



The Asia Foundation

**Gender (in)Equality in the
Governance of Myanmar: The Present
Situation and Potential Strategies for
Change**

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Why does increasing the gender equality of participation matter?

- The gender equality of participation can affect:
 - The *equity* of decisions that are made – women and men typically have different preferences on policies and budgets, and in most contexts female leaders are more responsive to these preferences.
 - The *efficiency and effectiveness* of governance – potential aspects here include reduced corruption, improved rule compliance, and increased social capital.
 - Increasing the ability of women to participate in public decision-making can raise their *agency*, and therefore well-being.
 - It can also affect the *style* of governance, and women's perception of the *legitimacy* of governance institutions.
 - In future work it would be good to more fully integrate gender with age, class, ethnicity, religion, and location.

Why gender considerations matter for policy-making, budgeting and public service delivery (1)

- Gender inequalities in a country's economy, society, and access to public services are unfair and welfare reducing for the 'less equal' gender (typically women). They also serve to limit economic and social development in general. E.g.:
 - Inequality in inheritance and property rights reduces overall investment, and can make investment less efficient.
 - Failure to invest in public services that would reduce women's time constraints reduces their time for additional paid work, studying, and/or leisure.
 - Men and women typically spend income (from government transfers and remuneration for paid work) differently, and this affects investment in children.

Why gender considerations matter for policy-making, budgeting and public service delivery (2)

- Gender sensitive policy-making, budgeting and public-service delivery can raise welfare and economic growth by reducing and removing these inequalities.
- Appreciation of gender differences in access to services within a given country can also help to raise the efficiency and equitability of public-service delivery.

Methodology and Sources

- December 2015 and January 2016: conducted interviews in Yangon with 15 individuals from political parties, LNGOs, INGOs, UN agencies, and bilateral donors.
- These interviews provided a lot of useful information, but this report primarily draws on pre-existing datasets and research, most notably:
 - GEN's database of all the MPs elected in November 2015.
 - Information gathered last year as part of WON, ActionAid, CARE and OXFAM's research on Gender Responsive Budgeting in Myanmar.
 - Data on civil servants available from <http://mmsis.gov.mm/>
 - Various previously published reports relevant to gender and governance in Myanmar.

Women's and men's statistical representation in governance bodies (1)

- Women's electoral representation is now higher than ever before, but is still very low. Women now account for:
 - 13.6% of elected Union MPs (i.e. a little over 10% of total MPs).
 - 12.5% of elected State/Region MPs (i.e. $\geq 9.5\%$ of total MPs).
 - Highest is Mon – where women are 26.1% of elected MPs. Mon Parliament is also the only one to have a female Speaker
 - Women are now 2 of the 14 State/Region Chief Ministers (Tanintharyi Region and Kayin State)
 - No women MPs in Chin, Kayah and Rakhine Parliaments
 - 0.25% of VTAs (as of 2014)
- There are no women Township Administrators and very few women elected to Township Committees.

Women's and men's statistical representation in governance bodies (2)

- Of parties that won 7 seats or more, SNLD (16.7%) and NLD (15.1%) have the highest proportion of women MPs. PNO is the most electorally successful party to have no women MPs (they have 10 MPs in total).
- Women are generally poorly represented within party structures, although SNLD and NLD have higher than average levels of female representation within their parties.
- 52% of civil servants are female, but women are almost entirely excluded from DG and DDG positions. Big variance between ministries/state administrative bodies for gender balance of employees.

Female Representation in Selected State Administrative Bodies and Ministries, 2014

	% of Staff Who Are Female	% of Staff at Deputy Director Level and Above Who Are Female
Auditor General's Office	78.6	76.5
Min of Education	77.8	73.8
MOECA	23.1	13.4
President's Office	51.3	10.6
Home Affairs	20.6	4.5

Source: <http://mmsis.gov.mm/statHtml/statHtml.do> [accessed 22 October 2015]

Women's and men's statistical representation in governance bodies (3)

- Hitherto, women's statistical representation in the peace process has been very low. The 30% quota agreed at in the January 2016 NCA talks potentially represents a big change, although how this will be implemented remains unclear.
- Good data is lacking, but for public services provided entirely by communities, decision-making it still largely male-dominated.
- Women are extremely poorly represented in CFGs.
- NGOs and civil society offer relatively good opportunities for female participation in decision-making.

Key Influences on Participation

- Key influences that shape both the quantity and quality of men's and women's participation in the governance of Myanmar, include:
 - Time constraints and household bargaining power
 - Cultural biases in favour of male leadership
 - Women's travel being more restricted than men's
 - Family members' participation in politics
 - Existence/nonexistence of role models
- Gender differences in formal education do not appear to be a major barrier. However, women's historical exclusion from governance has limited their access to informal skill acquisition.

Recent and current efforts to make participation more gender equal (1)

- NSPAW (published 2013) calls for the improvement of, ‘...systems, structures and practices to ensure women’s equal participation in decision-making and leadership at all levels of society.’ However, NSPAW has had little impact so far.
- NCDDP includes a quota mandating 50:50 M:F representation on its Village Tract-level committees.
- Political parties have generally not done that much to raise women’s participation, although there are some limited exceptions (including NLD and SNLD).
- Many local and international development organisations have been working on “women’s leadership”, and the number doing so is expanding.

Potential approaches to make participation more gender equal (1)

- Changing social norms and ‘engaging men’:
 - There is increasing recognition of the need to ‘engage men’ as part of a strategy to relax the social and cultural constraints that impact on women’s participation.
 - However, how to effectively change social norms generally, and engage men in particular, is still only very imperfectly understood.
- Increasing interest in using media and music to convey messages and change social norms – however, again, what works is still not very well understood.

Potential approaches to make participation more gender equal (2)

- As more organisations start working on women and leadership/participation there are the usual risks of lack of coordination between implementing organisations, which is something donors need to watch out for.
- Our understanding of the relative importance of the factors that shape women's and men's ability to participate is still relatively poor. Going forward, it is important to improve our understanding of this, so efforts can be targeted more efficiently and effectively.

Potential approaches to make participation more gender equal (3)

- Local development programs – *who is making decisions and whose interests do they reflect? What can be done to make participation and decision-making more equal?*
- Quotas – so far these have only been used in Myanmar for the NCDDP. Can also be considered for application to one or more of: Union MPs, State/Region MPs, the elected committees at Township level, Village Tract Administrator, various committees at Village Tract and village levels.
- Reform rules governing local administration:
 - Institute minimum requirements for engagement between VT, village and (possibly) Township authorities and citizens – adopt policies to promote gender equality in citizen participation.
 - Introduce direct elections for VTA
 - Reinstate 100 HH Head/Village Head, and make it elected.

Overview of gender and PM, budgeting and PSD

- Legislative change: the draft PoVAW Law and the Land Policy offer some (limited) grounds for optimism. However, the '4 Bills' include provisions that are regressive for women's rights, and are in contradiction of CEDAW.
- Factors other than gender are clearly important, but it can be noted that budget allocations are more closely aligned with male than female preferences.
- We have very little data by which we can measure budget outputs and outcomes, but it can be noted that maternal mortality is very high, and men have preferential access to agricultural credit.
- Citizen participation and awareness in planning and budgeting is generally very low, and this is particularly acute for women.

Recent and current efforts to make PM, budgeting and PSD more gender-responsive (1)

- As previously noted NSPAW has so far had little impact on GoM's practical actions.
- Chin State Government's preparatory documents towards their five year development plan, 2016-21 are an extremely rare example of the government incorporating gender considerations into planning and policy-making, and costing these plans.
- The NLD, along with several other political parties, has a policy subcommittee for women's issues. However, even for such parties, there is low technical capacity for incorporating gender in policy-making, budgeting and public service delivery.

Recent and current efforts to make PM, budgeting and PSD more gender-responsive (2)

- Myanmar NGOs and international development organisations working on women's rights/gender issues have had some impact on policy, but have hitherto not been engaged in budgeting and have had only limited engagement on public service delivery.
- Myanmar NGOs and international development organisations that have been working on budgeting and public services have generally paid little attention to gender.
- A number of international and local NGOs that work on women's rights/gender equality are now taking an increasing interest in gender and budgeting, however many of these are inexperienced with the technical aspects of budget analysis.

Recent and current efforts to make PM, budgeting and PSD more gender-responsive (3)

- The World Bank plans to provide assistance to MoF and MoP to help them raise the voice of women and minorities in local level bottom-up planning, and to build the capacity of the Budget Department, ‘...to undertake basic analysis on the incidence of public spending across genders and ethnicities.’

Potential approaches to integrate gender with PM, budgeting and PSD (1)

- Increasing the gender equality of participation is highly likely to make policy-making, budgeting and public-service delivery more gender equal.
- NCDDP is the only 'Local Development Fund' that includes a strong commitment from GoM to enabling citizen participation in decision-making, and promoting gender equality of participation. Efforts should be made to: i) Persuade GoM to implement rules mandating improved citizen participation; ii) (as some NGOs and CSOs are already doing) work with local actors so that they take the initiative to improve citizen participation.

Potential approaches to integrate gender with PM, budgeting and PSD (2)

- Currently there is a low level of awareness within GoM (especially its male staff) of there being gender differences in policy preferences, budget preferences, or access to services. Raising this awareness is a vital first step.
- Gender budgeting exercises in most developing countries have not been particularly successful. Ultimately, it is something that can be quite easily fudged/dodged if it is imposed on unwilling government entities. Therefore such work should be targeted towards government entities that show an interest.
- In the long-run it is highly important for the Ministry of Finance and Planning to be engaged in gender budgeting work.

Potential approaches to integrate gender with PM, budgeting and PSD (3)

- As noted, many of the LNGOs and INGOs interested in gender budgeting lack technical experience on budgeting – there is a need to try and build such technical skills.
- NSPAW process needs to be revived and an implementation strategy finalised.
- GoM and development organisations need to collect better data on the impact of the services they provide (i.e. ‘outcomes’), and to make such information more widely available.