



Photo:Shwe Lay

# Exploring Gender Discrimination Practices through Art-based Research

December 10, 2019

Art-based research is one of the tools used by gender activists to explore gender discrimination practices in society.

Art-based research is a collaboration of art and research values, making both of them more accessible to the public. The "Pursuing Arts in Research (PAIR) Festival", aimed to familiarize people with art-based research in applying research findings, was held by Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation (EMReF) from November 30 to December 3 at the Secretariat, Yangon. At the festival, panel discussions, art exhibitions, and documentaries were shown. There was also a panel

discussion specifically about gender discrimination.

Many gender-based discrimination practices are inherent within Myanmar superstitions. Particularly in Htamein (women's sarong), people have irrational beliefs. The artist, Htein Lin, examined how traditional beliefs are changing in modern times through his art work "Skirting the issue". He viewed Htamein as a basic social issue, oppressing Myanmar women.

Htein Lin said, "According to Myanmar culture, people believe that man's power would be lost if he passes under the line of a Htamein. So, even men's sarongs and women's sarongs are separately washed.

Nowadays, it is necessary to save water and electricity while using the washing machine; thus clothes are not separable. And women have to go outside and work, besides doing house work; so they wash all clothes together. That causes problems in a family, even sister-in-laws and mother-in-laws can intervene. So, some women get hurt; so that stimulates my interest to explore this issue."

At the PAIR Festival, many cartoons, photos, art exhibitions, and films highlighted gender discrimination practices. Seng Mai Maran, editor-in-chief of the Myitkyina News Journal, presented the documentary film "No Country for Women", which was about the lives of female drug users



in Kachin State.

In her film, she depicted the social norm which dictates that only men are accepted in the anti-drug and rehabilitation camps in Kachin State. The lives of women drug users are ignored. "I found that many women are also using drugs, but they are not hosted by the rehabilitation center, and there is no space for them. Women are supposed to be more complicated to handle than men. Because some female drug users might be pregnant already. Some go back home for missing family and children. Some were already infected with diseases. And they are weak. Since adequate care could not be provided, they are not accepted at the camp. The result is they were arrested while using the drugs and sent to prison," Seng Mai Maran said. The film raised awareness about female drug users' experiences and advocated for designed rehabilitation centers for female drug users.

Hilary Faxon, who has been doing research in Myanmar since 2010, is interested in the lives of female



farmers living in rural areas, so she collected photos of those female farmers. At the festival, these photos were shown in an exhibit: "Portrait / Position / Craft".

According to Hilary Faxon, women's participation in responding to the survey questionnaire was low. The role of women in decision-making about land and land tenure was invisible. However, when she initiated the "photo voice" activity, by letting women shoot photos and tell their

stories, she found that women could raise their voices, and they did a great job.

At the PAIR festival, cartoons and illustrations based on research findings demonstrated the reasons why women are less involved in politics. Specific barriers and challenges were also presented as a result of the collaboration between research and artwork.

*Shwe Lay*

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## Women and Youths are the priority for some Ethnic political parties in the 2020 general election



Photo: Shan Nationalities League for Democracy facebook

**October 25, 2019**

The preparation of political parties began in October for the upcoming general election, which will be held by the end of 2020. New political parties have emerged, and ethnic parties are preparing their strategies to compete with the strong parties. Some ethnic parties have adopted policies to promote women and youth.

The Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) and the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP), which are the two main parties in Shan State, announced that they would prioritize women and youth candidates in the upcoming election. The SNLD has set a policy to include 30% of women and youth among candidates.

The SNDP, also known as Kyar

Phyu (White Tiger) Party, told the media that up to 45% of candidates would be women and youth. The SNDP's official added that they want to see women involved in Myanmar's politics, and they want to give a space to youth.

The Chin National League for Democracy (CNLD) has adopted a policy to include 30% of women. CNLD is a collaboration of three parties: Chin National Democratic Party, Chin Progressive Party, and the Chin National League for Democracy Party. According to their statements, some ethnic parties have decided to promote the role of women by promoting 30% of women's participation; this quota was decided at the Law Khee Lar (Peace) Conference.

In addition, the "Citizen's Political Preferences for 2020" survey conducted by People's Alliance for Credible

Elections (PACE) examined "the candidate and party preference of citizens". One of the questions in the study investigated; whether people would vote or not a woman candidate nominated by the party they supported. About 70% of the respondents said 'yes', U Sai Ye Kyaw Swar Myint, Executive Director of PACE explained at the "Women and Electoral Politics" (Myanmar Spring Talk) event.

"The percentage of people who want to support women is huge. This is encouraging for political parties", he added.

In the 2015 general election, 6,083 candidates were competing and 800 women candidates were involved. In that election, there were 151 female MPs at all Union, regional and state level.

*Shwe Lay*

## Calls to apply in WVL Myanmar's Multi-Year Funding and Support program

January 2, 2020

WVL Myanmar's Multi-Year Funding and Support is open to Myanmar-based women's rights organisations and networks.

Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL) Myanmar's Multi-Year Funding and Support will provide approximately ten women's rights organizations to support in four key areas – in which includes: 1) Flexible, core and activity funding, over a period of four years (2020 - 2023); 2) Access to fast, responsive funding to allow for timely, strategic responses to unforeseen

events, and to pilot innovative ideas; 3) Organisational strengthening and strategy development support to boost management, performance and sustainability; 4) Support to strengthen and empower networks, coalitions and movements to mobilise women's collective action to lead change. Applicants must have a minimum three years of operational experience and be either an emerging, Yangon-based women's rights organisation, OR a sub-national women's rights organisation. The detail information can be found on WVL Myanmar's website,

'wvlmyanmar.org'.

WVL Myanmar funds, supports and connects women's rights organisations to sustain and empower feminist movements that can deliver transformative change for Myanmar women and girls. WVL Myanmar is funded by Global Affairs Canada, and Women's Voice and Leadership is a global initiative that is part of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy and is currently being implemented across in 30 countries/regions.

*Shwe Lay*

## Call for independence of the Judiciary, unbiased judgment, and fair implementation of PoVOW Bill

November 25, 2019

Women's League of Burma (WLB) calls for effective action to ensure independent, and unbiased judgment on incidents of violence against women.

This appeal was highlighted in a statement issued on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. According to WLB's 2018-2019 record, the rate of sexual violence against women has increased. It was noted that a total of 238 cases of sexual violence cases did not receive enough justice. This indicates that women who are victims of sexual violence seem to have fewer chances of receiving justice. On the other hand, ineffective actions seem to

encourage and perpetuate the prevalence of sexual violence against women.

The current draft of the Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women Bill (PoVAW Bill), which is currently delayed to be enacted as a law does not protect women from all forms of violence. In particular, the bill does not take into account the voices of women in conflict zones and their concerns.

In their statement, WLB advocated for justice in cases of violence during armed conflicts and to end impunity; to amend the existing laws that are oppressing and violating women; and to pass laws that protect all women who are residing in Myanmar.

*Shwe Lay*



## Yangon ranks seventh in terms of women entrepreneurs in technology in 65 countries

November 10, 2019

Yangon, Myanmar ranks seventh from the study of women-led entrepreneurship in the technology industry.

This was covered in a Forbes

Magazine article which was written on October 10. The Founder Institute studied female entrepreneurship in the technology industry in more than 180 cities in 65 countries.

According to the study, Oslo, Norway stands in first place with 74 %

of female founders, then Washington DC, United States is the second, and New York, United States is third. Yangon, Myanmar stands in seventh place with 57%.

*Reference: <https://www.forbes.com>*



Photo: Si Thu

## Knowledge MarketPlace will be held at Mandalay University on January 28<sup>th</sup>

January 2, 2020

The Knowledge MarketPlace, organized by the Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC), will be held at Mandalay University on January 28, 2020.

The Knowledge MarketPlace is a sharing knowledge program by demonstrating research papers and the activities of research organizations and think tanks. This Knowledge MarketPlace is as a part of progress toward Myanmar's Sustainable Development Goals Conference 2020, which is co-hosted by the Australia Myanmar Institute (AMI) and the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International

Studies (Myanmar-ISIS).

Knowledge MarketPlace 2019 was held by IDRC last year in Yangon. In that program, more than 30 organizations, including research organizations, think tanks and universities displayed and shared their activities and research papers. Knowledge Forum 2019 was organized by the Knowledge for Democracy Myanmar (K4DM) program, the forum brought together people from those organizations to learn from each other about their works on social and economic issues, and to facilitate democratic transition in the country.



Photo: <https://www.britannica.com>

## World Famous Quotes

“Equality will be achieved when men and women are granted equal pay and equal respect.”

..... Beyonce Knowles (American singer and actress)

# Voice of the research participant of EMReF's K4DM project

Name : Ma May May (Not a real name)  
 Age : 36  
 Position : Leader of Female Youth Group  
 Village/Ward : Ohn Paing Village, Thabeikkyin Township, Mandalay Region

*(NOTE: This information or case study was not from a case study interview but she was so happy to talk to the researchers about how she felt after she saw the girls were not talking much. So, the researcher had a chance to talk to her. The information that taken from her sharing was interesting.)*

Thank you so much for coming to our village and also thank you for bringing important issues to be discussed, and at the same time to learn from each other by talking about them. This is the first time I am being interviewed and also listening to the discussion as well. You guys are also the first group to come to our village to discuss about women's leadership. We have never had such a discussion before. So I am so glad that you people came and I am definitely sure that the people in my village learned something from today's discussion. Also, the people who came and listened to the discussion would also get something. However, there are people (especially a group of men) who were not happy about it because they think that women need to take the leadership positions.

Besides, as you can all see today, the young girls are

not talking. I have always encouraged them to stand up and raise their voices, but not many girls came out. As I am not a youth anymore, I want someone to replace me as a female youth group leader but there is no one. Sometimes I feel so disappointed for the fact that the girls are always down there, and do not dare to stand up from where they are now.

As you can see, they kept silent on the question on whether men and women have the same ability. I understand that because they have never thought that something like this would be openly discussed. I might be wrong, but this is the feeling that I am having now, but I think that this is the first experience for them thinking about the ability of women and men and how things work in reality.

