Women's Participation in
the Subnational Governance of Myanmar

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Preface

The Myanmar Development Resource Institute's Centre for Economic and Social Development (MDRI-CESD) and The Asia Foundation are pleased to present this third volume in the *Subnational Governance in Myanmar Discussion Paper Series*.

The pace of change in Myanmar is rapid and constantly evolving, and decentralization and local governance are issues of critical importance to the country's long-term development and priorities in the government's reform agenda. As such, there is a real need for timely research and analysis on key reform areas related to decentralization and local governance. As an extended collaboration between The Asia Foundation and MDRI-CESD, this series of discussion papers aims to provide Myanmar's policy-makers at national and local levels, civil society organizations, the business community, development partners, and other interested stakeholders with research findings on subnational governance issues that directly inform policy and reform processes.

Women's participation in the political life of Myanmar is gaining attention from policy makers and researchers but systematic data remains lacking. Analytical work done in other parts the world has shown that increased women's participation in political, social and economic life of a country can lead to significant improvements in equity and effectiveness of policies to the benefits of all stakeholders. As greater authority is being transferred to subnational governments in Myanmar leading to an expansion of roles of local authorities and decision-making, understanding the nature of women's participation in subnational governance institutions and processes is essential.

This paper outlines women's participation in the various forms of subnational governance in Myanmar, discuss why women's participation matters, and identifies the barriers and enabling factors to their participation. The findings are intended to inform discussion on this issue among the government, civil society, political parties, and development partners. The paper also highlights avenues for future research.

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MDRI-CESD   The Asia Foundation

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Executive Summary

Women's participation in governance has received increasing attention from international policy makers and researchers as a highly important issue on the grounds of both equity and improving the performance of governance. Hitherto, there has been relatively little research on this topic in Myanmar. This discussion paper builds on the existing research that has already been carried out to address three main research questions on the theme of women's participation in the subnational governance of Myanmar:

- What proportion of key decision-making governance positions at subnational level are occupied by women?
- Does women's participation in subnational governance structures matter?
- What are the barriers and enabling factors for women's participation in governance structures?

This paper conceives 'governance' broadly, and a variety of governance actors and institutions are examined. Outside of civil society and the judicial system, women's participation in subnational (and national) governance is found to be extremely limited. Women account for only 4.42% of MPs in Myanmar's national parliament. This figure is extremely low in comparison both with other ASEAN countries and globally. At the subnational level women's representation is even lower than at national level, with women accounting for only 2.83% of MPs at state and region level, 0% of administrators at township level, and 0.11% of village heads. Women generally have a secondary role within Myanmar's various armed groups and their associated political parties. Women's participation is also typically limited in other political parties, and religious organizations. Women's participation is highest within civil society, with women being engaged not only in large numbers here, but also often occupying senior positions with real decision-making power.

This paper presents evidence to strongly suggest that women in Myanmar have different preferences to men for which governance issues are most important, and what decisions ought to be made. Healthcare, education, sanitation, and microfinance are some of the issues on which women place greater priority. Evidence is currently sparse for Myanmar, but this paper suggests that women here also have different preferences for the regulation of social and intra-household behavior. This paper presents limited evidence to suggest that women decision makers in Myanmar are more responsive to the priorities of women citizens than male decision makers. This paper discusses ways in which increased levels of women's participation might be able to improve the quality of governance in Myanmar; for example, by reducing corruption, improving completion of projects and service delivery, and reducing conflict and discord.

Barriers to women's participation in subnational governance in Myanmar are found to include: a lack of experience and certain skills, low intra-household bargaining power, high time constraints, restrictions on women's travel, traditional norms that ascribe authority and glory to men over women, a lack of confidence, and a lack of acceptance of female leadership. However, enabling factors for women's participation in Myanmar include: a relatively high level of gender equality in formal educational attainment, the deliberate actions of certain governance actors to increase women's participation, and the women who are already in leadership positions inspiring and enabling other

women to follow in their footsteps. It is also found that a number of the barriers to women's participation are starting to fall.

There is still much scope for Myanmar's government, and other governance actors, to take positive action to increase women's participation in subnational governance. In so doing the country can meet some of its outstanding obligations as a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and commitments under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Key policy recommendations derived from this research are:

- The government needs to amend its laws to increase its compliance with CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- The government should seriously consider introducing a quota system that mandates a minimum proportion of women in certain elected positions, or on political parties' candidate lists.
- Various governance actors should work together to increase the availability of gender awareness training, and training in relevant specific skills, to women across Myanmar. Further, more needs to be done to deliver effective gender awareness training to men.
- Skills and leadership trainings offered by the government and non-government actors need to be made equally accessible to women as they are to men. Important considerations in this regard include ensuring that trainings are offered at times when women are able to attend, and if long distance travel is required, that safe means of travel (and accommodation if needed) are provided.
- INGOs, LNGOs, and other governance actors (e.g. Department for Rural Development), who are actively working to increase women's participation in governance in Myanmar, should work together with researchers to conduct rigorous monitoring and evaluation of their projects.
- Certain improvements in basic infrastructure, most pressingly ensuring that more households have electricity, would reduce women's time constraints. Efforts to increase the number of households in Myanmar with access to electricity should be supported by all actors seeking to improve women's well-being and participation in public life.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 1 provides an introduction and overview of the paper; Section 2 describes the data and methodology used; Section 3 outlines the proportion of women in certain positions in subnational (and national) governance structures; Section 4 discusses why women's participation in subnational governance structures and processes matters; Section 5 examines the barriers and enabling factors currently present for women's participation in subnational governance structures and processes in Myanmar; Section 6 concludes with recommendations for how women's participation could be raised.

ONE: Introduction

1.1 Background

Certain historical events and current indicators might be taken to suggest a high degree of gender equality in Myanmar society, and women having the opportunity to actively participate in governance. In 1935 Myanmar became the second country in what is now ASEAN to grant women the right to vote, and since then women have had constitutional rights of equal participation in politics.[1] Bamar[a] women have long had the legal right to division of property in divorce and equal rights of inheritance,[2] and according to statutory law, all Myanmar citizens also enjoy this provision.[3] The ratio of girls and boys enrolled in both primary and secondary schools is close to parity,[4] and in 2009-10 over 87% of females aged 15-24 were found to be literate.[5] In 2010 women were found to account for almost 45% of employment in the non-agricultural sector.[6] And, Aung San Suu Kyi, the country's most famous politician, and leader of the party many expect to win the most votes in the 2015 elections,[7] is a woman. Speaking in 2013, U Soe Maung, Minister of the President's Office, stated that:

> In Myanmar society, there is traditionally little gender discrimination. It is better than other Asian countries... women have equal rights with men not only according to the constitution but also by tradition.[8]

However, this paper contributes to the growing body of evidence showing that women's meaningful participation in governance in Myanmar remains extremely low, and argues that multiple forms of gender discrimination interact to severely curtail women's ability to participate.

1.2 Research Questions

This paper addresses three main research questions pertinent to women's participation in the subnational governance of Myanmar:

- What proportion of key decision-making governance positions at subnational level are occupied by women? (Section 3)
- Does women's participation in subnational governance structures matter? (Section 4)
- What are the barriers and enabling factors for women's participation in governance structures? (Section 5)

1.3 Policy and Legal Framework

Myanmar is committed to several international policy initiatives aimed at ending gender discrimination and promoting women's participation in public life. In 1997 Myanmar became a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and is also committed to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.[9] Under CEDAW Myanmar is committed to undertake a series of measures to help end all discrimination against women, including: abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women; and, ensure the elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.[10] A commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action involves aiming at, '[R]emoving all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural, and political

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[a] 'Bamar' are the majority ethnic group in Myanmar.

decision-making.'[11] Drawing on Myanmar's obligations to these international policy initiatives, the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women, 2013-2022, produced by the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs and the Department of Social Welfare argues that it is imperative:

> [T]o improve systems, structures and practices to ensure women's equal participation in decision-making and leadership at all levels of society.[12]

1.4 Governance Actors in Myanmar

In this paper 'governance' is interpreted broadly to include a wide range of organizations that are involved in providing goods and services, and creating and enforcing rules and regulations, to individuals, households and communities in Myanmar. A non-exhaustive list for Myanmar includes:

- Government (at state and region, district, township, and ward/village Levels)
- Community-based organizations (CBOs),local non-governmental organizations (LNGOs), and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs)
- UN agencies
- International financial institutions, e.g. World Bank
- Religious institutions
- Government and non-government armed groups
- Informal village meetings and village bodies
- Community forestry groups
- Government-linked organizations, e.g. Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA), Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAF)
- The judicial system

This discussion paper combines previously published data with new data to give a broadly indicative picture of women's participation in various subnational public decision-making institutions and processes in Myanmar. The situation in Kayin and Kachin States receives particular attention, but evidence and interpretation is provided that covers all states and regions in Myanmar. Aside from a few reports that have primarily or exclusively focused on women's participation in village-level governance, [13] there has hitherto been very little published work on women's participation in subnational governance in Myanmar. This paper also contributes to the public knowledge base by examining the key mechanisms through which women's participation in governance is promoted and hindered in this country, and whether women's participation in governance matters.

TWO: Concepts, Data, and Methodology

This paper assesses women's level of participation in subnational governance structures in Myanmar, whether this affects the governance decisions that get made and how governance actors behave, and what determines the level of women's participation. The paper is intended to provide information on women's participation in subnational governance in Myanmar, and promote discussion on this topic. Given the limited funds and time available to conduct the research for this paper, together with the lack of existing data, this paper cannot provide a comprehensive treatment of all of the issues related to women's participation in subnational governance in Myanmar. However, many of the most important issues are covered, and evidence is presented that is broadly indicative of the current situation in Myanmar. In so doing, this paper highlights key areas of policy action, and avenues for future research, in what has hitherto been a neglected topic.

It is important to understand that women's level of participation cannot be judged solely on the number or proportion of women within a particular institution, or even the number of women in a particular position within that institution. An individual can have a level of participation ranging from as low as being recorded as a member of the institution but having no input into decision making, or even awareness of the decisions being made (nominal participation); to as high as having considerable voice and influence, and holding a key decision-making position (interactive/empowering participation).[b]

Field research was conducted for this paper in Kachin State, Kayin State, Yangon (city), and Naypyitaw from February to May 2014. This research primarily consisted of interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). This paper also presents previously unpublished data on the number of women employed as village/ward and township administrators—this data was provided by the General Administrative Department (GAD).

Interviewees were men and women who worked for CBOs, LNGOs, INGOS, UN agencies, religious organizations, political parties, and government. Interviewees were chosen on the basis of them having particular knowledge deemed to be useful for this study. FGD participants were women aged 30-50 with an education level no higher than eighth standard. For further description of the Interview and FGD processes please refer to Appendix 3.

The original research conducted in Kachin and Kayin States gives an understanding of the situation pertaining in those states, and is primarily focused on the majority ethnic groups in the respective states (i.e. ethnic Kachin and Kayin). In Yangon, although two of the interviews (See Appendix 1: IYN6 and IYN7) and the FGD provide insight to conditions specific to Yangon city, most of the research was

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[b] Various categorizations of levels of participation can be used. Bina Agarwal suggests the following scale (from lowest to highest): 1) 'nominal' participation - membership in the group but nothing more; 2) 'passive' participation - being informed of decisions after the decisions have been made; 3) 'consultative' participation - being asked an opinion in specific matters without guarantee of influencing the decisions; 4) 'activity-specific' participation - being asked to (or volunteering to) undertake specific tasks; 5) 'active' participation - expressing opinions, whether or not specifically requested to do so, or taking initiative of other sorts; and 6) 'interactive/empowering' participation - having voice and influence in the group's decisions, holding key decision-making positions. See, Bina Agarwal, 'Does Women's Proportional Strength Affect Their Participation? Governing Local Forests in South Asia', *World Development*, 38 (2010), p.101.

targeted at gaining a picture of the situation across Myanmar's diverse states and regions. The same is true of the research in Naypyitaw.

Choosing Kachin and Kayin States as areas of particular focus was not based on any claims to national representativeness. Rather, it was driven by prior awareness of particularly interesting phenomena related to women's governance in Myanmar occurring in these states: In the case of Kachin State, what is referred to here as 'absent men' (see below, Section 5.3); and in the case of Kayin State, the increasing prevalence of women village heads in certain areas since the late 1980s (see below, Section 3.2). There are considerable differences in the level of gender egalitarianism and fluidity of gender roles in traditional Kachin and Kayin culture (traditional Kachin culture generally scores much lower on these aspects than Kayin, see below, Sections 4 and 5). This paper is able to explore how these differences, but also the many similarities, affect women's participation in the governance of these societies today.

Quantitative data on certain forms of women's time use, the proportion of households headed by females, and male and female literacy rates, is taken from the Integrated Household Living Conditions Assessment survey (IHLCA) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). Both of these are household surveys, conducted in 2009-10, that covered all states and regions, and for which the sample was statistically representative of the vast majority of Myanmar's population.[c]

Of the existing published work on women and subnational governance in Myanmar, ActionAid, CARE, and OXFAM's 2011 study (hereafter referred to as 'ActionAid') was of particular use and is cited frequently here. The elements of ActionAid's study cited in this paper were based on FGDs and interviews with male and female leaders and members of CBOs in 28 villages spread across 12 townships in Rakhine State, Kachin State, Kayah State, northern Shan State, Magway Region, Mandalay Region, and Ayeyarwady Region. Their field research was carried out from November 2010 to January 2011.[14] A 2011 report published by the Gender and Development Initiative (GDI), and a 2006 report authored by Reid Smith, focus on gender relations in rural areas of Myanmar.[d] All of these reports cover various regions (areas in which ethnic Bamar constitute the majority of the population), and states (areas in which various ethnic minorities predominate). By making frequent reference in this paper to the findings of these studies it has been possible to give a broad analysis of the situation across Myanmar's states and regions. And, the rural focus of these studies helps to compensate for any urban bias that may be present in the original research carried out [see Appendix 3].

When drawing lessons from the international literature that can be applied to Myanmar, particularly frequent reference is made to studies on India. It is important to be clear that this does not mean it is assumed that gender relations in Myanmar, and the processes by which women's level of participation in governance are determined, are the same in Myanmar as in India. There are considerable

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[c] For both surveys some parts of certain states and regions were not included in the sample due to security issues, accessibility issues, and/or the dislocation caused by Cyclone Nargis. As a result, these areas were not included in the sample survey, and so the surveys are not fully representative of all of the population in Myanmar. See, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, Ministry of Health and UNICEF, p.4; Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and UNDP, *Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar (2009-2010): Technical Report* (Yangon, June 2011), pp.1, 9.

[d] N.b. The Gender and Development Initiative report presents findings from Ayeyarwady Region, Shan State, Rakhine State and Kachin State. Reid Smith's report presents findings from Ayeyarwady Region, Shan State, Rakhine State, Chin State and Kachin State. The Gender and Development Initiative, p.13; Reid Smith, pp.3-4.

differences between the countries, and indeed, there is great diversity within both India and Myanmar in this regard.[e] However, a large amount of high quality and highly detailed research has been published on women and local governance in India in the last decade, and many lessons can be drawn for Myanmar from this literature.[15f]

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[e] For Myanmar, see Sections 4 and 5 below. For India, see, Wendy Janssens, 'Women's Empowerment and the Creation of Social Capital in Indian Villages', *World Development*, 38 (2010), pp.975-76.

[f] In 1993 a Constitutional Amendment in India devolved more power to village councils (the equivalent of Myanmar's village administration offices) and required that in one-third of villages the position of village head be reserved for women. The villages in which the position of village head is reserved for women are randomly selected at each election cycle. The randomness of the selection process enables researchers to have much greater certainty in being able to establish 'causation' when examining differences in issues such as: the behavior of women and men leaders (including their respective levels of corruption); the quality, quantity, and type of public goods and services provided in villages with men and women chiefs; and reporting of, and responses to, crimes against women. As a result, in the last decade a lot of high quality detailed research has been published on women and local governance in India, which can inform research and the policy-making process elsewhere.

THREE: Women's Participation in Myanmar's Governance Structures

3.1 Women's Representation in Government Structures

Table 1: Women's Representation in Myanmar's Union (National) Level Parliament[g]

	Constituencies (N)	Elected Seats (N)	Military Appointees (N)	Elected Seats + Appointees (N)	Women (N)	W as % of elected seats	W as % of all MPs
Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House)	330	322	110	432	25	7.76	5.79
Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House)	168	168	56	224	4	2.38	1.79
Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Upper and Lower Houses Combined)	498	490	166	656	29	5.92	4.42

Source: Adapted from Myanmar: Women in Parliament 2012 (Phan Tee Eain& The Gender Equality Network, October 2012

At the union level, women's participation in elections, parliament, and the executive is very low. In the 2010 national elections women accounted for less than 4% of the candidates.[16] As Table 1 shows, women currently make up less than 6% of the total elected members of Myanmar's Lower and Upper Houses. When military appointees are accounted for, women's representation falls to 4.42%.[17] Women are particularly poorly represented in the Upper House, accounting for only 1.79% of the representatives in that chamber. Women's representation as MPs carries over into their low representation as ministers—out of a total of 33 ministries only two are led by women (the Ministry for Education; and the Ministry for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement).[18]

Figure 1 shows that women's representation in the national-level legislature in Myanmar is extremely low compared to other ASEAN countries.[19] The next lowest level of women's representation in the national lower or single house is found in Malaysia, but even there women's representation is almost 80% higher than it is in Myanmar. And, women's low representation in Malaysia's Lower House is counterbalanced to a degree by their relatively high representation in the Upper House (27.1% of members),[20] whereas the opposite is true for Myanmar (1.79% of members). In five ASEAN countries women account for more than 20% of the members of the national lower or single house (Philippines, Singapore, Lao PDR, Vietnam, and Cambodia).

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[g] Note that in eight constituencies it has not been possible to hold elections, hence the discrepancy between the number of constituencies and number of elected members.

Figure 1: Women's Representation in Houses of National-Level Parliaments of ASEAN Countries[h]
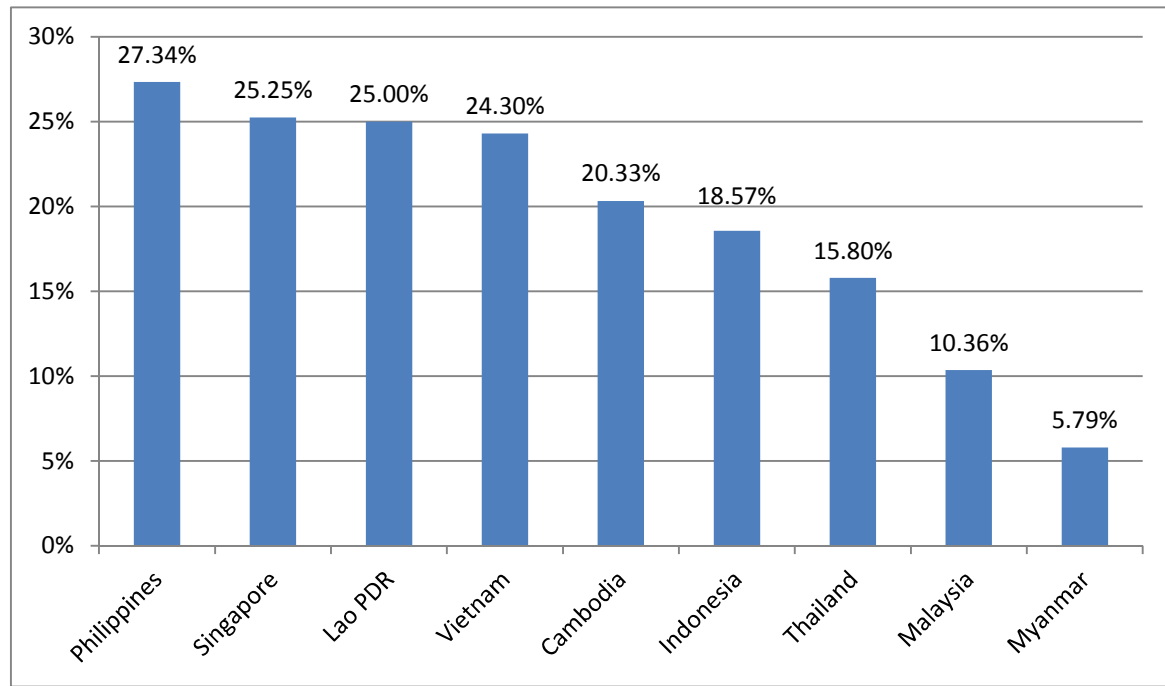
Sources: Adapted from Inter-Parliamentary Union Website (http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm) [accessed 10th January 2014]; Table 1, above.

Figure 2 presents data on women's representation in selected non-ASEAN countries for the sake of comparison. It is clear from this data that it is not only relative to other ASEAN countries that the proportion of women in Myanmar's national Parliament is very low. According to data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union database that ranks 189 countries around the globe by the proportion of the members in the national-level Lower or Single House that are women, Myanmar ranks 170th.[i]

Women's level of representation in the most important decision-making positions is even lower at subnational level than it is at national level. Women account for only 25 of the 883 MPs across the states and regions (2.83%). And they account for only 4 of the 169 state and region ministers (2.37%) (see Table 2). There are six states and regions (Chin, Kayah, Kayin and Mon States; and Sagaing and Tanintharyi Regions) that do not have any female MPs at all (see Table 3). The state and region parliaments that have women ministers are: Kachin State (Minister for Social Affairs; and, Minister for Shan National Race Affairs); Yangon Region (Minister for Finance); and Ayeyarwady Region (Minister for Social Affairs).

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[h] N.b. Brunei is not included in this table because it does not have an elected parliament.
[i] N.b. note that on the Inter-Parliamentary Union database itself Myanmar is ranked one place lower than we have stated here (i.e. just below, rather than just above, Sri Lanka). This difference is because the Inter-Parliamentary Union data for Myanmar is based on the results of the 2010 elections, and, unlike the data we present above in Table 1, does not account for the slight increase in female representation that occurred as a result of the 2012 by-elections.

Figure 2: Women's Representation in Lower or Single Houses of National Level Parliaments in Myanmar and Selected Other Countries[j]
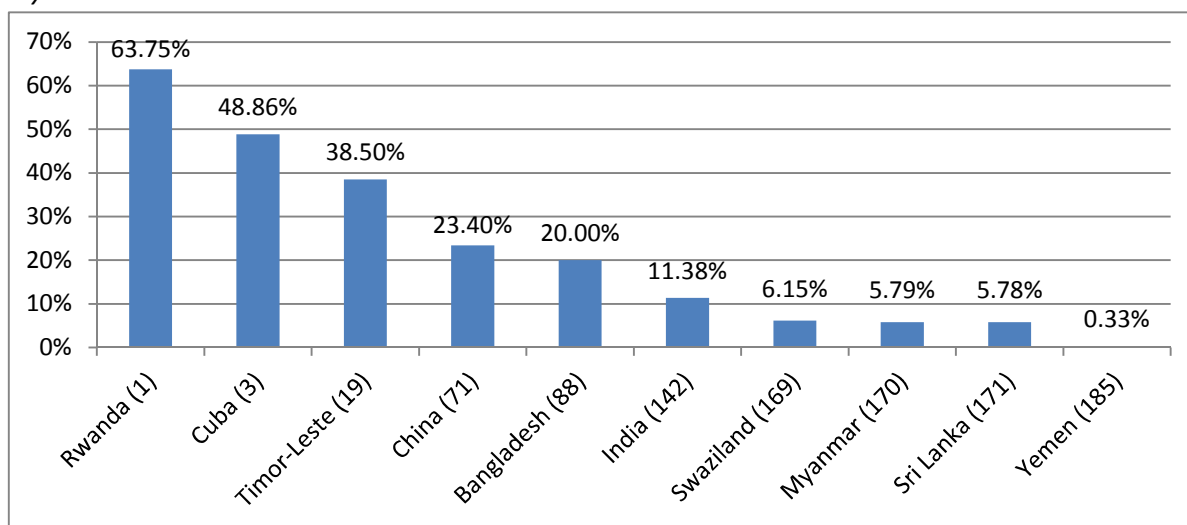
N.b. the global ranking of each country is given in brackets. Sources: Adapted from Inter-Parliamentary Union Website (http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm) [accessed 10th January 2014]; Table 1, above.

There are no women township administrators anywhere in Myanmar (see Table 2). Township administrators are the key decision-makers at township level, and are appointed by the GAD, rather than being elected as are most of the state and region MPs and ministers, and all of the ward/village tract administrators.[21] In an interview a senior national-level GAD official stated that while there are no rules prohibiting women from becoming township administrators, and, '[I]t is possible that women may become township administrators in the future ... this will take time.' The interviewee also reported that there are very few women in decision-making positions anywhere in the GAD.[22] This absence from decision-making positions is striking given that women make up, on average, 38% of GAD staff below 'officer' level in the state and region, township, and ward/village tract administrations.[23k]

Table 2: Women's Representation in Key Positions of Myanmar's Subnational Government[l]

Level of Government	Position	Total N	Women	Women as % of Total
State and region	MPs	883	25	2.83
	Ministers	169	4	2.37
Township	Administrators	330	0	0.00
Ward/Village Tract	Administrators	16743	19	0.11

Sources: Data provided to the author by GAD, 5th March 2014; Nixon and others, pp.55, 92

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[j] N.b. The Inter-Parliamentary Union database lists four countries that have no female MPs, and we accord them a rank of joint-186th. These countries are: the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Qatar, and Vanautu.

[k] Figures supplied to the author by GAD, 5th March 2014. Unfortunately, the author of this paper does not have disaggregated data that would make it possible to provide separate figures for the proportion of staff that are women at each of the state and region, township, and ward/village tract levels.

[l] N.b. the author regrets that he does not have any relevant data at district level that can be included in this table.

Table 3: Women's Representation In Myanmar's State and Region Parliaments

State/ Region	Total MPs (N)	Elected MPs (N)	Military MPs (N)	Women MPs (N)	W as % of elected MPs	W as % of all MPs	Total Cabinet Members (N)	W Cabinet Members (N)
Shan	143	107	36	8	7.48%	5.59%	17	0
Yangon	123	92	31	6	6.52%	4.88%	12	1
Ayeyarwady	72	54	18	3	5.56%	4.17%	12	1
Bago	76	57	19	3	5.26%	3.95%	11	0
Kachin	51	38	13	2	5.26%	3.92%	14	2
Rakhine	47	35	12	1	2.86%	2.13%	11	0
Magway	68	51	17	1	1.96%	1.47%	11	0
Mandalay	76	57	19	1	1.75%	1.32%	11	0
Chin	24	18	6	0	0.00%	0.00%	10	0
Kayah	20	15	5	0	0.00%	0.00%	11	0
Kayin	23	17	6	0	0.00%	0.00%	13	0
Mon	31	23	8	0	0.00%	0.00%	13	0
Sagaing	101	76	25	0	0.00%	0.00%	12	0
Tanintharyi	28	21	7	0	0.00%	0.00%	11	0
Total	883	661	222	25	3.78%	2.83%	169	4

Source: Adapted from Nixon and others, pp.55, 92.

Women account for only 19 of the 16,743 ward/village tract administrators in government-controlled areas of Myanmar (see Table 2). These women ward/village tract administrators are found in Kayin State (9); Magway Region (5); Kachin State (2); Chin State (1); Tanitharyi Region (1); and Yangon Region (1). In total, they account for only 0.11% of all of the ward/village tract administrators in Myanmar. It is important to note that this data is for government-controlled areas of Myanmar only. Interviewees in Kayin State reported that women village heads were particularly common in non-government-controlled areas of that State, and participants in one FGD estimated that women account for approximately 30-40% of village heads in the largely non-government controlled Hpapun Township.[24] An interviewee said that women village heads are also very common in Kawkareik Township.[25] The author of this paper is unaware of women village heads being present in non-government-controlled areas of other ethnic states, but does not have any evidence to confirm that they are not present in these areas. If the data on ward/village tract administrators included non-government-controlled areas, the proportion of women would undoubtedly increase, but given that it seems women village heads are only present in significant proportions in certain areas of Kayin State, the national average would remain extremely low.[m]

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[m] There are no reliable population figures currently available for Myanmar. However, it can be confidently asserted that the population of Kayin State is considerably less than 10% of the total population of Myanmar. Further, it is only in a few townships in Kayin State that female village heads are commonplace. For estimates of population by State and Region in Myanmar, see, Hamish Nixon and others, *State and Region Governments in Myanmar* (MDRI-CESD - The Asia Foundation, 2013), p.11.

Table 4: Positions Held in 23 Myanmar Village Peace and Development Councils by Gender (2011)[n]

Position	Male	Female
10-Household Leader	42	
Chairman	20	
Member	13	1
100-Household Leader	14	
Secretary	14	
Clerical Staff	4	1
Joint-Secretary		1
Auditor	1	
Volunteer	1	
Total	109	3

Source: Löfving, p.40.

ActionAid's 2011 study included a mapping exercise of 23 village peace and development councils in their survey areas. Of the total 109 officeholders across the 23 councils, they found that only three were women, and these women had positions with very little authority. ActionAid's findings are shown here in Table 4. In one of the Kachin State FGDs carried out for this paper the participants described how their village administration office[o] had two women out of a total of five officeholders.[26] This is a relatively high number, but it should be noted that one of these women held the position of 'key holder', a position with no decision-making power; whilst the other held the position of 'treasurer' - a position that in Myanmar is strongly stereotyped as a female occupation.[p]

3.2 Women's Representation in Non-Government Governance Institutions

After being formally excluded for more than 50 years, in October 2013 the rules were changed to allow women to join the *Tatmadaw.*[27] Nevertheless, it seems highly unlikely that women will fill any senior positions in this highly powerful institution in the short- or medium-term. In non-government armed groups and their associated political parties women typically have a limited role, and are generally excluded from the highest positions. However, there are a few exceptions: Naw Zipporah Sein (General Secretary of the Karen National Union) is the most prominent, but Mi Sardar (Central Committee Member of the New Mon State Party), and Maw Oo Myah (Religious and Cultural Minister of the Karenni National Progressive Party) are also worthy of mention. All of these women are members of the negotiation teams representing their organizations in the current ceasefire talks.[28]

Kachin Women's Peace Network was founded in April 2012, with one of its primary goals being to end Kachin women's hitherto total exclusion from the peace process.[29] May Sabe Phyu, Coordinator for

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[n] N.b. the number of positions on a VPDC varied between villages in the sample, ranging from 2-10.

[o] N.b. 'village administration offices' replaced 'village peace and development councils ' in 2012.

[p] In all of the interviews conducted with INGOs, NGOs, and CBOs in which we discussed organizational structure, and the allocation of jobs to men and women within the organization, all of the finance staff were reported to be female (see Interviews IKC6, IKC7, IYN7, and IYN12). In Kachin State Democracy Party the only female Central Executive Committee member with a specific title is 'Treasurer' (see, Interview IKC9). In the village committees set up to interact with Community Health and Development, a NGO that provides health support to villages in remote areas of Kachin State, all have a woman as treasurer.

Kachin Women's Peace Network, described how they have made some progress in this regard with the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO)/Kachin Independence Army (KIA); and one-third of the KIA's technical advisory team for the ceasefire talks are now women. However, she also highlighted that there are still no Kachin women actually present at the negotiating table, and that the government has shown no meaningful interest in involving women in the peace process.[30]

It was beyond the scope of the research carried out for this paper to conduct a comprehensive or representative assessment of women's participation across all of the political parties now in existence in Myanmar. However, Dr Tu Ja, Chairman of the recently registered (December 2013) Kachin State Democracy Party, was one of the political party members interviewed. He stated that men and women have the same rights and opportunities to participate in the Kachin State Democracy Party, and that almost half of their members are women.[q] This is well above the global average, with women's political party affiliation rates typically being around half of those of men.[31] However, it should be noted that women's level of representation is not constant at all levels of the Kachin State Democracy Party. Only 'around 20-25' of the 69 Central Committee members, and 5 of the 21 Central Executive Committee, are women. Of the women members of the Central Executive Committee only one had a specific position ('Treasurer'); while the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, General Secretary, and Secretary are all filled by men.[32]

As is the case in most countries, women's level of activity and leadership in Myanmar is higher in the spheres of civil society and community activism, than in 'formal politics'.[33] Women in Myanmar generally tend to have strong representation in CBOs, LNGOs, and INGOs working on development issues, and the interviewees from these organizations reported considerable female representation at all levels of the organization.[34] This was particularly the case in Kachin State where women typically account for the majority of CBO, LNGO and INGO staff, and also account for a high proportion of senior staff.[r] The Community Development Department of the Kachin Baptist Convention also employs high proportions of women, with approximately two-thirds of its 35 staff members being female. However, women's representation in key decision-making roles is relatively low here, with women accounting for only two of the six key decision-making positions.[35] Several interviewees in Kachin State reported that women's opportunities for active participation in decision-making there are highest in NGOs and civil society, lowest in government, and somewhere in between for political parties and church-led social organizations.[36] The evidence presented in this section supports this view.

The development activities of CBOs, LNGOs, and INGOs often involve the creation of village-level committees to set priorities and manage implementation. Myanmar women's opportunities for

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[q] At the time of the interview the interviewee stated that the party had more than 800 members. Interview IKC9.

[r] For example, in METTA's Myitkyina office approximately 60% of the staff are female. The head person is a woman, and women are strongly represented in other senior positions. Community Health and Development was founded by a woman who continues to be head of the organization, and although they now have a roughly equal gender balance they find it much more difficult to find good male staff than female staff(see interviews IKC4 and IKC6). The non-governmental organizations that we spoke to that work specifically on women's issues had all-female staff at the top levels of the organization, and all or nearly all female members (see interviews IKC5, IKY4, IYN1, IYN2, IYN4, and IYN9). However, it should be noted that the chief executive of the Gender Development Initiative, a prominent Myanmar NGO working on women's and gender issues, is male. See, 'Within the Political Structure, Women Are Treated as Decorative', *The Irrawaddy Magazine*, 27 January 2014 <http://www.irrawaddy.org/interview/within-political-structure-women-treated-decorative.html> [accessed 16 May 2014].

participation are typically higher in these committees than in village administration offices. [37] However, even here, men disproportionately hold key decision-making positions such as chairperson and secretary.[38] And, it should be noted that women being present in committees does not necessarily entail them having freedom of decision-making in the sphere of activity the committee is involved in. For example, an interviewee reported that it is mostly women who are involved in the meetings and activities of the Kachin Baptist Convention's rice bank program, but since it is generally men who have ownership of the rice, they are the ones who possess ultimate decision-making power regarding how the rice is used.[39] It is also very important to note that women are typically much less vocal in committee meetings than men, which negatively impacts on their ability to influence decisions - this is discussed more fully below, in Section 5.

Despite the growth of officially registered community forestry groups in Myanmar being retarded by the complicated nature of the registration and reporting process, there are now 574 community forestry groups across the country, and they are particularly common in Kachin State and northern Shan State.[40] As Bina Agarwal has convincingly shown in her studies of community forestry groups in India and Nepal, how community forestry groups are managed has a considerable impact on women's lives, and a lack of female representation in these organizations negatively impacts on women's perspectives being heard in the decision-making process.[41] The importance of improving women's participation in community forestry groups in Myanmar was noted in a 2011 report,[42] but women's participation in these committees remains very low,[43] and the author of this paper is unaware of any concerted efforts to address this issue.

MMCWA and MWAF are nationwide government-linked organizations that are focused on addressing the needs of women, and are present at ward/village tract, township, state and region, and union levels. MWAF's mission is, '[T]o promote the welfare and advancement of women with the aim to enable them to participate fully in its national development.'[44] The creation of MWAF, and the activities they carry out, has been praised by the UN CEDAW committee.[45] MMCWA's mission is,'[T]o serve the Myanmar Society in promoting the health and well-being of mothers and child with the aim to improve the quality of life of the people [sic].'[46] The organization claimed, as of December 2011, to have approximately 14 million voluntary members.[47]

The large scale of MWAF and MMCWA, and the fact that they are women-only organizations, provides women with opportunities to take on decision-making roles at the community level and above. However, one interviewee stated that the majority of MWAF and MMCWA staff are chosen because of who their husband is (e.g. village administrator, township administrator, state/region chief minister), rather than it being strictly on merit.[48] As is discussed below in Section 4, women being appointed to decision-making positions on the basis of male patronage tends to limit their ability to act in the interests of women. Additionally, women obtaining governance roles based on their marriage or family relations can prevent inclusive decision-making that goes beyond local elite circles.

Unfortunately, in the course of the research carried out for this paper it was not possible to meet with anyone from MWAF or MMCWA and there is limited information online or in previous publications that describes these organizations' activities. Most of the people interviewed for this paper did not mention either of these organizations. One interviewee in Kayin State, who is active in several women's organizations there, stated that she was not exactly sure of what activities MWAF carry out in Kayin State.[49] Participants in a Kayin State FGD described how although MMCWA is present in their

village, they are not very active.[50] FGD participants from a village in Kachin State that has an ethnic make-up of approximately one-third Kachin, and two-thirds Bamar, reported that it was mostly Bamar people in their village that interacted with MWAF, and that no ethnic Kachin were 'active' members (although some were nominal members).[51] The evidence presented here on MWAF and MMCWA is extremely limited, and more research is required to gain an understanding of exactly how these organizations operate, and what this means for Myanmar women's ability to participate in governance decision-making.

Women account for nearly 40% of judges in state and region courts and nearly 50% of judges and judicial officers at district and township level.[52] This suggests high levels of women's participation in the judicial system at subnational level; however, further research on the position of these women within the various judicial hierarchies, and women in the judiciary more broadly, is required to gain a better understanding of what role and influence these women have.

FOUR: Why Women's Participation in Governance Structures Matters

The World Bank's *2012 World Development Report* convincingly argues that women's ability to have a voice in society and policy is a crucial aspect of their agency. Following Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's pioneering work on 'capabilities', agency is held to have intrinsic relevance for women's individual well-being and quality of life, with a person's ability to make effective choices and exercise control over their own life being a key dimension of well-being.[53] Ensuring that women's voice is heard is thus essential from an *equity* perspective. Women's ability to contribute to governance decision-making also matters from an *efficiency* perspective: i) women typically have greater knowledge than men on a variety of issues (especially those issues that are related to activities women spend the most time engaged in relative to men), enabling them to contribute vital knowledge to the decision-making process; ii) involving women (or other excluded groups) in the decision-making process increases compliance with the decisions/rules that are made.[54]

The first part of this section (Section 4.1) argues that men and women in Myanmar have different preferences for governance decision-making, thus emphasizing the need for women's voices to be heard for governance to be equitable. The second part of this section (Section 4.2) discusses whether women in governance behave differently to men, with this being relevant in terms of both efficiency and equity.

4.1 Women's and Men's Governance Preferences

Three interviewees, all politicians from Kachin State, said that they thought that men and women in their community had largely the same preferences for which governance issues are most important for their lives, and what decisions ought to be made.[55] However, considerably more interviewees thought that there were significant differences in the governance preferences of men and women, and this was also the opinion of FGD participants. Women were reported to be more interested in: health care, sanitation, children's education, day-to-day livelihood and family income needs, and micro-finance.[56] Whereas, men were reported to have greater interest in: more general and/or abstract political concepts such as power and the constitution, business, and physical infrastructure such as roads and electricity.[57] Women's reported preferences tend to be focused on the household sphere and meeting basic family needs, whereas men's are oriented towards the public sphere.[s]

4.1.1 Women's and Men's Governance Preferences - Time Use

International experience clearly shows that women and men have different governance preferences.[58] Evidence from India shows how closely these preferences can be linked to the activities that men and women within a community spend their time on.[59] Previous studies of Myanmar indicate that women's income generating activities tend to be smaller-scale and located closer to home than men's, and that they have more responsibilities for caring for the family.[60] The gender differences in governance preferences reported in some of the interviews and FGDs carried out for this paper (see above paragraph) broadly reflect these differences in time use.

The 2011 GDI survey of villages in Shan, Kachin, and Rakhine States, and Ayeyarwady and Magway Regions found that in all study locations the following unremunerated tasks were performed mostly

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[s] N.b. Gender is far from the only factor that influences governance preferences, other factors can include: social status, income, ethnicity, religion, age, and rural or urban dweller.

or exclusively by women and girls: cooking, caring for children, caring for the sick and elderly, washing clothes, cleaning houses, preparing food and sending it to those working in the paddy field, collecting firewood, fetching water, and going to the market to purchase rice, vegetables and kitchen assets.[61] It is only females that become pregnant, give birth and breastfeed. The types of work that women typically perform to raise income and/or produce food for family consumption are those that tend to be located closer their house than the types performed by men. Also, self-employed women typically have smaller start-up capital than self-employed men.[62] The MICS survey does not include evidence on which gender spends most of their time on these activities, but it does measure who is responsible for collecting water and these results support the GDI findings: across Myanmar, in 71.9% of households that do not have a source of drinking water on their own premises a female aged 15 or over was found to be the person usually responsible for collecting water.[t]

Based on these gender differences in time use in Myanmar it could be expected that women would place greater priority than men on healthcare (caring for children, caring for the sick and elderly, becoming pregnant, giving birth, and breastfeeding); education (caring for children); water supply (fetching water); sanitation (caring for children, caring for the sick and elderly, cleaning houses); and management of forests and common land (collecting firewood). Also, the fact that their self-employed activities typically use smaller levels of start-up capital than men's can be expected to give them greater interest in microfinance. As mentioned above, healthcare, education, sanitation and microfinance were indeed noted by a number of interviewees and FGD participants as governance issues on which women place higher priority than men.

Studies on India, where women are also the primary persons responsible for collecting water, show that improved water supply is a significantly higher governance priority for women than men there.[63] However, this was not mentioned by any interviewees and FGD participants as a governance issue that they thought to be more important for women than men (or vice versa). This may be explained by the fact that the research for this paper was carried out in, or close to, urban centers. The MICS survey found that 64.2% of urban households in Myanmar could access water from their premises, and so improving the water supply would be of relatively low priority for members of these households, whereas only 24.1% of rural households enjoyed this benefit and so can be expected to place greater priority on this issue.[64]

The MICS survey found that 94.3% of households in Myanmar (and in rural areas this figure was 99.0%) still relied on 'solid fuel' (i.e. charcoal and biomass) for cooking. Given that women and girls are responsible for collecting firewood it is somewhat surprising that no interviewees or FGD participants thought that the governance of forests and common land was a governance issue of particular priority for women.[u] This may again reflect the urban bias of the evidence collected for this paper.

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[t] N.b. Yangon (43.5%) is the only state or region where adult females are not the person usually collecting water in the majority of households that do not have a source of drinking water on their own premises. This figure is highest in Rakhine State (93.4%), followed by Chin State (86.9%). Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, Ministry of Health and UNICEF, pp.34, 90.

[u] In a number of highly influential works Bina Agarwal has shown that the management of community forests is an issue that women in India and Nepal, who are also the main collectors of firewood, are strongly interested in, and have interests that differ from those of men. See, for example, Bina Agarwal, 'Participatory Exclusions, Community Forestry, and Gender: An Analysis for South Asia and a Conceptual Framework', *World Development*, 29 (2001), pp.1630-36; Bina Agarwal, 'Does Women's Proportional Strength Affect Their Participation? Governing Local Forests in South Asia', *World Development*, 38 (2010), pp.99, 107.

Alternatively or additionally it may be that there is a low level of awareness of how the management of forests and common land has differential impacts by gender.

4.1.2 Women's and Men's Governance Preferences - Social Relations, Crime and Intra-Household Behavior

Men's and women's governance preferences do not only reflect their time use. Social relations, crime, and intra-household behavior are just some of the other issues that men and women can have different preferences for, and which governance plays a role in.

The true incidence of rape Myanmar is currently unknown.[v] These crimes often go unreported, and of the rape cases that are reported, many are settled out of court, meaning that the perpetrator is not subject to criminal conviction.[65] There has long been a high incidence of rape (and other forms of violence) committed by the armed forces against women in rural ethnic minority areas, with extremely low levels of prosecution for these crimes.[66] Reflecting this, Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has recently called, '[O]n the Government of Myanmar to fully investigate and respond to current and historical human rights violations and abuses, including crimes of sexual violence.'[67] Most communities in Myanmar expect women to adapt their behavior to the (real and perceived) threat of rape rather than taking measures to address and eliminate it.[68] Indeed, in certain communities in Myanmar single women who are victims of rape are expected by their family/community to marry their rapist on the basis that since she is no longer a virgin she is no longer marriageable.[69] Spousal rape is still not a crime in Myanmar.[70]

While there is no strong evidence that the author of this paper is aware of that contrasts the views of Myanmar men and women on the legal status of rape, it can reasonably be expected that women, on average, would support stricter laws. Studies of various countries find that men, on average, apportion a degree of blame to women who are victims of rape, whereas women attribute a higher degree of blame to the men perpetrating the violence.[71] There is much scope for governance actors in Myanmar to act proactively to challenge the, 'social and cultural norms [that] serve to condemn women who are raped, despite the fact that they are victims of these crimes'.[72] The CEDAW committee has already recommended that Myanmar's government engage in such forms of proactive behavior.[73] The Kayin State branch of Women's Organizations Network of Myanmar is just one of the grassroots governance actors in Myanmar currently carrying out such types of activities, offering support to victims of rape, and working to raise awareness on this issue among the community.[74]

A key objective stated in the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women is:

> [T]o develop and strengthen laws, systems, structures, and practices to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, and to respond to the needs of women and girls affected by violence.[75]

In accordance with this, the Department for Social Welfare is currently working together with the Gender Equality Network to draft anti-violence against women laws. Support from other key actors

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[v] N .b. We should have a better understanding of this soon. The Gender Equality Network is currently undertaking qualitative research on violence against women in Myanmar, and, on social practices, cultural norms, and gender equality in Myanmar. The research reports are due to be published by the end of 2014. UNFPA is also currently carrying out quantitative research on this topic.

(e.g. other ministries, MPs, civil society) will be needed for these laws to be passed and effectively implemented.

Sexual harassment of women is common in Myanmar. Crowded buses in Yangon are one location where this type of behavior is particularly prevalent.[76] Dr. Nyo Nyo Thinn, a Member of the Yangon Region Parliament, reported that this is an issue of considerable concern to her female constituents, and that she has proposed the introduction of women-only buses to the Yangon Region Parliament. However, she also described how her efforts on this issue have been largely met with indifference by her male colleagues.[77]

Myanmar has no specific laws to deal with domestic violence and in many cases cultural taboos prevent women from reporting domestic violence to the authorities.[78] Again, no reliable data exists on the prevalence of domestic violence in Myanmar, but it is thought to be high.[79] In many communities in Myanmar domestic violence is still tolerated to some degree.[80] And globally, changes in laws to promote women's rights have been slowest with regard to regulation of relations within households.[81] Domestic violence is frequently regarded as a private intra-household matter in Myanmar and is often socially legitimized;[82] as such some may argue that this issue is unrelated to governance. However, cross-country evidence shows that men are typically more likely to endorse domestic violence than women are,[83] suggesting that it is important that this issue be discussed publicly and women's voices be adequately represented.

Domestic violence not only has a strong negative impact on the well-being of the immediate victim, but international experience also shows that males who witness domestic violence as children are two to three times more likely to perpetrate violence themselves when they are adults.[84] Thus, a strong case can be made for the government to pass laws that specifically deal with this issue, and that various governance actors work with communities to change cultural norms that tolerate domestic violence, as a means to improve the welfare of all of its citizens and reduce violence in both the short- and long-term. The anti-violence against women laws currently being drafted are important in this regard.

Laws relating to divorce and inheritance have also been slow to change around the world, again being connected with the regulation of relations within households.[85] As stated earlier in this paper, Myanmar statutory law stipulates the equal division of property between descendants, regardless of gender. However, in practice, customary law is frequently permitted to override statutory law, and, with only very rare exceptions, in Chin and Kachin communities, women do not receive any inheritance whatsoever.[w] An interviewee described how Kachin women's lack of inheritance makes them economically dependent on men and so reduces their ability to challenge or negotiate their husband's decisions.[86] Such a situation reduces women's agency, and thus their well-being. Inheritance practices are undoubtedly a culturally sensitive matter, but more could be done in Myanmar to promote open

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[w] Interviews IKC7, IKC8, IYN4. In interview IKC8 the interviewee mentioned that there were a few exceptional cases where Kachin women had inherited family wealth—in all of these cases, it was because the only son/all sons were drug addicts and so could not be trusted to use the inheritance wisely. For Chin women not having the right to inherit, see, Matthew Smith, 'Myanmar's Economy Needs Human Rights Reforms', *Huffington Post*, 2013 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/matthew-smith/myanmars-economy-needs-hu_b_4347843.html> [accessed 15 May 2014].

discussion within communities regarding discriminatory inheritance practices and the effects of these practices.

Laws that prevent women from divorcing, or result in them having little or no property after divorce, seriously reduce their bargaining power within the household.[87] Again, this reduces their agency, and in turn, their well-being. Legal, as well as cultural and social restrictions on divorce can also have the more obvious adverse effect on well-being of trapping women in marriages in which they are unhappy. While, as mentioned earlier in this paper, Myanmar law guarantees division of property in the case of divorce, in certain communities (e.g. Chin, Kachin) a woman who divorces receives no property, and is subject to strong social opprobrium/sanctions.[88] Across almost all ethnicities in Myanmar, the wife is typically blamed if a couple divorce, and she can be subjected to strong social sanctions.[89] Cultural and social norms related to divorce are highly sensitive, and certainly not all women in Myanmar would support a reduction in social/cultural practices that punish women who divorce, but encouraging debate on the equity implications of the current status quo is something that governance actors interested in promoting women's well-being can productively engage in.

4.2 How Does Female Representation Affect Governance Decision Making and Behavior?

Internationally, women leaders have generally been found to be more responsive than men leaders to women's governance preferences. Evidence from Uganda, Argentina, and the USA shows that women leaders are typically more responsive to the governance preferences of women.[90] A number of studies of India have found female village heads are more responsive than male village heads to the preferences of female villagers, although some have not.[91] In India it has also been found that having a woman as village head results in women having better interactions with the justice system.[x]

Dr. Nyo Nyo Thinn described how in the Yangon Region Parliament male MPs focus heavily on building roads, and are unwilling to divert funds away from this to issues that women MPs in the Parliament prioritize, such as education, health, and caring for old people and orphans.[92] Among the female village-level committee members and leaders interviewed by ActionAid, two of the most common reasons they gave for why it is beneficial to have female involvement in decision-making forums and leadership roles is: i) to be able to speak for themselves and to represent and work for other women's needs; ii) to act as a counterweight to men's power. This limited evidence suggests that female decision-makers in Myanmar may be more responsive to the priorities of women citizens than male decision-makers are, but further study of this issue is needed.

Two widely cited studies, both published in 2001, analyzed data from a large number of developed and developing countries to find a strong statistical relationship showing that countries with higher proportions of parliamentary seats held by women had lower levels of corruption.[93] These studies also cite evidence from psychological experiments and surveys in various countries to show that women are generally more likely to exhibit 'helping' behavior; vote based on social issues; score more highly on 'integrity' measures; take stronger stances on ethical behavior; and behave more generously when faced with economic decisions.[94] However, methodological problems with these studies (most notably

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[x] Notably: i) a large and significant increase in the number of women reporting crimes committed against them (and there is no evidence to suggest that the number of crimes being committed increases in villages with female heads); ii) a large and significant increase in police officers' arrest rate for crimes against women; iii) a significant improvement in the quality of women's interactions with police officers. see, Iyer and others, pp.18-19, 23-24, 26-30.

a problem known as 'omitted variable bias') mean that the data in the studies cannot necessarily be taken to mean that women are less corrupt.[95] And, as the authors of one of these papers themselves note, even if women in a given time and place can be shown to be less corrupt than men, this does not necessarily mean that these differences are permanent or biologically determined—these differences could also be attributable to other factors such as socialization, differences in access to networks of corruption, or knowledge of how to effectively engage in corrupt practices.[96]

A few studies have examined village heads in different Indian States to try to establish whether female leaders are more corrupt than males. The evidence on whether female village heads taken as a whole are on average more or less corrupt than men is mixed.[97] However, recent research provides interesting analysis of how certain characteristics of female village leaders influences their propensity to engage in corruption: i) less corruption occurs in villages with female heads the longer a particular woman has been in the job, whereas the opposite is true for men; ii) the relatively high levels of corruption committed in villages headed by women who have recently been appointed as village head, primarily occur in villages headed by women who have no prior political experience, and/or require assistance for carrying out their day-to-day duties [i.e. they lack the necessary basic skills and education to perform their day-to-day duties].[98] Thus, where corruption in villages headed by women does occur in India, it is largely the result of inexperience and lack of basic skills, whereas corruption in villages headed by men increases the longer the incumbent has been in the post.

In interviews carried out for this report, it was expressed (in Kachin State) that, 'women are better at fighting corruption than men', and (in Kayin State) that female village heads, 'commit less corruption than men.'[99] Interviewees also reported that female village heads in Kayin State were able to more successfully negotiate with armed groups operating in the area to reduce the level of extorted money, goods, and/or labor demanded by these groups than male village heads.[100] Several of the Myanmar women interviewed by ActionAid who were members of mixed-gender village-level committees mentioned that women's presence on the committees acted as a deterrent to male corruption.[101] This limited evidence is clearly insufficient to be able to confidently state that women's involvement in governance in Myanmar reduces corruption or that Myanmar women are less corrupt than Myanmar men. However, it is certainly possible that this could be the case.

The findings from India that, at the local level at least, much of the corruption that is committed by females is attributable to women who are lacking in education and skills is relevant here: gender disparities in educational attainment are lower, and the proportion of women who are literate is higher, in Myanmar than India.[y] While women's widespread exclusion from governance structures in Myanmar means that there are not many women with political experience, this possible source of female-linked corruption could be challenged in the short run by providing capacity building trainings to female leaders. In the long run it can be largely erased simply by ensuring that a much higher proportion of women are represented in governance structures, thereby giving a larger pool of

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[y] Data for India from 2010 shows that 75.2% of males aged 15 and above were literate, whereas for females aged 15 and above this figure was only 50.8%. There is no directly equivalent data available for Myanmar, but the MICS survey found that in Myanmar in 2009-10, 87.8% of females were literate. Section 5.1 of this paper presents data showing relatively low gender inequality in formal education attainment in Myanmar. See, Friedrich Huebler and Weixin Lu, 'Adult and Youth Literacy, 1990-2015: Analysis of Data for 41 Selected Countries' (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012); Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, Ministry of Health and UNICEF.

politically experienced women to select from. Given Myanmar's severe problems with corruption,[102] further research into the effect that female involvement in governance has on corruption in this country would be of considerable value.

METTA Development Foundation, a national NGO that works with local communities across Myanmar, has found that the higher the level of female participation from the communities they are working in, the more successful the projects tend to be.[103] Similarly, Patrick Aung Thu, the Project Manager of Community Health and Development, a NGO that provides health support to villages in remote areas of Kachin State, stated that the village committees that have higher levels of active involvement from women are normally able to raise more money to pay for the salary of the community health worker, medicine, and any other necessary expenses for the project.[104]

A number of interviewees expressed a view that women's input to governance decision-making delivers benefits because women pay greater attention to 'detail'.[105] Other positive traits identified in interviews and FGDs carried out for this paper as being associated with women leaders included: higher levels of motivation than many of their male colleagues;[106] being less confrontational and better negotiating solutions that satisfy all parties;[107] having greater sincerity, kindness, and 'seeing reality more';[108] women village heads having a better relationship with villagers because they are able to organize them in a 'gentle' manner;[109] and women village heads being 'more patient and accurate'.[110]

A perhaps obvious, but nevertheless important, point to make is that women leaders' performance in office will depend considerably on their prior skills and experience before entering office. As discussed above, evidence from India shows that villages headed by women who have prior political experience and/or the full skill set needed to be able to do the job, experience less corruption than villages headed by women without this experience or skills. And, even for villages headed by women without experience or necessary skills, corruption declined significantly over time, suggesting these women are able to learn on the job.

Other evidence from India also points to the beneficial impact women leaders can have when they are given time to gain experience. It was found that villages that have been reserved for women village heads for two election cycles in a row have higher levels of investment in almost all public goods than villages that have only been reserved for women village heads once. Further, the levels of investment in twice-reserved villages are also higher than those found in unreserved villages (i.e. villages that almost all have men village heads).[111] As discussed below (see Section 5.1), there is a high degree of gender equality in formal education in Myanmar, however, women have so far had limited opportunities to gain experience in governance roles. If women are given greater opportunities to gain experience their level of performance is likely to increase as well.

How women are chosen for their leadership position influences how they will behave when they are in office. Women who are appointed to positions within centralized and authoritarian parties, and whose position is dependent on the actions of powerful individuals within that party are unlikely to be able to challenge the policy preferences of the leadership. If in these cases, as it usually is, the party leadership is male dominated, women are unlikely to respond to the preferences of female constituents.[112] Political parties can take actions to enable women to gain political experience, for example, by instituting internal quotas for decision-making positions within the party, and ensuring that women's access to these positions does not depend on familial or personal relationships. Civil

society actors can also provide training to women specifically focused on providing them with the skills to enter, or move up in, the political system.[113]

This section has presented strong evidence that men and women in Myanmar have different preferences for the decisions that are made by governance actors. The limited evidence available for Myanmar, together with international experience, suggests that women in decision-making positions are likely to be more responsive to the preferences of women. Increasing women's participation is therefore desirable from an equity perspective. Increasing women's participation may also deliver benefits in terms of efficiency; evidence suggests that women in Myanmar may be less corrupt than men, and that increased women's participation leads to more effective completion of projects.

FIVE: Barriers and Enabling Factors for Women's Participation in Governance Structures

This section discusses the barriers to women's participation in governance in Myanmar, as well as the factors that can enable them to participate. It is argued that many barriers exist to limit women's participation, but this section also highlights how some of these barriers are now being reduced for many women in Myanmar.

5.1 Education, Skills, and Experience

Education, skills, and experience all matter for both men's and women's ability to meaningfully participate in governance. As mentioned above (Section 4.2), studies of India have shown that women village leaders who have prior political experience and the skills needed to carry out their day-to-day duties performed much better than those who do not. A number of interviewees and FGD participants in Kachin State stressed the need to increase women's education and skills to enable them to have a greater role in public decision making.[114] The need to increase both women's formal education and experience in public discussion and participation, were specifically mentioned in this regard.[115] Previous studies of Myanmar also found many women who spoke of the need to educate women and girls to enable them to participate meaningfully in local governance bodies.[116]

The IHLCA 2009-10 survey data suggests that although women in Myanmar are more likely than men to have very low levels of educational attainment and lack basic literacy and numeracy, formal educational attainment is not a significant reason for their low levels of participation in governance. For individuals in the survey aged 20 and above, 84.6% of females had ever attended school, only slightly lower than the 87.4% of males. Of those that did not attend any formal schooling or had completed no more than the first standard, females (7.4%) were considerably less likely than males (19.1%) to be able to easily pass a test of basic literacy and numeracy. Among the individuals surveyed who had attended formal schooling, females (26.4%) were more likely than men (19.1%) to drop out before the 'fourth standard' (i.e. fail to complete primary school). However, females (17.1%) were slightly more likely than males (16.1%) to complete the 'tenth standard' (i.e. high school). And females (11.3%) were also more likely than males (8.1%) to hold a bachelor's degree or above. While females living in rural areas have considerably lower educational attainment than females in urban areas, this is also the case for males, and there is no major difference in the gender gap for educational attainment between urban and rural areas.[117]

Women's formal educational attainment relative to men's does not appear to be much of a barrier to their participation in governance in Myanmar. However, their lack of experience in occupying public decision-making roles appears to negatively affect their participation. Daw Mi Myint Than, Union-level MP for the All Mon Region Democratic Party, stated that most of her party's probable female candidates for the 2015 elections have either experience of working in exile groups in Thailand, or work/have worked for NGOs in Myanmar. She attributed their willingness to stand for election to their experiences working in these organizations giving them greater awareness of human rights and more confidence to speak in public.[118] NGOs offer women in Myanmar a rare opportunity to gain experience in public decision-making roles, as well as access to trainings in specific skills—advantages that men have through their participation in other governance bodies, such as the government and political parties. If governance actors outside of the civil society sector increase opportunities for women to

participate, and gain experience and skills, this can become a self-sustaining process in which women are then enabled to raise their participation still further.

5.2 Intra-Household Bargaining Power

Women's bargaining power within a household is important for their ability to participate in governance. Maran Ja Seng Hkawn, leader of the Kachin Women's Union and a prominent person in various political and social activities, believes that the status conferred on her by being the daughter of former KIO leader Maran Brang Seng gives her a degree of bargaining power enjoyed by few Kachin women to negotiate with her husband regarding her role, activities, and the division of labor within the household.[119] Nang Phyu Phyu Linn, Gender Specialist at CARE Myanmar, reported that across Myanmar women's decision-making power within the household is heavily dependent on whether they have their own income.[120] This relationship between income and decision-making power within the household is something that has been shown to be the case in many countries.[121]

Lu Ja, Branch Office Coordinator of METTA's Myitkyina office, highlighted the significance of women having their own income source(s) in the context of their opportunities for involvement in community decision-making. Men are often opposed to their female household members getting involved in community/public decision-making, and so women who are totally economically dependent on men have their opportunities to participate curtailed.[122] Similarly, an interviewee from the National Community-Driven Development Project (NCDD) noted that in their target villages, where women have an income generating role they have considerably more confidence to speak in the village meetings than in villages where they do not.[123]

Kachin interviewees reported that in Kachin society women's lack of inheritance reduces women's ability to challenge the decisions of male household members,[124] and thereby participate in public life. Women's inheritance and asset ownership has been shown to be highly important for their bargaining power within the household in studies of other countries.[125] Aside from the Kachin and Chin communities, most ethnic groups in Myanmar give at least some inheritance to females, and a considerable number of females receive equal inheritance with their male relatives.[126]

In the majority of Myanmar's ethnic groups property is held in common between husband and wife, however, among Mon people any property brought into the marriage by husband and wife traditionally continues to be the property solely of the person who owned the property prior to marriage. Mon marriage tradition also entails the man moving into the household of the wife's family, and in some cases he is barred from entering certain rooms of this house.[127] These particular features of Mon culture may increase women's opportunity to participate in public decision-making, but it has been beyond the scope of this paper to investigate this.

As discussed above (Section 4.2), women in Myanmar who get divorced typically face very strong social opprobrium and sanctions, and within some communities are left without property. Norms and laws that result in women having little or no assets following divorce, and reduced opportunity to earn income, reduce their bargaining power within marriage.[128] Thus, the constraints currently placed on divorce in Myanmar by social norms, and in some communities by customary law, can be expected to negatively impact on their ability to participate in governance.

5.3 Time Constraints

Time constraints were identified as a major barrier to women's participation in governance by a number of interviewees and FGD participants.[129] This evidence is in line with previous studies of Myanmar that found time constraints to be an important barrier to women's participation in community activities.[130] Females in Myanmar are typically expected to perform most household tasks, and in many communities men are unwilling to share some of this work if women are engaged in income-generating activities outside of the home or community/political activities.[131] Women in Myanmar, unlike men, can face criticism from the wider community if they prioritize business or political activities instead of household duties.[132] There is also generally a strong expectation among male household members that women complete all of 'their' household tasks, and that participation in community/political affairs should not lead to neglect of these tasks, or an expectation that other family members will do them.[133] In Kayin culture it has traditionally been relatively common for men to help with domestic work according to the needs of the household,[134] although even here there are strong norms against men washing women's clothes, and household tasks are still mainly performed by women.[135]

In ActionAid's interviews with village-level committee members across six states and regions in Myanmar, all of the male and female respondents stated that they prioritized committee work over household work. While for men this often meant handing over their household duties to their wives, for women it was more common for them to complete their household work by working longer hours and sleeping less.[136] International research has shown that in some countries women's participation in local development groups or CSOs can have the unintended negative side-effect of causing other female household members to have to take over the household chores, at the expense of other activities such as attending school.[137]

Women's time constraints are a bigger barrier to their involvement in village administration offices than in most other village-level governance activities. ActionAid's survey found that the time requirement for those with positions on village peace and development councils was significantly higher than for village-level CBO work, with almost half of the village peace and development council members in the survey having to work at least 32 hours per month, and most positions on the village peace and development councils being unpaid.[138]

One interviewee noted that women's time constraints arising from household tasks are lower in urban areas than rural areas, because the better infrastructure and available technology in urban areas means that households here do not have to spend time on certain tasks that women are typically expected to perform such as collecting water and firewood.[139] A recent study of rural electrification in South Africa found that villages being connected to the national power grid (i.e. receiving a relatively reliable and affordable source of electricity) resulted in women's paid employment rising much more than men's, as households switched from using wood to using electric cooking and lighting, thereby reducing women's household time constraints.[140] In American history the spread of electricity and piped water, followed later by the spread of labor-saving devices such as refrigerators and washing machines, also reduced women's household time constraints, freeing them to enter the labor force more easily.[141] In Myanmar only 24.1% of rural households have water that is accessible on their own premises, with the remaining 75.9% having to collect water from a source away from the household.[142] And only 34.3% of rural households have electricity.[143] Increasing households' access to electricity and

piped water in Myanmar would significantly reduce women's household time constraints, enabling them to participate more actively in both labor markets and governance.

Women's time constraints are particularly pressing in Kachin State, partly due to cultural norms—meaning that most men here are extremely resistant to helping with 'female' household tasks,[144] but moreover, because of a phenomenon termed here as 'absent men'. 'Absent men' refers not only to men who are physically absent from the household for most of the year or permanently, but also to men who are physically present in the household but are unable to contribute to, and indeed often extract from, household income due to their drug addiction. High numbers of Kachin men are now living and working away from their families, on mining or logging sites elsewhere in Kachin State. These men typically only return home for a small fraction of each year, or in some cases not for several years at a time. Some Kachin men have also migrated to China.[145] While there are no exact figures available, there is no doubt that rates of drug addiction (primarily heroin), which is an overwhelmingly male phenomenon, are now extremely high in Kachin State.[146z]

While men working away from home in mining or logging are usually able to contribute some money to family income, it is often not enough, and their female household members need to engage in paid employment to make up for the shortfall.[147] Combined with women's existing unpaid household tasks, as well as the need to perform unpaid tasks that would have traditionally been performed by men (such as digging for local infrastructure projects), needing to perform paid work can result in women in Kachin State being highly time constrained.[148] The pressures on women who have one or more male household members who are addicted to drugs are even more severe. Not only are these men typically unable to work, and so contribute to family income, but they frequently resort to stealing from their families (and the wider community) to fund their addiction.[149] Many men have died at a young age as a result of their drug use, leaving widows with families to provide for.[150] The time constraints on female household members resulting from male household members being addicted to drugs are very high.[151]

The IHLCA survey finds that Kachin State has the second highest proportion of female-headed households (25.0%) of any of the states and regions in Myanmar, marginally behind Yangon Region (25.2%).[aa] As high as this figure is, it is likely to considerably understate the number of Kachin State households with absent men. While none of the published IHLCA reports state exactly how 'female-headed households' are defined,[152] it seems probable that most, if not all, households with men who are away for most of the year, or who are present physically present but addicted to drugs, would not have been recorded as 'female-headed households'.

One interviewee believed that a primary cause of Kachin women's recently increased role in public life is that so many Kachin men are now drug addicts.[153] Kachin women who have household members

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[z] Some interviewees and FGD participants from Kayin and Mon States also mentioned drug addiction (primarily methamphetamine) as being a problem in their communities, but it does not seem to be on the scale of Kachin State. See, FGD FKY2; Interviews IKY3, IKY5, INP2.

[aa] The national average was reported to be 20.8%. Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and UNDP, *Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar (2009-2010): Poverty Profile* (Yangon, June 2011), p.35. N.b. note that the MICS survey reported the national average to be lower at 16.8%, but unfortunately does not present separate figures by state and region for the proportion of female-headed households. See, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, Ministry of Health and UNICEF, p.61.

who are drug addicts are unlikely to have increased opportunities to participate in governance, due to both their severe time constraints and the social stigma attached to relatives of drug addicts.[154] However, the large numbers of absent men in many Kachin communities would seem to create a vacuum that could be filled by other Kachin women. To what extent this happens, and how gender norms are re-negotiated in response, is an important avenue of future research. Many of the women who might fill governance positions vacated by absent men are likely to face considerable challenges, not only from traditional norms opposed to their role and possible time constraints, but also the negative social and economic impacts at household and community level that have resulted from widespread drug addiction.[bb]

5.4 Restrictions on Women's Travel

Communities and families in Myanmar typically place greater restrictions on women's travel than they do on men's, and particularly for young women it is often seen as inappropriate for them to travel alone.[155] Fear of rape and sexual harassment seriously inhibits women's long- and short-distance travel and participation in recreational activities.[156] Many subnational governance roles in Myanmar include travelling for various purposes (e.g. attending trainings and meetings, visiting government offices and houses of constituents), and so restrictions on women's travel are a barrier to their participation. [157] Restrictions on females travelling can also act indirectly to limit women's participation, when women's and girls' travel is restricted their access to social networks and economic opportunities falls - both of which could increase their opportunity to engage in public decision-making.[158] One interviewee, who identified restrictions on women's travel as one of the main barriers to women participating in governance, was of the opinion that restrictions on women's travel are largely due to cultural norms rather than actual dangers faced by women.[159] This may well be the case, although it should be noted that, particularly in conflict areas, the threat of sexual harassment and sexual violence is a real one for many women (see above, Section 4.1).

5.5 Cultural and Religious Norms

Other norms that prescribe certain types of behavior for women and girls also affect their ability to participate in governance. Women have been excluded from the Myanmar Buddhist *Sangha* since the 13th century, and in Myanmar Buddhism women are considered spiritually inferior to men. [160] Buddhist nuns are considered to be spiritually below monks, and only men are believed to be capable of attaining Buddhahood.[161] The concept of *hpone* is important in Myanmar Buddhist communities— *hpone* is an abstract quality that all men are believed to possess that places them on a higher spiritual level; and while certain women are also considered to possess *hpone* this is to a much lesser degree. Men's loss of *hpone* is feared, and it is thought that certain behaviors by women can pollute/reduce men's *hpone*. Certain household practices, such as washing and ironing women's and men's *longyis* together, or women repairing a roof, are held by many to reduce men's *hpone.*[162] One interviewee

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[bb] Impacts of drug addiction on Kachin communities were reported to include very high rates of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C among intravenous drug users - many wives of drug users have also contracted the disease; broken families; high rates of widowhood; drug users being unable to contribute to family income; families not being able to afford to send their children to school; high rates of theft within families and communities - the fear of theft has led to insecurity, and in some communities all households now feel it is necessary to always have at least one family member at home to guard against theft; families with drug users having to sell their land and other possessions; a lack of eligible Kachin men for Kachin women to marry; and increased levels of domestic violence. (See FGDs FKC1, FKC2; and Interviews IKC1, IKC2, IKC3, IKC4, IKC5, IKC7, IKC8, IKC9, IKC10, IYN4, IYN10).

described how *hpone* both gives men more confidence and ensures that they receive more respect.[163] ActionAid's study found that in Buddhist societies in majority Bamar areas, and Shan and Rakhine States, women's role in religious, social, and cultural activities were typically welcoming guests, decorating, and preparing food; whereas men were responsible for the leadership and management of many activities.[164] In these areas, those who were opposed to women's leadership often invoked the concept of *hpone* to justify their views.[165]

How Kachin Christian beliefs impact on women's lives varies: one Kachin interviewee mentioned that the Bible says that men are the heads of households, and so Kachin people should follow that;[166] whereas Lu Ja described how the Myanmar Council of Churches has been most successful in getting men to engage in gender awareness trainings when these trainings have been given by a male Baptist minister, who cites passages from the Bible that support more equitable treatment of women.[167] Kachin churches have dedicated women's groups (as well as men's groups and youth groups), that give Kachin women the opportunity to engage in public decision-making. These groups are involved in both development and religious activities, and make decisions according to a vote.[168] Women's participation here has given them useful experience and skills in leadership, and contributing to the decision-making processes, which seems to have increased their ability to participate in other spheres.[169] Overall, Christianity seems to offer Kachin women greater opportunity for engagement in public life than has been the case in traditional (animist) Kachin culture, which was highly exclusionary for women, and still impacts on Kachin cultural norms today.[170]

5.6 Confidence

Many interviewees noted that women's lack of confidence is a significant barrier to their active participation in governance.[171] Maran Ja Seng Hkawn, sees the root of this lack of confidence for Kachin women in the cultural norms that train them to see their role as a domestic one in which they serve men.[172] A male Kachin interviewee was of the same opinion.[173] Across Myanmar, traditional culture widely recognizes women as being in charge of 'home affairs', but not being considered to have a role in politics or the public sphere more broadly. Smith finds that before self-reliance groups were introduced to the Myanmar villages in the five states and regions covered in the study, '[M]ost women were terrified of speaking in public.'[174]

Nang Phyu Phyu Linn also identifies women's lack of confidence as a significant barrier to their active participation in governance, reporting that in CARE Myanmar's target villages the men only require 'capacity building' (i.e. training in practical skills), whereas for women it is also necessary to build their confidence to enable them to engage effectively.[175] Interviewees from the National Community Driven Development Project and an international development NGO working in Myanmar also noted women's lack of confidence across Myanmar's states and regions and the need to provide trainings targeted to increase it. They said that while the trainings make a considerable difference to women's confidence to participate, even after this increase women are still typically less vocal than men in village committee meetings.[176]

Nan Khin That Mar Win, a female village administrator in Kayin State, described how in village meetings, '[L]ess educated women don't dare to talk, whereas less educated males will carry on rapidly.'[177] A (male) interviewee in Kachin State agreed that women speak less in meetings, but interpreted this tendency differently to those cited hitherto. He believed that this was because

'women don't care' and are only interested in an issue if it directly relates to their activities, whereas men are willing to contribute on any topic if they feel they have something useful to say.[178]

After surveying the international literature, Esther Duflo recently concluded that globally:

> [T]he widespread perception that women are not competent leaders is probably *the* strongest barrier to greater participation of women in policy making. [emphasis added][179]

Various traditional proverbs in Myanmar reveal attitudes that see public speaking and decision-making as a male preserve. The norms embodied in these sayings can be expected to affect women's confidence. And, psychological studies show that negative stereotyping has a significant negative impact on individuals' performance.[180] A traditional Kachin saying is that, 'When men talk a lot they will bring more profit, when women talk a lot they will bring more damage.'[181] GDI's survey found villagers across Myanmar mentioning that, 'The sun cannot rise up by a hen's crow.'[182] These sayings reflect negative attitudes towards women taking on decision-making roles, which can encourage discriminatory practices towards women, as well as damaging the confidence of women to take on such roles.[183]

5.7 Perceptions of, and Responses to, Women Leaders

Gendered norms not only affect women's opportunity to take on decision-making roles and have the confidence to participate actively, they can also affect how women who are in decision-making roles are perceived and responded to (which can in turn affect women's willingness to try to take on decision-making roles). Dr. Nyo Nyo Thinn thinks that her constituents (who are from Bahan Township, Yangon) are equally happy to have male or female leaders.[184] However, her constituency is wealthy and located in central Yangon, so should not be taken to be representative of most places in Myanmar. FGD participants in Hlaing Tharyar Township (a poorer township in Yangon, much further from the center of the city) believed that in their community there is a strong preference for men to be Ward Administrators, 100 Household Heads, and 10 Household Heads.[185]

In Kayin culture, following their identification as the head of household, villagers have traditionally ascribed leadership positions in the community to men.[186] ActionAid notes this association between men and heads of households and leaders in the public sphere across Myanmar, with women's and men's gender roles generally being most strongly demarcated in rural areas.[187] Similarly, interviewees from the Ministry of Social Welfare perceive that across Myanmar resistance to female leadership is highest in rural areas, and lowest among highly educated urban dwellers.[188]

An interviewee in Kayin State said that many Kayin people still do not have trust in women to be able to provide strong leadership, and that the majority of Kayin women are still nervous of making decisions in the public sphere.[189] Another interviewee reported that the lack of female village heads in Mon State is related to men not wanting to accept female village heads, and women not thinking that this is a position available to them.[190] In all states and regions surveyed by ActionAid, they found some men who were opposed to women being leaders, with this sentiment particularly strong and widespread in Rakhine State and northern Shan State.[191]

ActionAid found that among the committee members and leaders interviewed across their survey areas, the dominant view of leadership involved firm decision-making being made by an individual who is educated, intelligent, and well-informed—and these qualities are typically associated with

men. Some women surveyed rejected this model of leadership, instead emphasizing the need for thoughtfulness, listening skills, and consultation—and these qualities are typically associated with women in Myanmar. The second model of leadership was largely rejected by men, who saw this decision-making style as time-consuming and ineffective.[192] Although two of the people interviewed for this paper did not believe there was a significant difference between the leadership/decision-making style of men and women in Myanmar,[193] more interviewees were of the belief that there were differences. Differences identified by these interviewees include women being more consultative, making decisions less hurriedly, being more empathetic, being more patient, and trying to tackle problems more deeply.[194]

An interviewee in Kachin State described how until recently Kachin people generally preferred decisions to be made by a high status man acting and thinking alone. While this mode of leadership is still generally preferred by rural Kachin people, the interviewee claimed that in the last 20 years urban Kachin have increasingly wanted to have the opportunity for discussion and consultation before a decision is made.[195] Another Kachin interviewee noted that women's leadership is increasingly accepted within the civil society and community spheres (but not within the government sphere), and that this change had been much stronger in urban than in rural areas.[196] An interviewee in Kayin State described the typical behavior of Kayin villagers that attend meetings organized by the village administrator as, 'accept what they are told, do not debate, and dare not complain.'[197] The old, autocratic, style of decision-making would seem to count against women who wish to take on leadership roles, but as participatory decision making becomes more common in Myanmar, women's leadership can be expected to be increasingly recognized as valuable.

Dr. Nyo Nyo Thinn believes that as a relatively young woman in politics she can be critical of those in power without provoking as much anger/backlash from them than is the case for those who are older/male. While she appreciates the greater freedom this gives her to speak freely, she notes that the flipside of this is that many male politicians do not take what she says seriously (i.e. because she is young and female).[198] A Kachin woman informed GDI that, 'No one at the meeting considers women, though we are there. Woman's and child's words are regarded as nonsense [sic].'[199] Indeed, some men in Kachin State, and elsewhere in Myanmar, do not believe that women have the right to speak at, or contribute to, public forums.[200] Women in Myanmar can also be marginalized in meetings because of the perception among some males that they are too talkative or gossipy and so cannot be trusted with important information.[201]

Kachin interviewees described how although in Kachin society women are increasingly accepted in low-level decision-making positions, there is still resistance to them taking on higher-level leadership positions. This resistance is particularly strong in organizations concerned with politics, religion, cultural and language groups, and village elder groups. Whereas, as has been noted above, women's involvement in civil society and NGOs is much more accepted.[202] In Kayin society there is less opposition to women taking on leadership roles within Christianity than is the case in Kachin society. In the Kayin Baptist Convention, unlike the Kachin Baptist Convention, women can become reverends and occupy senior positions such as General Secretary.[203] Within certain forms of traditional Kayin animist belief women are the focal points for spiritual power within the household and only they can perform certain religious duties.[204] However, in Kayin Buddhism only men can become monks (this is the case in Buddhism throughout Myanmar). And, despite a few notable exceptions such as Naw

Zipporah Sein (Karen National Union) and Nan Say War (Phalon Sawaw Democratic Party), there is still resistance to women taking on high positions in Kayin political parties.[205]

Reid Smith's 2006 study found a number of men in various states and regions that were opposed to their wives joining self-reliance groups on the basis that it would lead to the wives shirking their household and motherly duties. These men were also concerned about their wives gaining new habits and an independent social network, and the men possibly losing their standing as masters of the household.[206] Similarly, ActionAid found men who were reluctant to let their wives get involved in CBOs and in most of their study areas women had to seek permission from their husband if they wanted to participate in such organizations.[207] None of the women CBO committee members in Kachin State interviewed for ActionAid's study reported having to get permission from their husband (or any other relative) to be able to work on the committee, but they said that their work on the committee was a constant source of quarrelling with their husbands, who perceived their CBO work to be causing them to neglect their family duties.[208]

5.8 The Effect of Women Leaders on Other Women's Participation

Women who are already in leadership positions can help to increase the participation of other women. This can occur through these women taking direct action to create greater female representation, such as Naw Zipporah Sein ensuring that at least three women are part of the KNU negotiation team at each round of the ceasefire talks.[209] It can also occur more indirectly by women leaders inspiring and giving confidence to other women to do the same. FGD participants in Kayin State believed that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's prominent leadership position and behavior was an inspiration for female village heads in their state.[210] Previous studies of Myanmar have also found local women leaders citing the existence of female role models as a reason for themselves getting involved.[211]

Research on community forestry groups in India and Nepal shows that: i) women executive committee members are more likely to attend meetings when they are not the only woman on the committee; ii) the greater the percentage of women on the executive committee, the more likely women villagers' are to speak up and voice their perspectives in the meetings.[212] Similarly, research on Indian village committees shows that women are more likely to speak up in village meetings when the village head is a woman.[213] There is no data available to test for the same effects in Myanmar, but it seems probable that similar effects would be observed here.

Having other women to work alongside in leadership roles can also encourage more women to take on these roles. Women committee members interviewed by ActionAid who worked on mixed-gender committees that had more than one woman, or all-women committees, described the climate of mutual understanding and co-operation they felt with other women committee members. The benefits of working with other women were expressed in terms of familiarity, frankness, openness, and solidarity. Women colleagues also tend to be more sympathetic than men when women's time constraints mean that they are sometimes unable to attend committee meetings.[214] The study also found that in committees with only one or a few women members, opportunities for these women to engage in active and meaningful participation in discussions and meetings were minimal.[215]

Role models that do not conform to traditional gender norms (for example women who are political leaders) can help women and girls challenge those norms themselves,[216] and so encourage and inspire Myanmar women to take on leadership roles. Such role models for Myanmar females can come from

both within Myanmar and abroad. As Myanmar opens up, develops, and becomes more exposed to different cultural norms and practices, females here will be increasingly exposed to women leaders from around the world (e.g. through access to international television and the internet). Such exposure has been shown in many countries to promote women's empowerment and change gender norms.[217] Indeed globalization/increased awareness of practices in other countries was mentioned by interviewees as a major cause of the increased acceptance of women's leadership among certain segments of Kachin society.[218] And interviewees from the Ministry of Social Welfare identified the hitherto lack of exposure to international practices as a major barrier to women occupying more leadership positions throughout Myanmar.[219]

5.9 Deliberate Interventions and External Shocks

Agarwal shows that in India and Nepal women are more likely to attend community forestry groups' meetings where an NGO or the Forest Department has catalyzed the community forestry group or helped to shape the community forestry rules, noting that NGOs in these countries tend to be, '[M]ore gender progressive than traditional village leaders.'[220] In another paper she describes how NGOs have also successfully influenced the central government in India to adopt policies directed at increasing women's participation in community forestry groups.[221] Several interviewees mentioned the positive impact non-state actors have had in promoting women's participation in public life in Myanmar. One interviewee pointed to the important role that workshops and trainings on gender awareness, as well as more formal education targeted at basic skills, provided by UN agencies, INGOs, and NGOs have had in enabling Kachin women to become more involved in public decision making.[222] Interviewees from CARE Myanmar, another international development NGO working in Myanmar, and METTA described how the various trainings and capacity building activities provided by their organizations to women in their target villages, over extended periods of time, have enabled those women to take on a greater role in community decision-making.[223] However, interviewees from organizations engaged in development work highlighted the difficulties they have had in getting Myanmar men interested in gender awareness trainings.[224]

The interviewees from the Ministry of Social Welfare reported that prior to 2008 their ministry had very little awareness of gender issues and were not actively engaged in this field. However, through their involvement in the tripartite group set up in response to Cyclone Nargis, in which they interacted with UN agencies and NGOs, their level of awareness increased substantially. As a result, they are now working to promote awareness of gender and women's issues, and advocate for the introduction of a quota system guaranteeing a minimum level of women's representation (i.e. 30%) not only for elected positions, but also for senior positions within the civil service.[225] The National Community-Driven Development Project, which operates under the Ministry for Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development, and receives support from the World Bank, requires that 50% of its village committee members are women.[226] However, most ministries have hitherto shown little interest in gender issues or the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women.[227]

Having the support of influential people from within the community can increase women's opportunity to take on leadership roles. Daw Mi Myint Than (female Union MP from the All Mon Region Democracy Party) described how monks from her community, as well as many villagers themselves, encouraged her to stand for election, and this helped give her the confidence to do so.[228] Nan Khin That Mar Win (female village administrator in Kayin State), described how the highly

influential local head monk gave her much encouragement to stand for election, and his support of her candidacy helped her to overcome the resistance some villagers felt towards having a female village administrator [229]

External shocks to communities can also increase women's leadership opportunities. ActionAid found that male respondents in Ayerarwady Region were more likely to see the benefits that female leadership could bring than men in other Buddhist areas. They think that this difference may be attributable to women in this region having had considerable involvement in community work in the wake of the destruction caused by Cyclone Nargis (2008).[230] The introduction and spread of women village heads in Kayin State from the late 1980s was a result of conflict in these areas, with communities there discovering that women village heads were able to negotiate less onerous demands for labor, goods, and cash from armies operating in their area.[231]

Several governance actors operating at the subnational level in Myanmar have instituted quotas to ensure a minimum level of female representation in governance bodies. CARE Myanmar requires that at least 30% of village committee members are women. [232] The National Community-Driven Development Project requires that 50% of village committee members are women.[233] These minimum requirements should not only ensure that women have a considerable degree of nominal representation in decision-making bodies; as described above, having a 'critical mass' of women enables individual women to engage more fully and actively (see above, Section 5.8).

Daw Mi Myint Than reported that the All Mon Region Democracy Party is becoming increasingly gender aware, and is keen to increase the number of women politicians they have.[cc] Towards this end, in 2013 they adopted a target of having 30% women candidates for the 2015 elections.[234] The National League for Democracy (NLD) are actively trying to increase women's involvement in the party, and increase their number of female candidates. At the end of 2013, the party adopted a policy that while emphasizing ability as the primary criteria when choosing candidates, also gives preference to women, youth, and ethnic minority candidates.[235] Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the NLD, has repeatedly stated the need to increase women's representation in Parliament,[236] and it is thought that the NLD will field a considerable number of women in the 2015 elections.[237] However, they have not set themselves a target that specifies a minimum percentage of women candidates. Indeed, Aung San Suu Kyi has publicly opposed the introduction of a government-mandated quota that could require either: i) a minimum number of seats in parliament are reserved for women; or ii) that all parties' candidate lists contain a specified minimum percentage of women candidates.[238]

5.10 Quotas

Section 3 of this paper shows women's currently very low level of representation in subnational and national governance bodies in Myanmar, with this being particularly the case in the government. Section 4 argues that women's representation in subnational governance structures is of considerable importance for Myanmar to achieve its developmental goals. Section 5 has discussed the various

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[cc] Mi Myint Than described how in the 2010 elections the All Mon Region Democracy Party had hoped to field at least five women candidates, but in fact she was the only woman candidate of a total of 34 All Mon Region Democracy Party candidates fielded in the union and state and region elections. She attributes the lack of women candidates in 2010 to the rushed process of trying to organize for the elections, women's security/safety concerns, and a lower level of gender awareness in the All Mon Region Democracy Party than is now the case. See, Interview INP2.

barriers to, as well as the enabling factors for, women's greater participation in subnational governance. One potential means to increase women's participation is government-mandated quotas that stipulate a minimum number of seats at a given level(s) of government (e.g. ward/village tract administrators, state and region parliament, etc.) to be reserved for women, or that political parties must field a minimum percentage of women candidates in elections. Two members of the ASEAN community (Indonesia and Philippines) have already introduced such laws, as have many other Asian countries, including Bangladesh, China, East Timor, India, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Nepal and Pakistan.[dd] Myanmar's National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women calls for the:

> Application of quota systems to ensure women's participation in decision-making in legislative, judicial, and executive bodies.[239]

However, aside from the Ministry of Welfare, there seems to be little interest within the government in putting this into practice. U Soe Maung, Union Minister at the President's Office, has rejected the need for quotas in Myanmar, claiming that they are unnecessary given that there is traditionally very little gender discrimination in Myanmar compared to other Asian countries.[240] However, this paper has shown that gender discrimination still persists to a considerable extent in Myanmar society generally, and that women's representation in decision-making positions in most spheres of governance remains extremely low. Thus, the introduction of quotas ought to be given serious consideration.

Political quotas for women can be introduced at any level of government (e.g. union, state and region, district, township, or ward/village). As indicated above, quotas can be classified into two broad categories: i) a reservation of seats system, whereby a certain number of seats are reserved solely for women; ii) a reservation of candidates system, whereby each political party must have a minimum percentage or number of women.[241] Quotas have now been introduced in many countries around the world, and have had a large causal effect in raising the number of women in government.[242] The reservation of seats system tends to be particularly effective in this regard.[243]

Quotas for women are typically intended not only to raise the number of women in government. Common additional aims of quotas include: increasing women's experience and confidence to take on governance roles; increase the political engagement of women constituents and citizens; increase the responsiveness of government decision-making to women's preferences; and promote policies targeted at gender equity and equality. Many countries with quotas have achieved these broader goals, but a considerable number have not.[244] Thus, if a quota system is to be introduced to Myanmar, it is essential that this is designed carefully, to ensure that gains are maximized. Further research is required in this regard to apply the relevant international lessons learned to Myanmar's particular context.

SIX: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

Women account for only a very small percentage of key decision-making positions at all levels of Myanmar's subnational government. Women make up only 2.83% of state and region MPs; 2.37% of

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[dd] For details of the quota system in each of these countries, please see Appendix 4.

state and region ministers; 0% of township administrators; and 0.11% of ward/village administrators in government-controlled areas. Women are also poorly represented in other decision-making positions in village administration offices and in township offices. The *Tatmadaw*, non-government armed groups, and many political parties currently offer limited opportunities for women. The subnational governance institutions that offer the greatest opportunities for women's participation are CBOs, LNGOs, and INGOs—within these organizations women are represented in considerable numbers, and occupy key decision-making positions. Within the village-level committees that LNGOs and INGOs create, women have much greater levels of participation than within village administration offices, although men still disproportionately fill the highest leadership positions within these committees.

The evidence presented in Section 4 of this report suggests that men and women in Myanmar have different governance preferences. Some of these differences are attributable to gender differences in time use. Other probable differences in governance preferences include gender-based violence, inheritance, and divorce. Further research is required to gain an understanding of how the governance preferences of men and women in Myanmar differ. It seems plausible that women leaders and decision-makers would be more responsive to women's governance preferences and less corrupt, and that increased representation of women in leadership positions would lead to improved delivery of goods and services. However, there is currently a lack of evidence on how the behavior of women decision-makers and leaders in Myanmar differs from that of men, and the very low number of women currently in leadership positions outside of CBOs, LNGOs, and INGOs makes collecting such evidence difficult.

A number of barriers and enabling factors for women's participation in governance have been identified. Trainings, in both specific practical skills and/or knowledge, and more generally for women's confidence building and gender awareness, were emphasized by many interviewees as highly beneficial for raising women's ability and confidence to participate. Women who are already in leadership positions were shown to be able to directly increase women's participation through selecting them for other decision-making positions, and have an important indirect role by inspiring other women and girls to want to become leaders. There seems little doubt that development activities of LNGOs and INGOs have helped, and continue to help, to increase women's participation in village-level decision-making, as is the incipient National Community-Driven Development Project; however, more evidence is required to accurately assess the extent of this effect.

Women's participation in governance appears to be increasing, and cultural norms are changing among certain segments of the population to become more accepting of women in public leadership roles. However, women's participation remains at very low levels outside of civil society, and many barriers remain. Women's leadership has been found to be especially strongly resisted in the spheres of politics, religion, and in many traditional cultural activities/societies. Women's time constraints represent a major barrier to their increased participation in governance. Restrictions on female travel also hinder women's participation. A lack of confidence to contribute to public decision-making prevents many women from trying to take on leadership roles. This lack of confidence arises to a considerable extent from traditional cultural norms that associate women with the household sphere, and men with the public sphere. These norms also mean that women who are in governance can face resentment from men and have difficulty getting their voices heard.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the evidence presented in this paper, the following recommendations for subnational governance actors in Myanmar are proposed:

- The government should seriously consider introducing a quota system that mandates a minimum proportion of women in certain elected positions, or on political parties' candidate lists. Within subnational government the elected positions of state and region MP and village administrator would seem to be particularly suitable for the introduction of a quota system. International experience shows that the success of quotas in raising women's interactive/participation, and ensuring that government becomes more responsive to women's preferences, is variable. Therefore, any such possible policy needs to be designed very carefully, and be appropriately tailored to the Myanmar context.

- Various governance actors should work together to increase the availability of gender awareness training, and training in relevant specific skills, to women across Myanmar. Further, more needs to be done to deliver effective gender awareness training to men. It is essential that there is information sharing between organizations providing gender awareness training to men of lessons learned regarding which approaches work, and which do not, in Myanmar's various geographies, ethnicities, religions, and cultures. In the context of improving women's participation in governance, particularly important issues to be included in gender awareness training given to men include: sharing of household work; encouraging women from within their household and the community to take on public roles and expand their social networks; and the need to reduce gender-based violence.

- Skills and leadership trainings offered by the government and non-government actors need to be made equally accessible to women as they are to men. Important considerations in this regard include ensuring that trainings are offered at times when women are able to attend, and if long distance travel is required that safe means of travel (and accommodation if needed) are provided.

- INGOs, LNGOs and other governance actors (e.g. Department for Rural Development) who are actively working to increase women's participation in governance in Myanmar should work together with researchers to conduct rigorous monitoring and evaluation of their projects, to assess which policies are most effective for increasing women's participation, and what difference women's participation would make to the behavior of subnational governance institutions. Crucially, the results of such assessments ought to be made publicly available unless there is a compelling reason not to do so.

- Much further research remains to be done to gain a better understanding of the issues related to women and governance in Myanmar. Donor agencies should actively look to fund such research. Particularly important topics for research include, but are by no means limited to: the impact women's participation has on governance decision-making and behavior; the barriers to, and enabling factors for, increased women's participation in governance; how the phenomenon of 'absent men' in Kachin State (and probably elsewhere) impacts on women's

participation in governance, and their lives more broadly; and whether legislation that has been proposed, and passed, is responsive to women's governance preferences.

- Certain improvements in basic infrastructure, most pressingly ensuring that more households have electricity, would reduce women's time constraints. Efforts to increase the number of households in Myanmar with access to electricity should be supported by all actors seeking to improve women's well-being and participation in public life.

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Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

N.b. Where the name of the individual and/or their organization is not given below this is because the interviewee did not consent to their name being published.

Kachin State

IKC1: Dau Nyoi (woman); *Sha-It*; 19 February 2014

IKC2: Ja Tawng (woman); *Central Executive Committee Member, Kachin State Democracy Party*; 20 February 2014

IKC3: Kum Shawng (man); *Director, Kachin Baptist Convention - Community Development Department*; 17 February 2014

IKC4: Lu Ja (woman); *Branch Office Coordinator, METTA Development Foundation - Myitkyina Office*; 18 February 2014

IKC5: Maran Ja Seng Hkawn (woman); *President, Kachin Women's Union*; 17 February 2014

IKC6: Patrick Aung Thu (man); *Project Manager, Community Health and Development*; 20 February 2014

IKC7: *People with Chemical Dependency*. All four full-time staff from this organization were present at the interview - i.e. "coordinator and accounts" - woman; "admin and field staff" - man; "admin assistant and program" - man; "cashier and field staff" - woman; 19 February 2014

IKC8: Stephen Tsa Ji (man) (*Deputy Director, Kachin Development Network Group*) and Ah Htung (woman) (*Mungchying Rawt Jat*); 19 February 2014

IKC9: Dr. Tu Ja (man); *Chairman, Kachin State Democracy Party*; 18 February 2014

IKC10: (Woman); *Staff Member of Myitkyina Branch of International Development NGO*; 17 February 2014

IKC11: *Minister, Kachin State Parliament*, and *Legal Offical, Kachin State Parliament*; 20 February 2014

Kayin State

IKY1: Nan Khin That Mar Win (woman); *Village Administrator, Taung Ka Lay Village*; 20 March 2014

IKY2: Saw Kyaw Swar (man); *Secretary, Karen Affairs Committee* and *Project Officer, Karen Development Network*; 20 March 2014

IKY3: Nan Aye Aye Thwai (woman); *Teacher and Co-founder Toung La Yaung English School*; 21 March 2014

IKY4: Nan Tin Zar Win (woman); *Coordinator, Women's Organizations Network of Myanmar - Kayin State Branch* and *Coordinator, Karen Women's Empowerment Group - Kayin State Branch*; 22 March 2014

IKY5: (woman); *Senior Office Holder, Kayin State Branch of National Political Party*; 21 March 2014

Naypyitaw

INP1: U Aung Tun Khine (man) (*Deputy Director-General*), and Daw Rupar Mya (woman) (*Deputy Director*); *Department of Social Welfare; Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement*; 21 May 2014

INP2: Daw Mi Myint Than (woman)*; Union MP, All Mon Region Democracy Party*; 18 March 2014

INP3: (Man); *Senior Member of Staff, General Administrative Department*; 18 March 2014

INP4: (Man); *Member of Staff, HR Office of General Administrative Department*; 18 March 2014

INP5: (Woman); *Member of Staff, National Community-Driven Development Project, Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development*; 19 March 2014

Yangon

IYN1: Bron Ives (woman); *Technical Adviser, Gender Equality Network*; 12 March 2014

IYN2: Daw Hnin Wai (woman); *Secretary General, Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs Association*; 20 March 2014

IYN3: Daw Khin Myo Aye (woman); *Program Director, Local Resource Centre*; 14 March 2014

IYN4: May Sabe Phyu (woman); *Coordinator, Kachin Women's Peace Network*; 2 April 2014

IYN5: Nang Phyu Phyu Linn (woman); *Program Advisor - Gender, CARE Myanmar*; 14 March 2014

IYN6: Dr. Nyo Nyo Thinn (woman); *Yangon Region MP, Independent*; 12 March 2014

IYN7: Tha Uk (man); *Managing Director, EDEN Centre*; 2 April 2014

IYN8: U Ohn (man); Chairman, *Forestry Resource Environment Development and Conservation Association*; 28 March 2014

IYN9: (Woman); *Co-ordinator of Myanmar NGO working on Women's Issues*; 12 March 2014

IYN10: (Man); *Senior Manager, International Organization working on Drug Issues in Myanmar*; 11 March 2014

IYN11: (Woman); *Programme Officer, UN Agency*; 28 March 2014

IYN12: (Woman); *Gender Specialist, International Development NGO*; 15 March 2014

Appendix 2: List of FGDs

Kachin State

FKC1: Aye Mya Tharyar Village, 18 February 2014

FKC2: Pa La Na Village, 17 February 2014

Kayin State

FKY1: Naung Ka Myin 22 March 2014

FKY2: Thaung Ka Lay, 21 March 2014

Yangon

FYN1: Hlaing Thar Yar, 1 April 2014

Appendix 3: Description of our Interview and FGD Processes

Paul Minoletti and/or Naw Eh Mwee Aye Wai conducted a total of 32 semi-structured interviews for this paper. 12 semi-structured interviews were in Yangon, 11 in Kachin State, 5 in Kayin State, and 4 in Naypyitaw. 30 of the interviews were with Myanmar nationals. The two foreign citizens interviewed had both worked in Myanmar for at least four years and had specialist knowledge on particular topics we were interested in.[ee] The vast majority of our interviewees were highly educated and living in urban areas. Interviewees were chosen on the basis of them having particular knowledge deemed to be useful for this study. They were hoped to be able to describe the experiences and perspectives of women (and men) outside of their socioeconomic position, but there is the possibility of bias in their responses.

All of the interviews in Yangon were conducted entirely in English; the interviews in Kachin State and Naypyitaw were either conducted entirely in English, or a translator translated between English and Myanmar; all of the interviews in Kayin State were conducted in Myanmar. Handwritten notes were taken in the interview and subsequently typed up in English. Apart from certain interviews conducted in Kayin State, we decided not to make audio recordings of interviews because MDRI-CESD researchers have found in the past that this can make certain interviewees nervous and talk less openly. All interviewees were given the option of their name and organization being kept confidential or being made public. A list of the interviewees is given in Appendix 1.

2 FGDs in Kachin State, 2 in Kayin State and 1 in Yangon were conducted for this paper. Our FGD participants were all women aged 30-50 and had obtained an education level not above 8th standard. This fairly low maximum education level helps to counteract the over-educated bias amongst our interviewees. We chose a relatively narrow age bracket for participants as we felt that having to wide a range may lead to younger participants feeling constrained in their participation due to respect for older people, but this means that voices of older and younger women were not directly represented in our FGDs. Naw Eh Mwee Aye Wai was the facilitator in all of the FGDs, a role she has performed many times before. The author of this paper (Paul Minoletti) was not present at any of the FGDs because we believed that having a male foreigner present would likely be off-putting or distracting for some or all of the participants. Again, we decided not to make audio recordings, so as to encourage participants to speak freely and openly. All but one of our FGDs had 6-9 participants.[ff]

[ee] Interviews YN1, YN10.

[ff] FKY2 had only 3 participants. We had planned to have approximately 8 participants, but unfortunately many of them had to cancel at the last-minute, and we were not able to reschedule it for another time.

Appendix 4: Outline Description of Quota Systems that Ensure Minimum Levels of Political Representation for Women in ASEAN, and Selected Other Asian Countries

The source for all of the information given below is www.quotaproject.org [accessed 1st May 2014]

Indonesia: Political parties' candidate lists for both local and national elections must be at least 30% women.

Philippines: At least one-third of sectoral representatives in every municipal, city, and provincial legislative council must be women.

Bangladesh: At least one-seventh of the members of national Parliament must be women. On each local council at least three of the elected seats must be filled by women.

China: At least 22% of national-level MPs must be women.

East Timor: At national level one out of every three candidates on the electoral lists must be women. There must be at least two women on every local council.

India: Women must make up at least 33% of the members of local government bodies, and at least 33% of the leaders of these bodies.

Korea, Republic of: In proportional representation elections political parties' candidate lists must be at least 50% women. In first-past-the-post elections political parties'candidate lists must be at least 30% women.

Mongolia: For national elections political parties' candidate lists must be at least 20% women. For local council electionspolitical parties' candidate lists must be at least 30% women.

Nepal: For national elections political parties' candidate lists must be at least one-third women. For municipal council electionspolitical parties' candidate lists must be at least 40% women.

Pakistan: In both the upper and lower houses of the national Parliament 17% of the seats are reserved for women.

Endnotes

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[226] Interview INP5.
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