LIFT Forum 2019: Championing Equality: Women’s Empowerment In Myanmar

May Sabe Phyu • 13 June 2019
Introduction

- Growing Attention toward Gender Equality

But for Women in Myanmar many challenges remain:

- Preferences in inheritance and education, employment and politics – Men > Women

- Social, Traditional and Cultural Practices and Norms – Deeply Rooted and Internalized by Both Men and Women

- Culture and Religion – Used to legitimize different treatment of and opportunities available to men and women
Developments in Recent Years

- National Strategic Plan for Advancement of Women (NSPAW) (2013 – 2022)
- Myanmar National Committee on Women (MNCW) – Reformed – 2016 → Four Technical Working Groups
- Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP) (2018 – 2030)
  - National Indicator Framework – Gender Indicators
Recent Years

Percentage of Women Representation in Parliament (2011-2018)

Source: Central Statistical Organization (2019)
Opportunities

- Ratified CEDAW in 1997 – Concluding Observations
- Universal Periodic Review – Recommendations
- Beijing Platform for Action +25
- Sustainable Development Goals – Especially Goal 5

As an ASEAN member

- ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
- The ASEAN Committee on Women
Opportunities

- Public Dialogue about Gender Equality – attention toward the attainment of human rights and national development
- Ministries – opening up – to a certain extent
- Media – liberalization – partial (Opportunity Vs Challenge)
- NSPAW
- MNCW
- MSDP – at least 30% participation in peace dialogue
Challenges

Myanmar Constitution (2008)

- No sex discrimination in Myanmar citizens’ constitutional or legal rights to run for elected office, or to vote
- Dedicated to equal opportunities:
  “The Union shall not discriminate any citizen of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, based on race, birth, religion, official position, status, culture, sex and wealth.”

- However, “...nothing in this Section shall prevent appointment of men to the positions that are suitable for men only”
Challenges

- Qualifications of the President and Vice Presidents are that they
  “….shall be well acquainted with the affairs of the Union such as political, administrative, economic and military;”

- Misconceptions: Gender = Women

- Entrenched Social and Traditional Norms

- Political Will & Prioritization

- Limited Resources – Technical, Human Resources & Financial

- Scarcity of Gender Sensitive Policy, Laws and Procedures
How to Overcome

- Need to reframe “Gender” – Gender ≠ Female
- Institutional Mechanism for Gender Equality – needs strengthened
- Gender Sensitive Policies, Procedures and Laws – Reform, Revise, Abolish and Adopt, etc.
- Gender Responsive Budgeting
- Donors Agencies, Partners in Development & NGO/INGO/CSO
  - Awareness Raising – Various Stakeholders
  - Advocacy (Evidence Based) & Lobby
  - Technical, Human Resources & Financial Support – Contextualized Locally
  - Promote Men’s Engagement
Conclusions

• Increase attention towards Gender Equality
• Challenge discriminatory social and traditional norms and practices
• For women in Myanmar – still – many challenges, a long way to go
• Action – match with local needs and context
• Coordinated efforts between partners in development, donors, international and local organizations
• Effective institutional mechanism for Gender Equality – at all levels
• Gender Responsive Budgeting
Questions?

Thank You!