

Are women more likely to take the lead in the 2020 election?

October 19, 2020

Of more than 6,400 candidates competing in the 2015 election, over 13% of candidates are women. In the last parliamentary term, women MPs held 10.5% of seats. There are approximately 7,000 candidates running in the 2020 general election, and over 15% are women. The “Women's Political Leadership: From Local to National” webinar was held on 16 October by the Enlightenment Myanmar Research Foundation (EMReF). Panelists discussed if there could be more hope for women representatives in the 2020 election, based on research findings. Some excerpts from the discussion are described below.

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Daw Khin Ma Ma Myo

Founder and Executive Director
 Myanmar Institute of Peace and
 Security Studies & Myanmar
 Institute of Gender Studies

Gender Budgeting plays an important role for Women and Politics

When it comes to gender budgeting, some people think that a separate budget will be set for men and women. That is not the main purpose of gender budgeting. The main thing is to have gender mainstreaming in the budgeting process and the implementation of public policies; to change policies; and to increase government accountability.

Research findings regarding Gender Budgeting

Gender issues in society, especially cultural norms and social norms, have impacts on the actual implementation

of policies. Women face many challenges to get involved in public life. There are many people who want to keep women at home in private life. When it comes to women's leadership in villages, we found only a handful of female administrators. Men often assume leadership positions. Some people say that men discriminate against women. But sometimes we found that not only men are discriminating against women; women are also blocking women from participating in public affairs. A husband may accept his wife's participation in the political and business field, but a mother-in-law may not accept it. Sometimes, we found that mothers try to limit their daughters' participation in politics, and the business and social sectors. According to social norms, men are more likely interested in defense and security budgets than women, but the survey found that women were more interested in defense and security budgets. This finding demonstrates that women are feeling more insecure and want to spend more money on public security to protect them (in their community life), rather than on bu

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**U Soe Myat Tun**Research Manager
Gender Equality Network-
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Myanmar Politics and Gender Research Survey

Gender Equality Network (GEN) has published "Myanmar Politics and Gender Research" to identify challenges experienced by women and men to become MPs in 2016-2017. A total of 50 candidates, both elected and unelected, were interviewed in the 2015 election. The research was conducted in Kachin, Kayin, Rakhine, Shan, Sagaing, Yangon, and Nay Pyi Taw.

Women are less likely to be involved in the parliamentary decision-making process because of being disqualified, just because of social norms. For example,

we all know how the representatives were elected in 2015. Most people do not check and voted based on the qualifications of each candidate; therefore their vote just went to the party. Thus, people did not have a chance to check MPs' qualifications before the election; and only when they were seated in the parliament, they showed their abilities. Who raised the most questions in the last term, and who submitted the most proposals (at the parliament)? We found that women asked more questions than men. Given the proposals that have been submitted, data suggests that women are not inferior to men and may even be at the top. Due to social norms, women have been less involvement in decision-making. It will take more time to overcome this challenge. The role of the media is as important as educational reform including gender awareness. Now the relevant actors are initiating reforms gradually. If gender quotas are mandated by political parties, women will be able to more actively participate, as it is also important to eliminate the impacts of social norms. That may happen in another one or two terms of government.

**Daw May Pannchi**

Gender Freelance Consultant

Women's Economic and Political Empowerment Research

When the Myanmar Institute for Integrated Development (MIID) conducted this research, we divided the research into two parts: eastern and southern Shan State. The two main research objectives were: a) to identify factors that affect ethnic minority women's empowerment in economic and political sector and b) to identify the challenges women face in each sector. Key findings show that only when women's livelihoods are improved are they able to fully participate in political affairs.

Women are already capable!

Research shows that in eastern and southern Shan State as a whole, traditions are lagging far behind. Women do not trust each other. For many generations, only men

have led. Women are not incompetent. Women also have to lead in the community. Women also have to lead at home. But they are not acknowledged. Another thing is that women do not know that they are part of this government administration. In fact, at the community level, many educated and uneducated women are needed. Some women think that they cannot lead unless they have graduated from 10th grade. According to our research, women are already capable, regardless of formal education.

Another thing is that I think the ability is important to enhance women's political leadership. It is true that the number of women in politics has increased a lot now. However, when we did the research in the Pa-O region, one of our partners said that the number of women was about 20% to 30% participation in the Pa-O organization. More skill development is required for women to make decisions meaningfully. There are very few female role models in Myanmar. It is only Daw Aung San Suu Kyi mentioned; thus it is important to promote more female models from different areas. To increase women's interest in politics and encourage women's participation and leadership in the political sphere, it is important to prioritize long-term economic prosperity and security.

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U La Ring

Program Officer
 Enlightened Myanmar
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Research on Women's Participation in Politics

Our research is a three-year project funded by the International Development Research Center (IDRC). There are two working papers on phase (1) and phase (2). The main reason for the research is based on why women are less involved in politics, and what the barriers are for women's political participation. The first section focuses on the candidate selection process of political parties. The second part is a community survey, which was conducted from November 2018 to March 2019. We studied how many women are involved in the administration, what was the role of women in decision-making, and the attitudes of the community towards women's participation in public life. Surveys were conducted in four regions and states: Ayeyarwaddy, Mandalay, southern Shan State and Mon State.

What makes it difficult for women to get involved in politics?

Key findings showed that women were not able to enter politics because they were subject to a lot of social and cultural norms. When it comes to leadership, the important thing is that both men and women think that men should be given the first priority. This trend still exists. Another factor is that women are expected to work harder if they have been selected to be a candidate. More expectations on women created more barriers for them. Further, financial matters are also an issue. Men in our society are usually the ones who earn money. Since women do not earn money and just have to do household chores, we have learned that financial capacity is a barrier for women even if they want to join

party politics. Regarding their challenges as politicians, sexual harassment is another challenge that women experienced while serving as political leaders.

What makes it difficult for women leaders to emerge at the community level?

In Phase 2, we examined the level of participation of women leaders at the community level, and their requirements to be positioned as ward administrators; most women said they did not have much confidence. They said they had no experience with a leadership role. In a survey, more than 40% of the respondents said men are best suited for leadership roles. Only 9% of women said they could also be leaders. Here, again, community preference was also found. Women face more challenges to reach the level of community administration. The community pointed out that female administrators were not able to go out at night. Women seemed to lack the capacity to intervene in fights between men. Thus, male leadership was seen as more acceptable.

In the 2020 election, more women are contesting seats in parliament!

In the 2015 election, 6,400 candidates competed and 13% of incumbents were women. Now in 2020, about 7,000 candidates will compete and 16% of incumbents are women. Overall, there is a 3% increase in the number of women candidates, but some ethnic parties have increased slightly. This is a positive development. Not only women but also men are having a hard time during the Covid-19 pandemic. One thing is for sure, during this election, campaigning is being conducted on social media. In my opinion, I want to continue to use existing platforms. The more work we do with young people and civil society, the more we can expand our network. Another positive thing about the 2020 election is that there has been some progress by political parties, so I would like to say that there is a chance that women will be able to participate in parliament.

“Gender and Local Politics in Myanmar: Women’s and Men’s Participation in Ward, Village Tract and Village Decision Making” Report and a Synthesis Report are ready

October 12, 2020

Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation (EMReF) shared the Working Paper 2 “Gender and Local Politics in Myanmar: Women’s and Men’s Participation in Ward, Village Tract and Village Decision Making” and Synthesis report “Gender and Political Participation in Myanmar” – these working papers are part of a three-year research project about women and political participation.

Working paper 2 explores gender equality at the most local levels of governance in Myanmar, complementing another working paper published in April by EMReF that examines gender equality in Myanmar’s parliamentary politics, and another forthcoming EMReF working paper that will present evidence regarding gender and public perceptions of politics. In this working paper 2, we provided recommendations to give residents more opportunities to participate meaningfully in ward, village tract, and village governance; and particularly to make participation more gender equal. Then, a synthesis report was published which covered the following topics: i) why Gender inequality in Political Participation matters; ii) women’s and men’s level of participation in Myanmar politics; iii) factors that shape women’s and men’s opportunities to participate in Myanmar politics; iv) the role of political parties and other governance institutions in promoting or limiting gender equality in political participation; v) the costs and benefits of running for election and being a leader; and vi) key recommendations.

This study was conducted as a three-year project, funded by Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The research is part of the Knowledge for Democracy Myanmar (K4DM) program, which aims to promote the democratic transition in Myanmar. The full research paper can be downloaded from the EMReF website www.emref.org.

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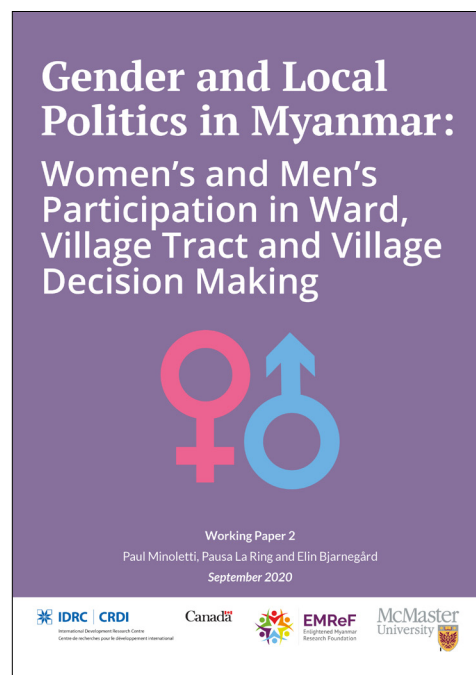




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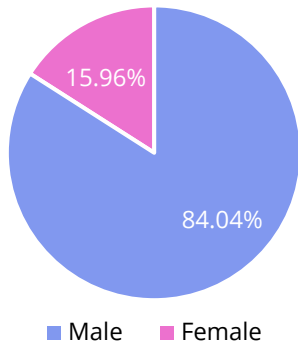
World Famous Quotes

“For me, a better democracy is a democracy where women do not only have the right to vote and to elect but to be elected”

..... Serena Williams (American Professional tennis player)

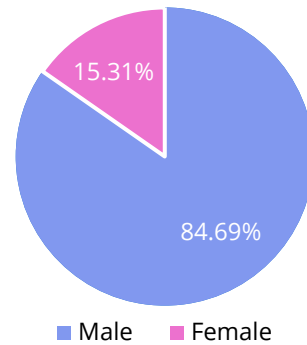
Percentages of male and female parliamentary candidates in the 2020 general election

Region or State Hluttaw



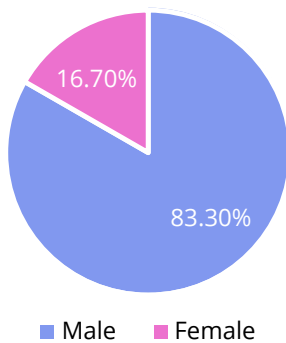
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Region or State Hluttaw (Ethnic Nationalities)



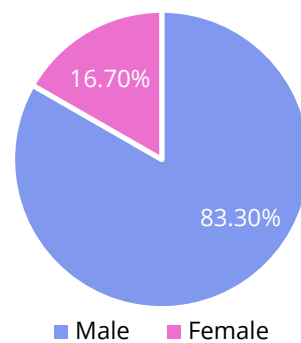
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Pyithu Hluttaw



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Amyotha Hluttaw



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