



What are the challenges for gender equality?

July 15, 2019

The “Gender and Decentralization in Myanmar” panel discussion was held at the Mercure Hotel in Yangon on July 10. This panel discussion was part of “The Knowledge Hub and Market Place 2019” event which was organized by International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

Four organizations conducting gender related research with the support of IDRC discussed their initial findings in the panel discussion. Specifically, panelists discussed the perception of gender equality in Myanmar, challenges, and research findings.

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Daw Khin Ma Ma Myo

Executive Director
 Myanmar Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS)

Discrimination is more common among women

We are doing advocacy for gender budgeting in four areas. The most challenging thing is dealing with social norms. We think that men are discriminating against women. I did not find many of these issues with male policy makers, but rather, we found that women discriminate against themselves and other women. The women who are the 0.01 percent representatives of Myanmar said that they are women leaders, and they have been involved in community affairs already. Therefore, they thought that gender equality has already been achieved, and there is no need to advocate. I also found that it is women who made the message about the fact that the main cause of sexual violence is the way that women wear their clothes. We had to explain to them that was not true.

They consider Gender as “Women’s issues”

The terms “gender” and “women’s affairs” were interpreted as women, and the public also accepted that concept. In Myanmar, “Women” is assumed as the issue which is led by the powerful men’s wives. Women’s day celebrations become more obvious and set “Gender” to “Women’s issues”. Defining these terms is a big challenge.



Dr. Min Zaw Oo

Executive Director
 Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security (MIPS)

Why they appointed female police staff

We are conducting research by considering that gender plays an important role in Myanmar. For example, we found female police staff in the Myanmar Police force. We want to know why they were appointed, and so we interviewed policy decision makers. When we asked them, one reason is that other countries have female police staff, so that is why they chose to appoint. I noticed that when the policy makers were thinking about women’s participation in the security sector, they had supply-driven perspective. The policy makers did not consider a demand-driven perspective, which is appointing female police staff to fulfill women’s services; they considered basic supply-driven services. They were making policy. They appointed on the basic principle that other countries have female police staff, so Myanmar should also appoint women.

For example, when they are providing service for women, if they take reports about women who have experienced sexual violence, the interviewer must be a woman police staff. For such a case, there were not any initial findings showing the percentage of women in this ward and how many female staff were appointed. They are thinking of their resources. Therefore, women have some challenges to go the police station when they experience sexual violence. When such difficulties exist, it is necessary for officials’ thinking to change from a supply-driven perspective to a demand-driven perspective for public services regarding the security sector.

Political parties do not have strong strategies to enhance the number of female MPs

Since 2018, we have been conducting research regarding women's participation in politics in collaboration with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Throughout history, women's participation in Myanmar politics has improved, but less than other Southeast Asian countries. When we asked party's gatekeeper such as CEC members about their views towards women's participation in politics and gender equality, and how they are implementing gender equality, we received two responses. One reason is that they encourage women to improve their capacity and they will also increase more female MPs. However, they do not have strong policies and strategies. We found that they only have knowledge to encourage. Secondly, they said men and women are equal. So, parties are freely open to everyone; in this light, only qualified people would join their parties. That is why they do not have any specific strategies. Fewer women are usually elected than CEC members. And we also found that women were less involved in candidate selection committees of political parties. However, women are more involved in the election campaign to motivate people. This is similar to the fact that women were involved as mobilizers and supporters in campaigns during the colonial independence movements.

Limitations for Female MPs in Parliament

When women hold seats in parliament, they are placed on committees such as the mothers and children committee, and other committees concerned with women's issues. In most cases, we think that may be true, but gender is not women's issue. We need men's participation as well. When we asked female MPs, they did not like being positioned to work on only women's issues. They want to be involved in other sectors such as national security, economics, and the natural resources sector. We found that they are also interested in those affairs. These are the limitations when they hold seats in Parliament.

Female role models

When we asked MPs and gatekeeper, either male or female, about their role models, they usually spoke about male role models. It is debatable whether respondents do not have female role models, or if they simply did not want to mention them in the context of an interview. Women role models existed in Myanmar



Daw Aye Lei Tun

Senior Program Manager (Gender and Livelihood)
Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation (EMReF)

history, however those female role models were highlighted less than their male counterparts. To bring about change at the community level, we also need to create some female role models that women can see as positive examples, admire, and to learn about new opportunities. To enlighten women, there should not only Bamar women, but also female role models of many different ethnicities.

Women's participation at the community level is the main process

After conducting this pilot study, we found that women's participation at the community level is the main issue. Some people said that women village and ward administrators are being appointed now. Actually, when we asked respondents in the pilot study, their perspective was that women's involvement, especially in conflict areas, is "just for show". The woman village administrator is better than a man when the armed groups are coming. This was respondents' perspective. So, they placed women in these positions for show. Another issue is that when we asked "why do they choose women and why do they agree to choose" in the pilot study, they have a sense that women would be less corrupt. So it is an exception that they did not consider that women are suitable or men are suitable.



Daw May Pannchi

Research Coordinator
 Myanmar Institute for Integrated
 Development (MIID)

They do not know what Discrimination is

MIID is studying what the challenges are regarding women's participation in politics and economics, and how these challenges are addressed. Research is being conducted in seven ethnic groups in Southern and Eastern Shan State with the collaboration of IDRC. We found that they do not know what discrimination is or how to identify it. Women are thinking that the issues they face are not discrimination. We found that most women are being discriminated against by other women. Even our local CSO partners in that area do not understand what sexual harassment is, but domestic violence is clear – it is like beating. For example, when a wife is beaten by her husband during a fight, the community thinks it is a common thing. Even the service providers who are doing development activities are not aware of these issues. This is our challenge. So we are collaborating with Gender Equality Network (GEN) and giving gender training to our local CSO partners first. After training, our research process with CSO partners has improved.

One of very significant finding is regarding drug issues. Men are doing nothing, but women have to do all the tasks, then they also have to give money to their husband to buy and use drugs. Women are very patient with their husbands, because they are afraid to lose a father for their children. Women's ability to have such patience is also encouraged and supported by fellow women, and also their mother-in-law.

Women involvement in alcohol use reduction could be more beneficial

June 28, 2019

Women's involvement in reducing alcohol use and alcohol related violence could be more beneficial, according to research.

The Women's Organizations Network of Myanmar (WON)'s research which is about alcohol consumption and gender-based violence in six townships of Myanmar recommended this approach.

Dr Than Myint, consultant and leader of the research said "We found that men were the severity level of alcohol consumption by using AUDIT C Score. Women (such as spouse, daughter, mother, aunt) mostly attempted to cut down alcohol drinking. So, improving women involvement in reduction of alcohol and alcohol related violence is needed."

This research was conducted in six townships namely East Dagon, Hlaing Thayar, Pantanaw, Pathein, Taung Dwin Gyi, and Tiddem, and all respondents were married. The research included people who attempted to cut down alcohol consumption; key findings showed that 65% of male drinkers attempted to cut down their alcohol use because their spouse encouraged them to do so. Also, findings indicated that 23% of women cut off drinking alcohol because of peer-to-peer education by their fellow women. In this study, the severity level of alcohol consumption indicated that 17% of men were severely addicted, and 44% of men and 12% of women were at risk because of alcohol dependence.

Daw Kaythi Win from the women organization network said, "In families where the men who are the head of the family are drinking alcohol and usually drunk, the women are suffering domestic violence such as physical, mental, sexual, and economic. We are trying to change the policy weakness and to reform on the base of this research."

This research recommends that a project is necessary to reduce alcohol consumption problems and alcohol related violence in the study areas.

Shwe Lay



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi urged women not to see each other as “enemies” in the gender equality movement



Photo-Myanmar State Counsellor Office Facebook

July 8, 2019

While gender equality movements are emerging, it is necessary to see each other as friends or siblings, rather than viewing one another as bitter enemies, said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counselor of Myanmar, on Myanmar Women’s Day, which was held in Nay Pyi Taw on 3 July, 2019.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi recommended “We aimed to go together. Women need to build understanding among themselves first; so that for the rest of society including men and women would follow. Then our generation would have a brighter future.”

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that individual self-interest and disorganization would not contribute anything to Myanmar’s development.

“So, women need to lead and set standards to organize and empower their fellow women it would be beneficial

not only for one day or a year, but also the future of our country – that is very important,” she said.

Myanmar Women’s Day is held annually on the same day that the Myanmar National Committee for Women (MNCW) was established on 3rd July. The theme for this year’s

International Women’s Day: ‘Think equal, build smart, innovate for change’ resounding with Myanmar Women’s Day. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi urged everyone to work in line with that theme, to work towards gender equality, social justice, and protection for women.

Shwe Lay



Photo-Myanmar State Counsellor Office Facebook



Photo-www.newsweek.com

World Famous Quotes

“Where women are full participants in a country’s politics or economy, Societies are more likely to succeed.”

..... Barack Obama

Ten Myanmar women entrepreneurs won the ASEAN Women Entrepreneur Award

June 27, 2019

Ten Myanmar women entrepreneurs received the 2019 AWEN (Outstanding ASEAN Women Entrepreneur Award), held in Thailand.

There were 10 winners: five were from Yangon and five were from Mandalay. This award was given women entrepreneurs in ASEAN countries. This contest was held in the third week of June in Thailand, and 87 women entrepreneurs in ASEAN competed.

The contest began in 2014, and Myanmar received the first prize in 2017. Myanmar received the most prizes this year and will enhance economic connectivity within ASEAN. Women entrepreneurs eligible for the award included: women who had led a company for at least five years, must have appointed female staff in the company, and must have contributed to regional activities and paid taxes.

Shwe Lay



Photo-Yangon Hluttaw Facebook Page

Female Minister has been appointed for Yangon New Ministry

July 5, 2019

The Yangon Region Parliament approved the appointment of Daw Moe Moe Su Kyi who was the Minister of Immigration and Human Resources Ministry, which was newly formed by Yangon Region government on July 2.

Daw Moe Moe Su Kyi is MP of Mayangone township constituency (2) and she was nominated by Yangon Chief Minister, U Phyo Min Thein, on July 1. Daw Moe Moe Su Kyi, the Minister of Immigration and Human Resources Ministry was committed in Yangon Region Parliament on July 3.

Daw Moe Moe Su Kyi was appointed the third female Minister of Yangon Region and the former female Ministers are Daw Niar Kyaw, who was the Minister of Electricity, Industry, and Transportation Ministry, and Daw Naw Pann Thinzar Myo who was the Minister of Karen Ethnic Affairs.

Shwe Lay