

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

Policy Paper by
the Salween Institute for Public Policy
in Partnership with
the Women's League of Burma

January 2018

GENDER
AWARENESS

GENDER
EQUALITY

QUOTA
SYSTEM

GENDER
SENSITIVE
POLICY

GENDER
BUDGETING

GENDER
MAINSTREAMING



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THE SALWEEN INSTITUTE
for Public Policy



SALWEEN INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Salween Institute for Public Policy is a Burma/Myanmar think tank contributing to the development of public policy: producing relevant policy analyses and providing policy-oriented empowerment training to leaders of communities throughout the country.

Through a combination of research, training and technical assistance, we empower community leaders and advocate to policymakers about just and effective approaches to peace building, policy making and community development.

We believe

- that equality and the right to self-determination for all ethnic nationalities are fundamental to building a peaceful and prosperous nation.
- that cultivating a strong intellectual foundation is crucial to fostering much-needed social cohesion among Burma/Myanmar's pluralistic communities.



WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF BURMA

The Women's League of Burma (WLB) is an umbrella organisation comprising 13 women's organisations of different ethnic backgrounds from Burma. WLB was founded on 9th December, 1999. Its mission is to work for women's empowerment and advancement of the status of women, for the increased participation of women in all spheres of society in the democracy movement, and in peace and national reconciliation processes through capacity-building, advocacy, research and documentation.

Aims

- To work for the empowerment and advancement of the status of women
- To work for the rights of women and gender equality
- To work for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women
- To work for the increased participation of women at every level of decision-making in every sphere of society
- To participate effectively in the movement for peace, democracy and national reconciliation

PREFACE

Burma/Myanmar is at a critical point in its history. This is the time when everyone is working together to end the 70 year-long civil war and to build sustainable peace through the establishment of a federal democratic union, that guarantees self-determination and ethnic equality. It is crucial for the people of this country to contribute their energy, expertise and skills towards this landmark achievement.

However, the representation of women, who make up more than half of the population has been lacking throughout the political dialogue and the whole negotiation process for a nationwide cease-fire agreement. Neither the previous Thein Sein government nor the present Htin Kyaw government have appointed many women to significant positions.

National policies for providing public goods and services that have been adopted during the previous and current legislature also failed to include the different voices and needs of men and women. As a result, no policy has been adopted that would benefit women directly.

This paper has been written in order to support efforts to increase women's participation in negotiations for a cease-fire agreement, political negotiations, and legislative and administrative processes. We hope to promote gender equality through more women's participation in the political decision-making process, starting with raising awareness about gender.

Salween Institute for Public Policy

Women's League of Burma

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We would like to thank every member of Salween Institute’s staff for their efforts in conducting research, but special thanks go to the authors of this paper, Shine Ko Ko Lwin and David Brang Ja with technical assistance from Elaine Moore. This paper would not have been as informative or as thorough without the comments, suggestions and feedback from the advisory board, policy board, secretariat and secretariat staff of the Women’s League of Burma.

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INTRODUCTION

Women have been working alongside ethnic leaders to build a genuine federal union that guarantees self-determination, democratic rights and equality. Despite their active participation in the struggle to achieve this, women's role in leadership and decision-making remains abysmally low.

With the exception of those organizations whose focus is specifically on women's issues and a few civil society organizations (CSOs), women's representation has not increased significantly in any branch of government or political parties; nor the regional and national Hluttaws; the Tatmadaw; ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), or public services. In order to highlight this, the Women's League of Burma (WLB), published two earlier positions papers namely; **"Constituting our Rights"** February 2006 and **"Looking Through Gender Lenses: Position Paper on Gender Equality"**, September 2006.

Anyone who believes that gender equality is essential to achieving a just society has worked together with the WLB on advocacy. As a result, the principle "To ensure gender equality, at least 30 percent of the seats at all levels of legislation of the Federal Union shall be reserved for women" was endorsed as article 37 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of the Union of Burma drafted by the Federal Constitution Drafting and Coordinating Committee (FCDCC). It was subsequently adopted on Union Day, February 12, 2008 by more than sixty organizations including those parliamentarians who were elected in 1990; EAOs; political parties; youth and women's organizations and other CSOs.

Nearly a decade later, EAOs unanimously adopted one of the principles of gender equality: "a minimum of thirty percent women's participation at every level of political negotiation". Nevertheless, despite this significant step forward, its implementation has proved challenging to realize both in numbers and meaningful participation in decision-making process.

Moreover, because leaders in the peace process discussion pay insufficient attention to gender equality issues, it has always been left to women to raise these, leading to accusations that women only talk about women's issues rather than other political questions such as self-determination, ethnic equality, federalism and justice. Unless and until everyone engages fully in viewing all issues through a gender lens, this will impede the progress of nation-building.

Therefore, this document has the double purpose of firstly, reviewing earlier published papers for relevance and thus enabling steps to be taken in the current situation. Secondly, we hope to provide a tool for policy advancement on gender sensitivity and to support organizations advocating for more meaningful women's participation in decision-making generally and the peace process specifically.

The paper is presented in four sections:-

1. The benefits of women's involvement
2. The obstacles to women's participation and how to remove them
3. Strategies to promote gender equality
4. Recommendations for stakeholder groups

CHAPTER 1

Why should more women participate in politics and decision-making?

The rate of women's participation in politics and the decision-making process has been consistently low, due to marginalization and discrimination. What is more, the decision to fight is rarely taken by women and yet they are the disproportionate victims of civil war and armed conflict.

While striving to build a federal democratic union in Burma/Myanmar, all stakeholders have accepted 'inclusiveness' as the most important principle. Therefore, women need to be included both as protagonists and to provide the perspective of those who have been suffering from the consequences of conflict. Only when the inclusiveness principle is genuinely realized, can the federal democratic union for which we have been longing be finally achieved.

Democratic legitimacy

One of the pillars of democracy is citizens' rights: within which equality stands firmly. All citizens have a right to participate equally in the political process, and if a group of citizens cannot exercise that fundamental right, responsible leaders must fulfill this vision. For women to enjoy full citizenship, they must have the same freedoms and opportunities as men to decide how to live their lives.

In a Union formed of diverse ethnicities, proportionate representation of every ethnicity is required for democratic legitimacy. As equal citizens, constituting more than 50% of the population, it is an equivalent requirement that women participate fully in political, social and economic life.

As citizens subject to the laws and policies of the government, women must have an equal opportunity to participate in the formulation of those laws and policies. A legislature that fails to represent more than 50% of the population cannot be said to be truly democratic. If a democratic government cannot guarantee adequate representation for half of the population, its legitimacy is questionable.

While Shan people would not accept Chin people to represent their affairs and outlook, or vice versa, it is an irony that men are representing women's perspectives and opinions, which may be different. Thus the 'give-and-take' of democratic politics, the process of sharing experiences and perspectives and designing policies that serve the interests of all the people, will be seriously compromised if 50% of the population is effectively unrepresented".¹

A failure to involve women in political decision-making is therefore a failure of democracy.

¹ WLB, *Looking Through Gender Lenses* September 2006.

International standards

“Gender equality is now a global norm. We now live in a global era of democracy that holds gender equality as a central norm for civilized society. To participate in an increasingly globalized world, Burma/Myanmar must recognize and adjust to modern norms of gender and justice, albeit in a way that remains respectful to cultures in Burma/Myanmar as they transform over time.”²

The Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action have called for more women’s participation in political decision-making. While CEDAW also urged temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women, Article 4 of the convention ensures that it shall only be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.

To achieve the targets of UN Sustainable Development Goal No. 5, the international community suggests several guidelines including “ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life” and “adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels”, in order for women to participate in politics.

The UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325 on Women and Peace and Security of October 31, 2000, “reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction”. UNSCR 1325 also highlights the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

In particular, the resolution emphasized the participation of women and the inclusion of gender perspectives in conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution. As a member of the United Nations, Burma/Myanmar is obliged to follow guidelines adopted by the UN. As a signatory of the CEDAW convention, it is obligated to implement its provisions.

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A more prosperous nation

The living standards of women, children, older people and differently-abled people are key indicators to measure the development and welfare of a society. As women attain a higher standard of living, so too, does the whole of society.

The World Bank has shown that women are more likely to invest additional household income in children’s health and education, raising child survival

² WLB, *Constituting Our Rights* February 2006,

rates and improving the welfare of the whole community. A National Democratic Institute (NDI) study has found that if there is increase in women legislators, an increase in total educational, health and other developmental expenditure follows.

Similarly in Burma/Myanmar, when a survey was conducted with female Members of Parliament serving 2011-2016, it found their concerns typically focused on issues all detrimental to the country's long-term welfare: poverty; infrastructural development; drug trafficking; ethnic and religious conflicts; land confiscation and land ownership.

When women are empowered as political leaders, countries experience higher standards of living: positive developments can be seen in education, infrastructure and health, while concrete steps are taken to deliver democracy.

Thus, by lifting the living standards of women, allowing more women's participation in decision-making, policy formulation, and taking up political leadership, the whole nation will be developed.

Attaining sustainable peace

"Half of all peace agreements fail within a decade of signature, yet peace processes and peace building are more likely to work, to enjoy support from civil society, and to address the make or break issues if there is full participation of marginalized groups, including women."

The NDI study found the following:

- "Women are deeply committed to peace building and post-conflict reconstruction and have a unique and powerful perspective to bring to the negotiating table."
- "Women suffer disproportionately during armed conflict and often advocate most strongly for stabilization, reconstruction and the prevention of further conflict."
- "Women's engagement in the transitional processes and post-conflict governments can increase the legitimacy of nascent institutions, decrease government corruption, broaden the political agenda, promote consultative policymaking and encourage collaboration across ideological lines and social sectors."
- "Half of all peace agreements fail within a decade of signature, yet peace processes and peace building are more likely to work, to enjoy support from civil society, and to address the 'make or break' issues if there is full participation of marginalized groups, including women."

Achieving social justice

The term 'social justice' is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, as "justice in terms of the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society."

Discriminatory behavior has its roots in cultural attitudes and requires structural remedies to address the challenge to democratic legitimacy if allowed to go unchecked. In the same way that no one would want to be discriminated against on the basis of religion or ethnicity, no one benefits from discrimination based on gender. Because all forms of discrimination undermine social justice, the democratic legitimacy of the government remains weak.

The price of inequality is too high a price to pay: social injustice will deter development and prosperity, and delays peace building and rehabilitation.

Women are better educated

In advocating more women's participation in politics, some typical responses are "few women are educated properly which is why they participate less," and "If they are qualified enough, they will automatically be included in politics and decision-making."

Though this may be true in war and conflict zones, in the country as a whole, numbers of educated women are much higher than those of men. According to a UNESCO survey, 34.2% of females and 25.7% of males finish high school education; females make up 65.2% of pre-bachelor degree courses, 80.5% of master degree courses, and 80.8% of PhD courses. The notion of low women's participation in politics and decision-making due to fewer educated and skilled women is inaccurate and contradictory: if women's participation in politics and decision-making remains low, that is not the reason.

After more than 70 years of civil war, the country needs human resources to take part in peace-building and nation-building and since educated women can fulfill these requirements, it is baffling why women are still marginalized.

CHAPTER 2

Limitations to women's participation

By limitations, we mean intentional limitations on women through existing laws, systems, and traditions on the one hand and on the other the continued failure of those in power to enforce policies that would advance women.

Legal limitations

Legal limitations are embedded in the 2008 Constitution and other existing laws. Provided below are a few of the many examples.

Section 6 of the Constitution enshrines "enabling the Defence Services to be able to participate in the national political leadership role of the State" by automatically taking 25 percent of unelected parliamentary seats. As men are traditionally dominant in the military, there are only a total of four female Tatmadaw representatives within this 25 percent. Moreover, the military quota is cited as a reason against calling for a representation of women in parliament of at least 30 percent. This is to misunderstand completely the reason why a temporary special measure of affirmative action is required in this newly democratic era.

Section 232 states "to obtain a list of suitable Defence Services personnel nominated by the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services for Ministries of Defence, Home Affairs and Border Affairs." This in effect means that those three ministries are automatically inaccessible to any non-Tatmadaw personnel: not only is this undemocratic, it is legally and institutionally discriminatory.

Section 253 of the constitution states "the Union shall, upon specified qualifications being fulfilled, in appointing or assigning duties to civil service personnel, not discriminate for or against any citizen of the Republic of the Union of Burma/Myanmar, based on race, birth, religion, and sex. However, nothing in this Section shall prevent appointment of men to the positions that are suitable for men only."

This statement implies that some jobs can only be done by men: it does not say which ones they are. Not only is this a contradictory clause in the Constitution, but it is also another way of excluding female representation.

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Even though the Union Election Law and the Political Party Registration Law do not restrict women's participation, they effectively fail to promote more women's participation and empowerment.

Furthermore, in a country with a long history of militarism and patriarchy, gender equality will not come about merely through the absence of discrimination: gender equality has to be pursued actively through policies and processes to ensure more women in political leadership.

Women have been consistently denied access to decision-making positions and the only way to change this is by constitutional and legal reforms to both remove historical discrimination and, at the same time, to fulfil our legal obligations as a modern democratic nation, taking its place in the international community.

Cultural limitations

Burma/Myanmar has experienced feudal, colonial and military dictatorship rule, all of which are patriarchal in nature. Women were limited to household affairs and they were put exclusively in the roles of mother, wife and daughter. Consequently, women were not seen as suitable for leadership positions.

In the Asia Foundation survey on Experiences of Women Parliamentarians 2011-2016, the majority of respondents identified major obstacles to women's participation as:

- the attitude of voters generally,
- lack of support from female voters, and
- potential female candidates' lack of self-confidence.

'If a woman's place is in the home, it cannot be in parliament' is summed up in these responses.

Paragraph 6 of the basic principles for a federal Union discussed in the second session of the Union Peace Conference: 21st Century Panglong states that "every ethnic nationality shall protect and promote their languages, literature, culture, and traditions." Ironically, this is being used to perpetuate discriminatory practices whereas its intention is clearly to sustain ethnic diversity not marginalize women.

Institutional limitations

Outdated cultural practices have embedded themselves in the nation's institutions. While women are allowed to carry out administrative roles, senior positions are denied to them.

In Burma/Myanmar, there are around 90 political parties and approximately 90 percent of executive committee members are male. Of the 18 political

parties which won seats in the 2015 general election, only 7 fielded women candidates. In the executive branch, there are only two female ministers at Union level and two female Chief Ministers at State/Regional level as of December 2017.

Thus, there are three barriers to women's entry to parliament via political parties:

- politically active women are not given leadership positions
- women candidates are not put forward for elections
- voters do not support them.

Since the 1962 military coup and military expansionism, sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war. The lack of individual and collective safety and security ensure that women are prevented from taking their rightful place in the peace-building process.

There are more than 20 ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) but very few have women at executive committee level. While the majority of EAOs have adopted the principle of a minimum of 30% women's representation at every level, this is not happening. Likewise, there is no tradition in the Tatmadaw of appointing women to senior ranks: they have never been promoted above the rank of colonel.

Women are 'agents of change' in politics, peace and negotiations and should be enabled to play this key role.

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CHAPTER 3

Strategies to promote gender equality

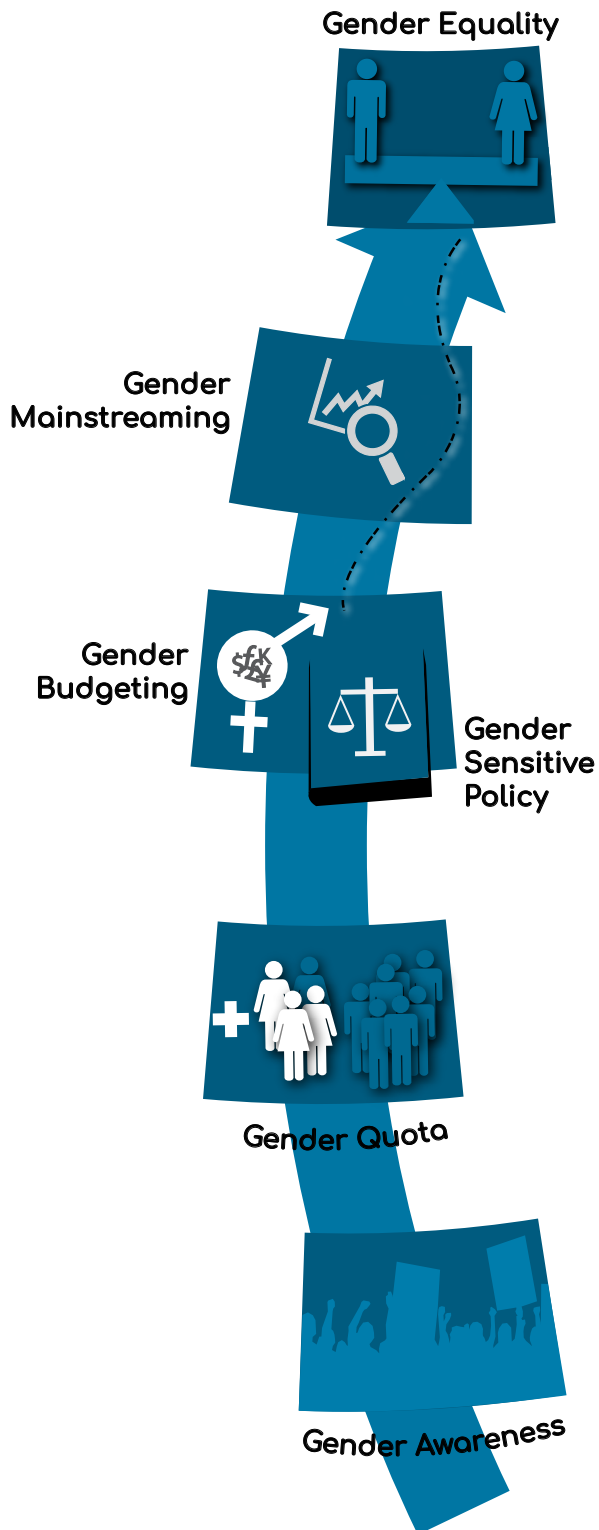
Obstacles to women's advancement in politics and leadership will not be removed automatically. Only through systematic adoption of policies with objectives and an implementation plan, will we achieve a just and fair society where gender equality is the norm.

Federalism and Gender Equality

One of the main characteristics of federalism is division of power between federal, state and local governments and thus it provides more entry points and opportunities for women to participate in politics and decision-making. Indeed, having more levels of government facilitates the creation of more dynamic and innovative policies: such policies can be initiated at state and local level and eventually adopted at the federal level.

Because states are empowered to administer their own affairs, they can adopt policies which may be good examples for other states to follow: among these could be women-friendly policies which would lead to greater gender equality. In addition, because local governments are closer to the communities they serve, they are in the best position to address the immediate needs and concerns of their constituents, more than 50 percent of whom are female.

While federalism can provide many advantages for gender equality, one can note some disadvantages. There is no guarantee that different levels of government will prioritize policies to address gender inequity. Moreover, having more channels through which to lobby and advocate policies changes can lead to dilution and weaken efforts to promote positive change.



Federalism alone cannot guarantee gender equality, nor is it necessary to wait until federalism is fully implemented to work for more women's participation in political leadership. However, building a federal democratic union is key to ending 70 years of civil war.

Quota systems

An increasing number of countries, close to 100, have introduced various types of gender quotas for office and elections. Quota systems are particularly designed to address deep-rooted inequalities including the systematic exclusion of women.

As the constitution is the document which reflects the values and aspirations of a society, it should ensure equal representation of both genders at every level of all three branches of government: the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary.

In 2006, representatives of EAOs, those elected at the 1990 General Election and other democratic forces from liberated areas drafted a federal constitution. This constitution was based on eight principles, among which are “democracy, human rights, and gender equality”. Later, in 2011, the EAOs unanimously adopted a policy of at least 30% women's representation at every level of political negotiation.

As the constitution is the document which reflects the values and aspirations of a society, it should ensure equal representation of both genders at every level of all three branches of government: the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary.

Furthermore, **the state could promulgate an electoral law that political parties are only eligible to contest elections if they submit at least 30% of women candidates.** Such a proposal does not mean women can take up positions without being elected, but rather, enables them to get a foot on the first rung of the ladder.

In some advanced democracies, quota systems have been introduced by political parties themselves in order to strengthen democracy and to be more inclusive. Alternatively, **a quota system could be included in political party registration law, with a requirement of at least 30% women's representation at central executive committee, central committee, and at every level of decision-making.** As political parties recruit new members and select candidates for elections, they are responsible for ensuring more women are elected to parliaments.

Electoral systems

In addition to federal democracy and a quota system, proportional representation (PR) and closed party lists, could increase significantly the number of women in politics and leadership. Women have more chance to be elected using PR, rather than a first past the post (FPTP) system.

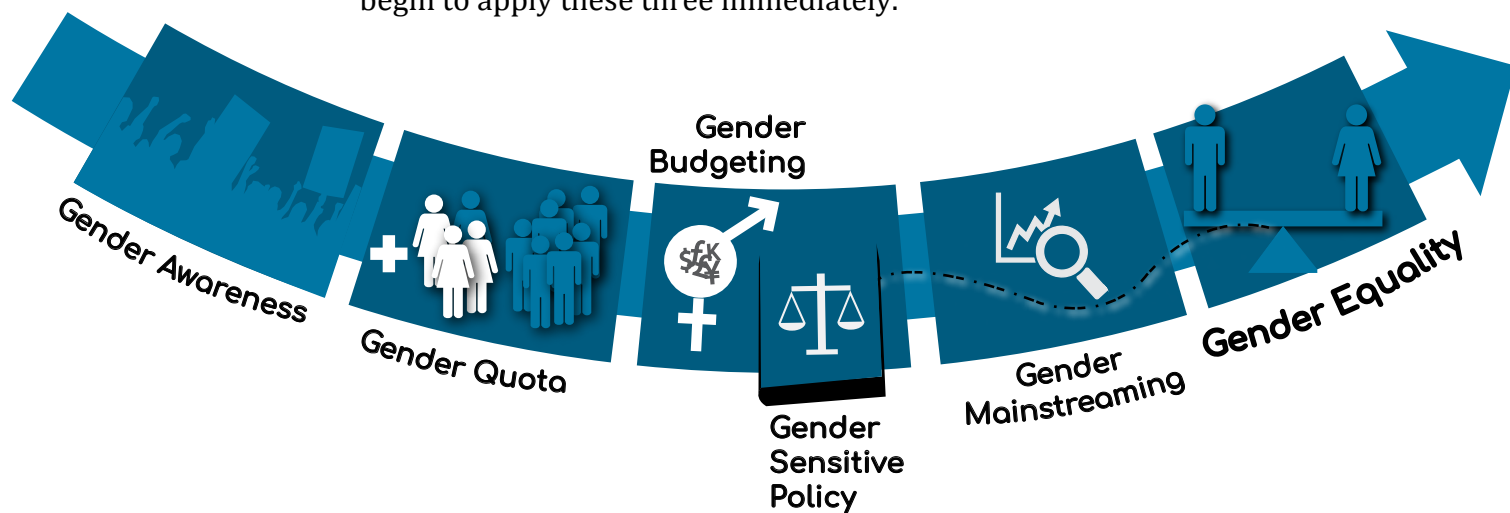
A quota system, proportional representation (PR) and closed party lists, could increase significantly the number of women in politics and leadership. Women have more chance to be elected using PR, rather than a first past the post (FPTP) system.

In eighteen countries which have bicameral parliaments, there are eight countries, which embrace a quota system of at least 30% women's participation in their parliaments and practise proportional representation in elections, while the others apply FPTP. In countries where PR is used, women parliamentarians comprise 33% and 34% in the lower and upper houses respectively, whereas in the others, women comprise 23% and 21% respectively.

Closed party lists mean that people vote for political parties rather than individual candidates. In such a system, the parties make a list of candidates who are then selected according to the ratio of votes won by that party. For example, Peru and Argentina both have a gender quota of at least 30% and a PR system. However, Peru, which practises the open lists system, has only 26% of women parliamentarians; in comparison, Argentina, which uses closed lists has 37% of women parliamentarians.

The closed party list system does not automatically guarantee equal representation following elections: only principled parties which adopt the 'zipper' system, where female and male candidates are paired, achieve this ideal.

Federalism, quotas and electoral systems will require constitutional and legal reforms. We now consider another three mechanisms which do not need to wait to bring about positive changes in the parliamentary process, peace negotiations, capacity building exercises, and other consultation processes. Government; parliaments; Tatmadaw; EAOs; political parties; CSOs, and the international community who are working to promote gender equality can begin to apply these three immediately.



Gender responsive budgeting

Gender responsive budgeting is a means for government to promote gender equality through budget policies and fiscal expenditure. It is a process designed to incorporate gender dimensions at all stages of the government's annual budget cycle. It aims to resolve the widening gap of gender inequality and to address women's underlying needs. Considering gender responsive concerns can lead to the following advantages:

- Realization of the country's commitment to international conventions
- Resolution of women's immediate rights and the advancement of women in the long term
- A just and prosperous society
- A lasting peace

Budgeting policy involves analyzing the different impacts on men and women and allocating resources accordingly. Sometimes targets will need to be set, e.g. equal school enrolment for girls, as well as directing funds more generally.

Our neighbor, India is a country with a wide gender equality gap which has started to implement gender responsive budgeting since the 2005-2006 fiscal year. India's gender budgeting policy comprises two parts: 'Women Specific Schemes', which have 100% allocation for women and 'Pro Women Schemes', where at least 30% of the allocation is for women.

In Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries with higher gender equality, there are two types of gender budgeting: specific programs and mainstreaming, which both lead to more efficient, accountable and transparent systems. Initially they planned to apply gender budgeting only temporarily, but as it is an efficient and more transparent allocation, as well as easy to assess impact, the policy has been embedded.

All 22 ministries of Burma/Myanmar's current government should, therefore, include analysis and assessment of all budget allocations for equality and impact. In addition, when state, region and local governments are allocated their budgets, women should be consulted to ensure their specific needs are addressed.

Gender sensitivity

When public policies take gender sensitivity into account, the needs of both women and men will be addressed.

Gender awareness is the ability of any individual to view society from the perspective of gender roles and how this affects women's needs in comparison to the needs of men. When public policies take gender sensitivity into account, the needs of both women and men will be addressed.

Moreover, policy makers should also identify the underlying causes of exclusion and address gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities. For example, cuts to the social welfare budget impact women and children disproportionately.

Gender mainstreaming

“Mainstreaming gender perspectives is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels.... The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for making women's and men's experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, and review of activities in all spheres: political, economic and social. When the cycle of inequality is broken and women and men benefit equally through government policies, we can say we have mainstreamed gender.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To all stakeholders

1.

- The establishment of a genuine federal union which guarantees self-determination and ethnic equality, including women's and ethnic minority representation, is a prerequisite to ending civil war and building a sustainable peace
- In the political sector of negotiation, gender equality and a commitment to 30 percent women's participation at every level of decision-making should be included as one of the federal principles
- In the peace process working committees, including the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC), "at least 30 percent women's participation at every level of peace dialogue" according to Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) Section 23 should be enforced
- When making policies on building and maintaining peace a gender perspective must be incorporated at every level
- Designated funding to fulfill women's specific needs should be allocated as part of peace building

2. Government and Parliaments (Hluttaws)

- In the constitution, a provision stating “there should be at least 30 percent women’s participation at every branch of government: legislative, executive and judicial” should be adopted
- To incorporate in election law the stipulation that, “at least of 30 percent of female candidates must be put forward”
- To adopt a Proportional Representation (PR) electoral system with more female and minority representation guaranteed
- In political party registration law, a specification of "at least of 30 percent of women’s leadership on the party's executive committee" should be included in order for it to be a registered political party
- All annual budgets should include 'gender responsive budgeting'
- All policy making must be gender sensitive
- Gender- based discrimination must be avoided when selecting and appointing ministers and directors of government's ministries and departments

3. To Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs)

- EAOs should adopt temporary measures to ensure more women’s participation in their military and administrative departments, including their executive committees
- EAOs must reduce gender discrimination in the designation and promotion of women officers
- EAOs should include more women delegates in work committees at different levels of the peace process

4. To Political Parties

- Political parties should recruit more female members and raise political awareness
- Political parties should design special programs which promote more women leaders at the village, township and state/region level executive committees and more women as chairs
- Political parties should include at least 30 percent of women as candidates to contest elections
- Political parties should allocate funding to increase the number of women candidates
- Political parties must have a gender policy

5. To Tatmadaw (Defence Forces)

- Tatmadaw must reduce gender discrimination in the designation and promotion of women officers
- Tatmadaw should include more women delegates in work committees at different levels of the peace process

6. To Civil Society Organizations

- As stakeholders in the peace process, CSOs should ensure more women's participation at their Township, State/Region, and National level committees and working committees
- More women's participation must be prioritized at different levels of the peace process e.g. setting agendas, choosing thematic issues, selecting lead discussants etc
- There should be more consultation and coordination with women's organizations and networks in different states/regions
- In proposing policies and budget setting, a gender perspective must be considered

7. To Media Organizations

- The Media need to portray women as agents of change who are working for peace, political and social improvement and not only as victims of war and conflict
- When presenting the news, there should be an emphasis on gender sensitive reporting
- As male and female perspectives are different, the media must ensure that all points of view are represented, whatever the topic
- Media agencies should encourage more female journalists

8. To the International Community

- The international community should support the country to fulfil its obligations on gender equality prescribed in international conventions including, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and UNSC Resolution No. 1325
- At least 15 percent of funding should be reserved for women in accordance with UNSC Resolution No. 1889
- When providing funding for peace-building, projects based on gender- equal strategies must be prioritized
- A minimum of 30 percent women's participation at every level of project activities must be specified as a criteria for peace funding,
- A Fund should be reserved for women's organizations and other agencies which focus on gender equality

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented the benefits of more women's participation in politics and decision-making. Organizations who believe in democratic principles have adopted a policy of gender equality and have been using different strategies to implement this policy.

Nevertheless, the level of women's participation in political leadership roles remains very low. Therefore, this paper has discussed legal, cultural and institutional barriers that are preventing more women's participation.

Moreover, the paper introduces different strategies that policy makers could adopt to promote gender equality. It also briefly discusses some of the potential shortcomings of these different strategies and how to best overcome them.

However, the scope of the paper was not wide enough to include a detailed action plan on how to systematically pursue each strategy. Nor was this paper able to provide empirical data showing how gender equality can bring about political and economic benefits and some of the key indicators for these benefits. This will need to be part of any additional or supplementary research to complement this initial research.

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