWFM and five representing the employer working group. The DRM is designed as short and efficient with three steps to solve labour rights disputes on freedom of association:

1. **The first step** of the Dispute Resolution Mechanism is dialogue at factory level between the employer and the worker. If the parties cannot reach an agreement on the dispute within 7 days at this stage, both parties have the opportunity to reach out to higher-level organizations for assistance. Employers can get assistance from their employer associations, and workers can get assistance from their trade union federations. Parties should resolve the case with the assistance within another 7 days.
2. If the negotiation at factory level fails to reach an agreement, the dispute moves to **the second step** of the DRM, to be addressed by a panel of the Guideline Monitoring Committee (GMC), consisting of four members of the GMC – two from the trade union and two from employers. The GMC panel will try to support the disputing parties in finding a solution. If the parties cannot agree, the GMC panel will aim at reaching a decision by consensus, and this decision will be binding on the parties.

If this is not possible within the given timeframe of 20 days, as a third step an independent mediator will be brought in from a group of qualified and neutral mediators reviewed and agreed upon by the GMC. The mediator will try to mediate either an agreement between the parties of the dispute or a consensus decision by the GMC panel. This process should be done in 10 days.

For the pilot phase, in case of not reaching a mediated agreement, the mediator will issue an expert opinion in writing that will be acted upon in good faith as appropriate. The Framework DRM furthermore foresees that “for cases in which the mediation step of the Framework DRM has been exhausted, and a consensus by the GMC panel has not been reached as to whether a violation of FOA has taken place, the parties to the FOA Guideline will seek to establish an appropriate mechanism for arbitration after the pilot phase”.

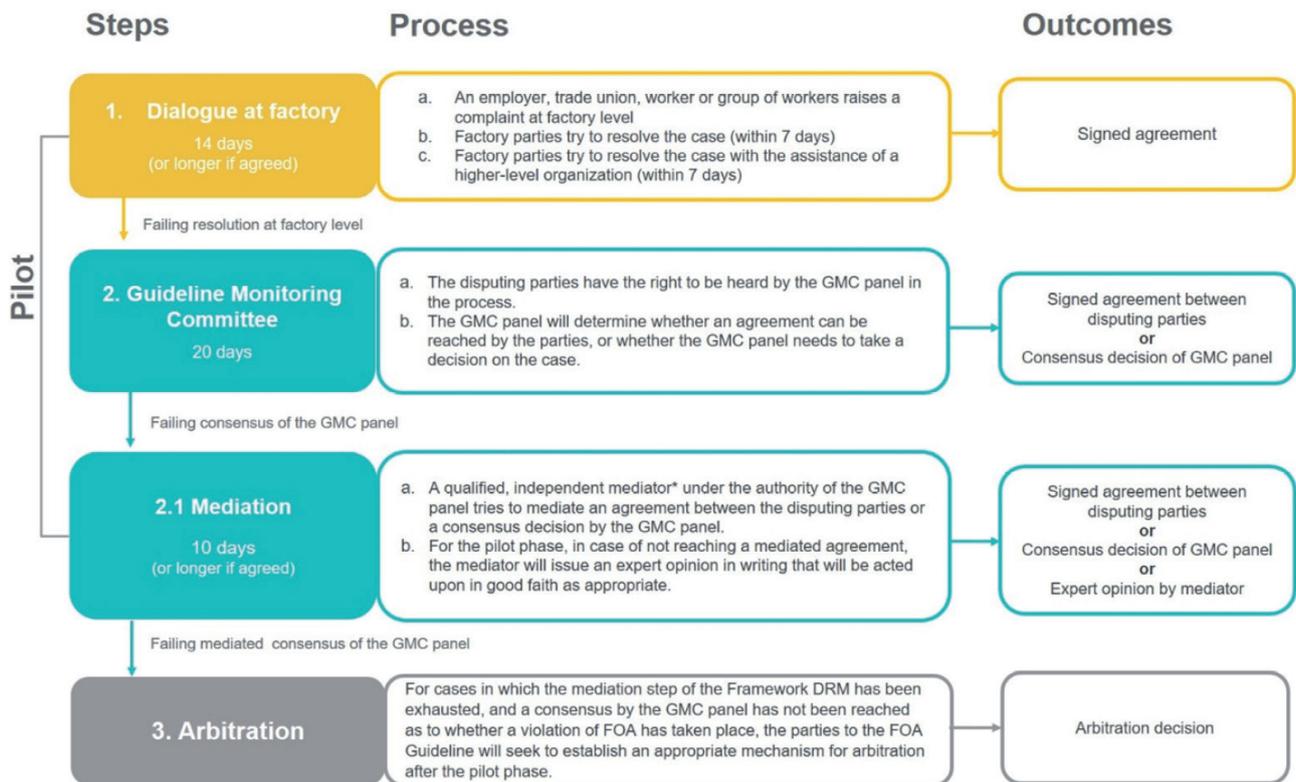
Non-compliance by an employer with an agreement or GMC panel decision will ultimately result in termination of the business relationship between the employer and the ACT member brands.

The first three steps above were included in the piloted DRM. The parties to the FOA Guideline have yet to establish an appropriate mechanism for arbitration for cases where no agreement between the parties or consensus decision of the GMC panel can be made. A technical review of the Framework DRM conducted by an independent industrial relation expert came to the conclusion that the DRM needs to include a binding decision by an independent third party (e.g. the mediator becoming an arbitrator) as the last step. It remains to be seen, if the parties of the FOA Guideline can agree on such a solution, including identifying mediators-arbitrators whose decision will be accepted and enforced.

“A key conclusion of the technical review of the Framework DRM on the FOA Guideline is that any effective dispute resolution mechanism needs to have a transparent and effective way to arrive at a final and binding conclusion. As such, the review recommended that failing resolution through dialogue, the original parties should go to mediation, and the mediator as an independent third party should have authority to issue a binding decision if he/she cannot get the parties to reach a voluntary agreement. This is called a Mediation-Arbitration (“Med-Arb”) process.”

– Tandiwe Gross, Senior Programme Manager, ACT secretariat

Flowchart of the Framework Dispute Resolution Mechanism



The process behind the FOA Guideline

The unions had the experience that national tripartite dialogue on how to secure Freedom of Association was not leading anywhere as they were not being heard by the government. Instead, IWFM called for an FOA Protocol with international brands, inspired by a Freedom of Association Protocol for the footwear and garment sector in Indonesia realised in 2011.

The point of departure for the Myanmar FOA Guideline process became the dialogue between IWFM and the coalition of three brands involved in the projects on social dialogue in Myanmar. IWFM insisted that it was necessary to develop a coherent FOA standard that could eventually apply to all suppliers in the country.

In November 2018, IWFM called for a meeting with the three multinational brands H&M, Tchibo and Bestseller on developing an FOA Protocol of Myanmar. The brands were engaged in three ongoing projects on social dialogue with involvement from local trade unions in Myanmar at the time (see box).

THREE PROJECTS ON SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN MYANMAR

The overall purpose of the three social dialogue projects was to build capacity for industrial relations, by training of garment workers, trade unions and factory managers, in social dialogue practices in order to improve working conditions, technical skills and productivity in the garment factories.

ILO-GIP: Involved ILO, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Swedish brand H&M.

The WE Program/Tchibo: Involved the German development agency GIZ and the German brand Tchibo.

MYPOD: Involved the Danish union confederation 3F, the Danish brand Bestseller and local Myanmar trade unions IWFM and MICS. Funded by the Danish government under the Danida Market Development Partnerships (DMDP) fund.

The three brands involved in the social dialogue projects became the starting point for the FOA Guideline of Myanmar.

In early 2019, IWFM paused its involvement with the three social dialogue projects due to several cases of violation of labour rights at supplier factories. IWFM wanted protection of workers' right to organize, before engaging in projects encouraging and educating workers to engage in trade union activities.

After several negotiation meetings, IWFM and the three brands agreed in March 2019 to work together for the development of an FOA Guideline of Myanmar.

“Through the MYPOD project and our engagement with workers in the factories in Myanmar, it was very clear to us that we needed to ensure freedom of association as a foundation for further, more advanced social dialogue solutions.”
– Andrei Vasiliev, Social Impact Manager, BESTSELLER

A range of actors supported the negotiation process

The three brands became the first *“coalition of the willing”* to support the trade unions' call for the need of an FOA Guideline – as the FOA protocol was then called – in Myanmar. They joined forces and brought their suppliers together in an Employer Working Group (EWG) to negotiate with IWFM.

Throughout the negotiations, the Danish trade union 3F was offering advice to its sister organisation IWFM. A representative from 3F International participated as an observer in many of the negotiation meetings. As an observer, the representative was not allowed to give advice and translations to IWFM at the negotiation table, but 3F's observer could discuss the negotiation, proposals and ideas with IWFM during negotiation breaks. 3F and the Danish brand BESTSELLER also had ongoing dialogues as they were both partners in the MYPOD project aiming at capacity building trade union, workers and factory management for social dialogue.

The role of ACT

Back in 2018, the ACT secretariat had been looking for an entry to start the ACT programme (*collective bargaining, responsible purchasing practices and living wages*) in Myanmar. Starting with a top-down approach to start the programme in the country, the ACT secretariat went for two country consultations together with ACT member brand and IndustriALL Global Union in May and September 2018 to initiate dialogue with Myanmar government representatives, trade union representatives and representatives of the employer association MGMA as well as the Myanmar-based associations of foreign garment manufacturers from China, Hong Kong and Korea. At the ACT country consultation in September 2018, MGMA refused to participate, as the employer association was not interested in cooperation on collective bargaining and living wages. Nevertheless, ACT initiated positive dialogue with the Ministry of Labour on bringing the topic of industrial collective bargaining into the national tripartite dialogue forum in the form of a potential future working group on collective

bargaining. The working group on collective bargaining was never realized, as the national tripartite dialogue forum was boycotted by trade unions in early 2019. With this situation unfolding, ACTs initial entry point in Myanmar was gone.

As dialogue on an FOA Guideline was initiated between IWFM, the three brands and their suppliers in the Employer Working Group, a representative from the ACT secretariat was called in by H&M to help coordinate the Employer Working Group and the secretariat work around the negotiations. The ACT secretariat brought in a senior technical ILO expert as a facilitator to the negotiation meetings in order to secure that the negotiations were well-mediated fair, transparent and result-oriented based on International Labour Standards. This was very helpful to the process to secure properly facilitated negotiations, as there were partners without much experience in negotiations, and many of the factory owners were sitting in different countries.

The role of the brands

The brands participated in the negotiation meetings as supporting observers for their suppliers from the Employer Working Group. From a brand perspective, it was a challenge to encourage the suppliers to even come to the negotiation table, as some of them were foreigners from countries with very weak industrial relations. The negotiations were new and challenging for them, as it was a complete change of mindset to have such negotiations.

The FOA process was presented to the ACT member council by the ACT secretariat in May 2019 and here it was emphasized that the pre-condition for collective bargaining and living wages is that workers can organize in trade unions in line with International Labour Standards. The ACT Memorandum of Understanding signed between all ACT member brands and IndustriALL Global Union furthermore includes the joint commitment to design strategies on how to proactively promote freedom of association. It took time and work to get to the point where a shared understanding between trade union, brands and suppliers of the need for enforcement of the FOA Guideline was obtained – for some of the parties involved, the need for freedom of association and the whole idea behind it was a complete change in their mindsets.

President of IWFM, Khaing Zar Aung, would not allow employers of other brands beyond H&M, Tchibo and Bestseller in the Employer Working Group, unless the brands accepted to make the FOA Guideline a binding element of their Code of Conduct. The ACT member brands agreed to this. The ACT secretariat thus coordinated with ACT brand members to encourage supplier factories to join the Employer Working Group. The ACT member brands agreed to inform all their suppliers in the country that they could choose to participate in the FOA Guideline negotiations or not, but that in any case the outcome of the negotiations – the FOA Guideline – would become binding for all suppliers in Myanmar. Around 40 out of 200 ACT brand supplier factories joined the Employer Working Group. The endorsement of the FOA Guideline process by all ACT brands thus broadened the participation of factories in the Employer Working Group and enabled the establishment of the FOA Guideline as a binding standard for all ACT brand suppliers.

The practical context: Labour unrest and insufficient state dispute resolution

Employers and supplier factories were facing problems with both strikes and employee turnover because of worker's dissatisfaction, and most of the disputes concerned freedom of association. The state mechanism to solve disputes on freedom of association did not function very well, and even when cases went through the settlement mechanism, the results were most often not implemented or simply deemed non-neutral.

Timeline of the Myanmar FOA Guideline process

May 2018 – ACTs first country consultation with representatives from Myanmar government, trade unions and employer/business associations to jointly explore options for starting the ACT programme in Myanmar.

September 2018 – ACTs second country consultation about the establishment of the ACT programme in Myanmar. The national employer association MGMA withdraws their participation at this meeting, but there is positive dialogue with the Ministry of Labour about collective bargaining being brought to the national tripartite dialogue forum in form of a new technical working group.

January 2019 – The process for the FOA Guideline development begins at the ILO Yangon office.

Early 2019 – IWFM pauses engagement with the ILO-GIP, Tchibo and MYPOD projects on social dialogue due to several cases of violation of labour rights at garment factories. IWFM campaigns on Freedom of Association in front of garment factories.

May 2019 – The Parliament of Myanmar passes an amendment to the Settlement of Labour Dispute Law containing provisions that weakens the protection of unionizing workers and contradict International Labour Standards.

November 2019 – IWFM and the delegates of the Employer Working Group agree on the Myanmar Guideline on Freedom of Association.

June 2018 – Case on Myanmar violation of FOA Convention 87 is brought to the 107th ILO conference and discussed at the Committee on Application of Standards (CAS).

November 2018 – First constituent meeting between IWFM and the brands H&M, Tchibo and Bestseller. IWFM calls to develop a Freedom of Association Protocol with the three brands.

January 2019 – Local unions boycott the national tripartite dialogue forum by the Ministry of Labour in response to having been ignored in the Myanmar labour law reform process.

March 2019 – After several negotiations, IWFM and brands agree to develop a Freedom of Association Guideline and on a time frame for the negotiations.

May 2019 – H&M calls in ACT secretariat to coordinate the FOA Guideline negotiations, support the strengthening of the Employer Working Group and propose the process to the ACT member council.

End of August 2020 – The agreed Framework Dispute Resolution Mechanism of the FOA Guideline is implemented as a pilot project running for three months.

February 2021 – The Military takes power in Myanmar and the work to unfold the full potential the FOA Guideline is halted.

Lessons learned

Key actors involved in the process highlight that the success of the FOA Guideline in Myanmar was the combination of the clear union strategy, the coalition of the three willing brands and the practical context. The coalition of the three willing brands were able to convince further ACT brands to join, in order for the FOA Guideline to be broadened to cover more supplier factories and thus become the standard for all ACT brand suppliers in the country.

If the process was to be applied in other countries and contexts, there are several learnings from the FOA Guideline of Myanmar:

One of the main learnings is that a bottom-up approach was key to the success of the Myanmar FOA Guideline. Working with the Employer Working Group representing the suppliers directly, rather than taking a top-down approach involving high-level representatives of Employers' Associations proved to be beneficial. In contrast, both the unions' and ACTs initial top-down approaches did not lead to any progress on pushing for freedom of association or collective bargaining and living wages in Myanmar.

Another learning is that suppliers should be provided with the necessary support and incentives. The buy-in from suppliers was vital for the support of the FOA Guideline in Myanmar. It is important to state that it was not enough for the brands to just call on the suppliers that they need to respect freedom of association – the brands also have to support the suppliers with the right kind of training and motivation, and create the right capacity for the suppliers. For many of the involved parties, freedom of association required a shift in mindset. Furthermore, it was important that the suppliers understood why it also made sense for them from a business perspective to have freedom of association. For example, the employers from the Employer Working Group were provided with an industrial engineer as technical advisor focused on production aiming to create an understanding of the positive effect on productivity by allowing and supporting the FOA guideline. As the suppliers were experiencing often disputes, strikes and had a high employee turnover at their factories affecting productivity negatively, the business incentives turned out to be an enabling factor in convincing the suppliers that the FOA Guideline could reduce these problems.

A third learning is that Freedom of association has to be brought into brands purchase practices – and violation of the right to freedom of association has to be a zero-tolerance-issue in the supply chain relations. The willingness of the brands for this was vital for the success of the FOA Guideline in Myanmar. Initially, suppliers were not interested in allowing and supporting freedom of association, but they were encouraged to be interested by the brands. As the brands began to bring International Labour Standards in as benchmarks when making contracts with suppliers, the suppliers had to accept to respect at least International Labour Standards as the benchmark as well if they wanted the contracts.

“It is important to explain the benefits of trade union representation and collective bargaining – but at the end of the day, suppliers need to be convinced that it is good for their business to have a binding FOA Guideline as the common standard. Purchasing practices and business incentives play an important role here.”

– Tandiwe Gross, Senior Programme Manager, ACT secretariat

“Violation of freedom of association is a zero-tolerance issue in the supply chain relations. In cases where such violations occur and cannot be resolved in peaceful, timely and good-faith manner, zero-tolerance protocols and escalation processes need to be applied.”

– Andrei Vasiliev, Bestseller

Convincing the suppliers also had a lot to do with trust-building. At first, the suppliers did not trust that the brands would carry the cost of potential wage increases that could be caused by respecting freedom of association (for example, if trade unions want to engage in collective bargaining on wages as the next step after FOA) – because according to suppliers, the brands did not even integrate the rise in the minimum wage in their purchasing prices, when that had previously been on the table at negotiations. As suppliers did not want to end up financing the extra costs associated with freedom of association, it was necessary that the employers trusted that the brand’s pricing policies would allow for freedom of association as well.

It turned out that the suppliers were also pushing for the FOA Guideline to become binding. From the supplier perspective, the suppliers who are respecting freedom of association would not be competitive compared to suppliers who did not respect freedom of association.

A fourth learning is that there has to be a third-party mechanism to assess whether the FOA Guideline has been violated, and the decision of this mechanism has to be binding and enforced by brands.

Tips and inspiration from the interviewed actors

“We believe that if FOA Guideline is implemented accordingly, the workers’ rights and trade union’s right in Myanmar garment industries will be improved.”
– **Khaing Zar Aung, president of Industrial Workers Federation of Myanmar**

“Support from our sister organization 3F was helpful – they participated in the meetings and gave ideas for the negotiations”
– **Khaing Zar Aung, president of Industrial Workers Federation of Myanmar**

“Remember to listen to the needs of the local stakeholders, because the process needs to be driven by the local partners – it has to be their guideline and their dispute resolution mechanism.”
– **Tandiwe Gross, Senior Programme Manager, ACT Secretariat**

“Just like any other collective agreement, the framework should be binding and enforceable for all the involved parties – and all the involved parties need to recognize and accept this. Otherwise the framework is of no use.”
– **Tandiwe Gross, Senior Programme Manager, ACT Secretariat.**

“Establishing Freedom of Association as a standard is possible to achieve – it requires a lot of work, but it is possible, because we did it in Myanmar.”
– **Andrei Vasiliev, Social Impact Manager, BESTSELLER.**

“Co-design the process together with the trade union, rather than introduce a fixed model. Suppliers need to co-design with unions, as they are the actual partner of social dialogue. Brands should provide space and conditions that enable cooperation between trade unions and suppliers.”
– **Andrei Vasiliev, Social Impact Manager, BESTSELLER.**

“Be honest and ask for what you actually want in negotiations – it will get you a long way. When you are honest, you build trust and people will know where you stand. But if you are not willing to compromise, you will not get an agreement.”
– **Than Zaw Thun, Program Officer, 3F United Federation of Workers in Denmark**

“Having good friends in your partners – like the partnership between IWFM and 3F – is important. They can guide you, give advice and share experiences in the process.”
– **Than Zaw Thun, Program Officer, 3F United Federation of Workers in Denmark**