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Alliance for  
Gender Inclusion  
in the Peace Process

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# Moving From Discrimination to Inclusion: Gender Perspectives on the Political Dialogue Themes



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# ACRONYMS/ ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AGIPP</b>	Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process
<b>BPfA</b>	Beijing Platform for Action
<b>CBOs</b>	Community Based Organisations
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CEDAW GR 30</b>	CEDAW General Recommendation 30
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>DDR</b>	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
<b>EAOs</b>	Ethnic Armed Organisations
<b>FPD</b>	Framework for Political Dialogue
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based Violence
<b>GEN</b>	Gender Equality Network
<b>GoM</b>	Government of Myanmar
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>JMC</b>	Joint Monitoring Committee (or Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee)
<b>KWPN</b>	Kachin Women's Peace Network
<b>NCA</b>	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
<b>NSPAW</b>	National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women
<b>NRPC</b>	National Reconciliation and Peace Centre
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PSF</b>	Peace Support Fund
<b>UPC</b>	Union Peace Conference
<b>UPWC</b>	Union Peacemaking Working Committee
<b>WLB</b>	Women's League of Burma
<b>WPS UNSCRs</b>	Women, Peace and Security United Nations Security Council Resolutions
<b>WON</b>	Women's Organisation Network

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout its history, Myanmar's political life has seen a very low rate of women's participation in the realms of politics, the economy, and peace-building. This can largely be attributed to a pervasive cultural attitude that sees women as only being suited to roles in the domestic sphere. This misleading gendered perception is reinforced by traditional beliefs, customs, and social stereotypes suggesting that women do not possess competencies relevant to participating in the military and politics. In addition to this—or perhaps because of it—structural barriers cemented into political and governance frameworks further hinder women's participation in public life.

Gendered norms and stereotypes have long prioritised a male dominated public sphere, reinforcing a patriarchal culture in which women are seen as a weak and vulnerable group requiring special protection, while men are seen as being endowed with natural leadership skills and competencies suited for decision-making positions. Hence, men are consistently given space in key domains such as politics and the economy, whilst women are almost always excluded from these spheres.<sup>1</sup>

This phenomenon is evidenced by the continued under-involvement of women in the current movement focused on building peace in Myanmar. Until October of 2015, the Union Peacemaking Working Committee (UPWC) was largely dominated by men, with only two women out of 52 members participating, and the Union Peacemaking Central Committee was composed of all men.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, only two women work amongst the 11 members of the National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NRPC). The Preparatory Committee for the 1<sup>st</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference included only two women out of its 16 committee members, whilst on Subcommittee (1) there were only two women present out of 15 members, and on Subcommittee (2), one woman present out of nine participants.

The first Union Peace Conference (UPC) took place in January 2016 followed by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong- Union Peace Conference that took place in August and September 2016. In comparison to 7% of invitees to the first UPC being women, women comprised an estimated 13% of the overall participants at the second conference. Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) had the highest rate of women's participation, with 36 women delegates out of a total of 175 (20.5%).

Despite this progress, however, a long road remains for women's participation in public life. Although the 2015 elections resulted in more female parliamentarians, the percentage of women elected to the *Pyidaungsu Hluttaw* is still merely 13%, marking Myanmar as the country in the ASEAN region with the single lowest rate of women participating in politics—the average being 18.3%.<sup>3</sup>

- 1 Gender Equality Network. (2015). *Raising the Curtain: Cultural Norms, Social Practices and Gender Equality in Myanmar*. November, Yangon: GEN; Peace Support Fund. (2016). *The Women Are Ready: An Opportunity to Transform Peace in Myanmar*. Yangon: PSF. Available in English and Myanmar.
- 2 Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2015). *Women, Peace and Security Policymaking in Myanmar, Context Analysis and Recommendations*. Policy Paper No. 1, 2015. Yangon: AGIPP; Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. *International Standards Guiding Gender Inclusion in Myanmar's Peace Process*. Policy Paper No. 3, 2017. Yangon: AGIPP.
- 3 Gender Equality Network. (2015); Gender Equality Network. (2013). *Taking the lead: an assessment of women's leadership training needs and training initiatives in Myanmar*. Yangon: GEN. (In Myanmar)

This situation provides clear evidence that, despite having acceded to the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) in 1997, Myanmar is still not in compliance with its obligation, as stipulated in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), to set a 30% minimum quota for women's participation in public and political life. Signatories to CEDAW agree to fulfill this requirement as a way of demonstrating their nation's commitment to gender equality and the elimination of discrimination against women in all areas of public life through the creation, or modification, of legislation and policies for fulfilling women's rights.

In order to increase women's participation in Myanmar's peace process, women's organisations and networks throughout the country organised a series of Women, Peace, and Security Forums in 2015 and 2016. These Forums were attended by members of civil society organisations associated with the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP), as well as by other organisations working on women's rights, peace-building, conflict, and security. Forum participants actively exchanged views and developed strategies to chart a new way forward toward greater gender inclusion. Their participation demonstrated that while gender parity remains a major obstacle to the country's advancement, women in Myanmar are committed to seeing see this vision realised.

This Policy Brief contains analysis and recommendations from a diverse range of women—over two thousand in total—from 21 regional Forums held in Kachin, Ka yah, Karen, Chin, Mon and Shan States as well as Tanintharyi, Yangon, and Mandalay Divisions, as well as those attending five national Forums held in Yangon, Naypyidaw, and Chiang Mai, bringing together voices of women from across the country.<sup>4</sup>

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4 Women, Peace and Security Forums (2016), held in Kachin, Kayah, Chin, Mon, Rakhine, Shan States, Sagaing, Tanintharyi, and Yangon Divisions. National-level forums were held in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, and Chiang Mai.

## 2. ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first section discusses gender analysis in five thematic areas of the Framework for Political Dialogue (FPD). They include: politics, social issues, the economy, security, and land and natural resource management. The latter section of the paper presents an overview of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) international norms and standards, and is concerned with women's participation in peace-building more broadly. This section also presents global evidence showing how women's participation in public life demonstrably contributes to sustainable peace.

### 2.1 Politics

#### 2.1.1 Policies and practices

The 2008 Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (the 'Constitution') contains provisions that create automatic barriers for women's participation in politics, economy, and the peace process. Notably absent from the Constitution are temporary special measures and quota systems which could improve women's participation. These absences contribute to denying and preventing women from realising their rights to participate in public life.<sup>5</sup> One of the factors that contributed to the Constitution's fundamental flaws was a low level of civilian participation in its original drafting.

Several provisions in the Constitution cement fundamental structural barriers to women's participation in public life. For example, Article 59(d) stipulates that those who assume top-level leadership and decision making positions in the country's governance, legislature, and judiciary functions—including President and Vice-President—are required to be 'well-acquainted' with defense matters. This stipulation implicitly hinders women's participation in top-level leadership and decision-making positions within the Government, as women have been historically kept out of defense-related roles. For instance, appointment of Union Ministers, Chapter 5, article 232 (A) states: "[t]he President shall appoint Union Ministers using the following methods to assess their qualifications: obtaining a list of suitable Defense Service personnel, nominated by the Commander-in-Chief of the Defense Services for the Ministry of Defense, Home Affairs, and Border Affairs." This clause indirectly excludes women from holding three salient ministerial portfolios in Myanmar, since these positions are constitutionally mandated as being suitable only for military personnel.

Likewise, Chapter 8, article 352, which references 'men-only' positions and stipulates, 'nothing in this section shall prevent appointment of men to the positions that are suitable for men only' opens the door to a series of legal loopholes for indirect discrimination. The clause does not provide clear specifications on what constitutes suitability of men only for certain positions, making it extremely difficult for women to build a case claiming discrimination against them. The lack of clarity in this article as to the meaning of 'men only' roles could easily lead to the interpretation that certain positions can be deemed off-limits for women and perceived to be more suitable for men. A circular logic is at play, in which the definition of 'men only' roles can be stretched according to existing discriminatory practices and attitudes, thus reinforcing barriers against women's participation.

Another important structural barrier to women's participation in politics can be found in the constitutional provision embedding a 25% quota for the military in Myanmar's parliament. Since

5 Gender Equality Network & Global Justice Center. (2016). *Shadow Report*. July, Yangon: GEN & Global Justice Center; New York; Women's Organisation Network. (2016). *CEDAW Shadow Report*. July, Yangon: WON.



the military has historically been an entirely male dominated institution, women are largely excluded from service, making their representation in parliament through this military quota implausible. Here we see how both governance structures and legal frameworks hinder women's participation throughout Myanmar's political landscape.

## 2.1.2 Quota system

By accession to the CEDAW Convention, all signatories agree to adopt concrete measures—including, but not limited to, temporary special measures such as quotas—to improve the participation of women in all areas of public life. CEDAW General Recommendation 5, on Temporary Special Measures (1998), recommends that countries implement quotas to increase the participation of women in education, politics, economy and labour markets.<sup>6</sup>

Despite its CEDAW obligation, the Government of Myanmar (GoM) has taken no steps to institute gender quotas to ensure the increased participation of women in public life.<sup>7</sup> To fulfill its CEDAW obligations, as well as those outlined under the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) (2013-2022)—the primary policy framework to advance women's rights and achieve gender equality—the GoM should create a quota system to increase the number of women in public life, including within the peace process.

At the first UPC held in January of 2016, there was agreement to include a 30% minimum gender quota in every level of political dialogue going forward. However, no measures have been taken to implement this commitment. While evidence from other countries clearly shows that the utilisation of a gender quota is an important and effective tool for fostering a gender-inclusive peace process, peace actors in Myanmar continue to stall, overlooking this essential mechanism.

AGIPP offers the following recommendations to the Government of Myanmar, EAOs and all peace actors:

**1. Amend relevant sections in the 2008 Constitution's articles that discriminate against women and discourage women's participation in public life, including in the peace process.** These include articles 232, 352 (holding ministerial positions), 343, 445 (granting immunity for armed forces), and 381 (suspending human rights in times of emergency).

**2. Mandate that all peace process entities, along with Union and State legislatures, implement a minimum 30% gender quota,** as well as general gender inclusion policies designed to increase women's participation and gender perspectives in future political dialogues and political decision-making processes, and require all peace process actors to review the current policies and practices in order to establish a minimum 30% gender inclusion policy, as committed to at the First Union Peace Conference in January 2016.

**3. Undertake regular gender audits of organisations and processes within the political dialogue to assess how women access decision-making opportunities,** the extent of this access, and how gender equality is (or is not) being integrated into the organisations as a key policy concern.

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<sup>6</sup> As above.

<sup>7</sup> Women's League of Burma. (2008). *In the Shadow of Junta: CEDAW Shadow Report*. Chiang Mai: WLB.



**4. Implement gender experts within all peace organisations,** to ensure that gender remains a primary area of focus.

**5. Allocate at least 15 % of overall peace-building funds provided by donor countries for women, peace and security, and gender inclusion.**

**6. Support the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW)** to ensure it serves in the future, as decided by Myanmar women, as a foundation for evidence-informed WPS policymaking.

**7. Advocate for public awareness around women, peace, and security issues** to the Government and civil society organisations, including grassroots women's groups.

### **2.1.3 Barriers to women's participation**

Myanmar's peace process, which has been under way since 2011, represents one of the most important aspects of Myanmar's transition to democracy.<sup>8</sup> Yet, low levels of women assuming diverse roles in ceasefire negotiations and political dialogues threatens to hinder these important gains. As noted previously, the primary cause of this ongoing obstacle involves cultural frameworks that see men as being uniquely capable of taking on and performing decision making roles in politics, as well as a glaring lack of support for institutional structures and policy frameworks that encourage women's participation in political spaces.

Participants in the various Women, Peace and Security Forums held throughout the country in 2015 and 2016 reported that a 'talent deficit'—or, lack of skilled and competent women available for inclusion in the peace process—has, time and again, been used as an excuse by men for their exclusion. No merit based criteria has, to date, been applied to account for the selection of men participating in the political dialogue. Nor were any evidence-based analyses conducted that compared the skill and competency differentials between men and women. By arbitrarily making women responsible for their own invisibility, Myanmar's socially entrenched gender biases continue to take prominence over real evidence regarding women's qualifications and capabilities.<sup>9</sup>

### **2.1.4 Structural and policy-related barriers**

#### **Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement**

One of the key achievements of Myanmar's peace process thus far has been the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) by eight EAOs of the structure of NCA itself, however, does not encompass a meaningful framework for women's inclusion and gender justice. Instead, it poses further challenges for women. For instance, one clause stipulates that the NCA shall work towards inclusion of "reasonable number of women representatives in the political dialogue process" (NCA Chapter 5, Clause 23). This clause does not adequately meet the CEDAW obligation to ensure sufficient levels of participation by women. The lack of specification as to what a 'reasonable' number of women representatives actually means illustrates that the agreement is not consistent with the CEDAW standard,<sup>10</sup> nor does it take seriously the evidence base for, and contexts in which gender quotas have been implemented. Clearly, such an assertion is an inadequate way to structurally support the meaningful and substantive participation of women in peace-building. Rather, the clause

8 Swisspeace. (2014). *Understanding Myanmar's Peace Process: Ceasefire-Agreements*. Catalyzing Reflections Series, 2/2014. Bern: Swisspeace.

9 Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2017). Forthcoming.

10 As above

opens the possibility of misinterpretation around what constitutes ‘reasonableness.’ Moreover, by asserting that the NCA will ‘work toward’ gender inclusion, the document lacks a timely and binding commitment to these issues, and poses a continual challenge to their future implementation.

Another example of a missed opportunity for substantive gender inclusion in the NCA can be seen in its provision for civilian participation in the nascent Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC). The NCA’s Chapter 4, article 12(a) states that the JMC will include “well-respected individuals,” “ethnic representatives,” and “other relevant representatives and stakeholders” in its operations. This framework for civilian participation could have provided an opportunity for women’s engagement—however, the ambiguous language used here means that this opportunity has largely been missed. In light of the prevailing societal norms around gender, this clause appears to tacitly define ‘well-respected individuals’ as being well-respected *men*. Early in the process, had more explicit provisions for women’s participation been included in the NCA, then a more meaningful interpretation of—and push for women’s participation—could have been made.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.1.5 Framework for Political Dialogue (FPD)

The FPD, developed after the signing of the NCA, lacks categorical provisions to guarantee women’s participation and gender justice. While a 30% women’s participation rate was clearly stated within this framework—a notable achievement—the text nevertheless requires further refinement to ensure the inclusion of gender perspectives. Take, for example, the clause that states, “make efforts to ensure 30% participation of women in all political dialogues.” As written, this statement does not guarantee the participation of women in political dialogues. Rather, it simply notes that an *effort* will be made to include women, rendering women’s participation as little more than a ‘suggestion’ or an aspirational target. Rather than being framed as a commitment, the clause instead remains ambiguous and open to interpretation.<sup>12</sup>

Another factor which suggests that the FPD does not put appropriate emphasis on gender equality involves its placement of gender issues under the ‘social matters’ thematic area. Gender should instead be integrated across all themes and be a stand-alone theme in the ‘politics’ stream, thereby giving the issue of gender equality and women’s participation in the peace process its deserved attention. The current framing of the FPD creates an impression that gender equality is merely a social matter, rather than a cross-cutting issue of relevance across politics, natural resource management, security and economics.<sup>13</sup>

Given these limitations, the NCA and FPD are failing to productively promote the inclusion of gender perspectives. They also fail to reduce structural barriers that stem from a narrow peace architecture needed to accelerate women’s participation. AGIPP therefore proposes the following recommendations:

- 1. Establish a gender policy committee** to oversee all peace process structures and mechanisms to implement the minimum 30% gender quota, and to ensure that gender equality is an overarching principle and consideration in all reconciliation and peacemaking efforts, including all peace process themes.

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11 As above.

12 Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2017). Forthcoming; Gender Equality Network & Global Justice Center. (2016).

13 Gender Equality Network & Global Justice Center. (2016).

**2. Mandate that committee review policy framework documents in the peace FPD and NCA implementation** to ensure the Government is upholding its international commitments and obligations to advance women's participation and gender inclusion in the peace process, as outlined in the BPfA, CEDAW and the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

**3. Ensure a minimum 30% gender quota for women's participation in any review or assessment of the peace process' documents,** at the 21st Century Panglong Union Peace Conferences, including any revisions of policy documents for the FPD.

**4. Include a minimum 30% of women as ceasefire monitors and commissioners.**

**5. Consult with women's rights organisations in the lead-up to all future UPCs** on the agendas, working methods and ways to include gender perspectives in these conferences.

**6. Make gender, peace and security advisers are available to negotiators** on all sides to provide timely and evidence-informed advice.

### **2.1.6 Socio-cultural gender norms and attitudes**

A wide array of socio-cultural gender norms impedes women's ability to effectively participate in the political sphere. These norms are ubiquitous, prevalent in all sectors of a society which considers women's roles in domestic work, child, and care giving work to be their 'traditional' and 'natural' responsibilities. Furthermore, this society also fails to consider the ways in which gender norms have negatively impacted women's ability to engage in politics. The path of political engagement commonly pursued by citizens in Myanmar requires them to attend trainings, as well as meetings at the regional and state level of Parliament; and to be present at the offices of government agencies. Women often lack the ability to demonstrate this attendance, as traveling for work is hindered due to the scarcity of time, resources, or security along the journey. Often, these barriers impede women's abilities to fully participate in the day-to-day requirements of public life.<sup>14</sup> Conversely, women who manage to break the social mould and enter the public arena often face ridicule for having pursued a non-traditional role. As many forum participants noted, those who dare to engage in controversial topics do so at the risk of intimidation, violence, and threats to their safety.

Furthermore, gender norms and expectations stemming from religious, cultural, and traditional beliefs also hinder women's participation in public life. These cultural norms impose heavy social responsibilities on women as caregivers and reproductive beings. For example, women who bear the social burden of taking care of families, in-laws, and relatives, often become overloaded with care giving responsibilities, while their time for engagement in other interests—such as politics, peace-building, and public life—is reduced. Thus, their engagement with these issues suffers. Such obstacles continue to pose significant barriers for women's entry into peace-building.<sup>15</sup> In addition, women who strive to enthusiastically participate in meetings and conferences related to the peace process are often not given equal opportunity to do so, due to the 'triple load' of responsibilities they must bear. Women's productive, reproductive, and care-giving roles inhibit their capacity to actively participate in the peace process.<sup>16</sup>

14 Women's Organisation Network. (2016). *CEDAW Shadow Report*. June, Yangon: WON; Peace Support Fund. (2016).

15 Gender Equality Network & Global Justice Center. (2016); Peace Support Fund. (2016). AGIPP and UN Women. (2016). *From Margin to the Center: Including Women and their priorities in Myanmar's Peace Process*. Myanmar Women Peace Forum held in Naypyidaw.

16 Peace Support Fund. (2016).

Women participating in the forums expressed a recurring reluctance to participate in committee meetings, peace-building dialogues and other activities—not because they lack interest, but because these activities rarely offer support for childcare services or family travel.<sup>17</sup> Other women expressed reluctance due to the societal and cultural norms which cast doubt on women’s abilities to take on leadership and decision making roles, and discount their views and opinions. Participants reinforced the problem that in Myanmar society, social norms hinder women’s leadership in direct, as well as indirect ways.<sup>18</sup>

Recommendations for action include:

- 1. Provide adequate funding** to ensure women have access and can participate in a substantive way to peace meetings, conferences and committees. This would include the allocation of funds for travel, stipends, accommodations, and childcare support.
- 2. Monitor discriminatory practices that inhibit women’s participation in the peace process**, including developing a gender scorecard for all peace structures and entities on women’s participation and gender inclusion within them, and establishing a mechanism to ensure monitoring and reporting of gender equality concerns and discriminatory practices.
- 3. Mainstream gender perspectives across all trainings and peace process support to EAOs and Government actors** assisted by the provision of timely and contextualised gender, peace and security advice.
- 4. Consult with women’s wing of EAOs and political parties on a consistent basis.**

## 2.2 Social factors

The participation of women in any given peace process is beneficial to a country’s sustained peace. Discussions conducted at the Women, Peace, and Security Forums held across Myanmar revealed that women often possess a wealth of in-depth understanding of the socio-economic conditions and hardships in their community. This is due, in a large part, to the ‘triple load’ of family responsibilities that women typically undertake. These responsibilities sensitise women to the needs and insecurities faced by vulnerable members of their families—an awareness that often extends outwards to the broader community. Such understanding may thereby help women engage in and conceptualise socially progressive projects within the framework of peace-building. As such, women’s ‘burdens’ can serve as an asset to effective people-centred policymaking.

The ongoing negative impacts of violent conflict include the spread of contiguous diseases, a decrease in the standard of living, a compromised or collapsed education system, and loss of arable lands. All this destruction further leads to the loss of ‘normalcy’ among an affected population. Moreover, violent conflict often hinders the delivery of essential services to the people, rendering their basic needs unmet and perpetuating an ongoing crisis-state throughout the society.<sup>19</sup>

What follows is a closer look at some of the social issues that directly result from violent conflict in Myanmar. These issues were raised in detail by forum participants. They include: education issues,

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17 AGIPP Advocacy Letter to Joint Monitoring Committee- Union Level. 5 May 2016.

18 Peace Support Fund. (2016); Women, Peace and Security Forums (2016 ) held in Kachin, Chin, Mon States and Tanintharyi Division; Action Aid, Trocaire, Oxfam, CARE. (2014). *Women’s Leadership*. Yangon: Oxfam.

19 Women, Peace and Security Forum. (2016). Held in Kachin State.

health issues, the illicit drug epidemic, human trafficking, economic issues, security issues, gender-based violence, and natural resource management and land issues.

## 2.2.1 Education

In Myanmar, over 50% of school-aged children do not attend school.<sup>20</sup> This crisis of education is more evident in violent conflict-affected areas—ethnic regions in which the standards and quality of education are decreasing yearly.<sup>21</sup> Women and girls face an uphill challenge in accessing quality education. With the rise of costs for mandatory school related fees, and rampant corruption among teachers (a response to the problem of their meagre pay), many parents can no longer afford to send their children to school. Instead, children are often encouraged to drop out and search for work. Moreover, if a family can only afford to send one child to school, prevailing socio-cultural norms dictate that a son's education be prioritised over that of a daughter.<sup>22</sup>

In theory, Myanmar offers free basic education for all citizens. In practice, however, successive governments have not allocated sufficient budgetary support for education, whilst the budget allocated for the military is greater than that of the health, education, and social sectors combined. Add to this the dearth of funding in ethnic and violent conflict afflicted areas, and it becomes clear that education in Myanmar has reached a crisis state. Lack of teachers, basic infrastructure, resources and materials, coupled with social norms privileging the education of sons all hinder girls' access to quality education, while the persistence of violent conflict creates an obstacle for parents who need to send their daughters to school in distant locations.<sup>23</sup>

Many social problems in Myanmar can be directly linked to a pervasive dearth in quality education. But of all those affected by conflict, the most vulnerable groups suffering from the absence of educational access are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Having fled from violent conflict, IDP children are forced to abandon their studies prematurely. Although some non-governmental and community-led programmes provide basic primary education to children in IDP camps, it is generally difficult for children to attend more formal schools, rendering their future educational opportunities precarious.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, when peace process actors negotiate the resettlement of IDPs, the provision of educational opportunities should be placed front and center.

Another group that suffers from a lack of education under the conditions of armed conflict is female combatants working in EAOs. Female combatants, often recruited young, face ongoing obstacles to accessing, or continuing, their education.<sup>25</sup> This, in turn, prohibits further growth in public life, as the lack of skills can inhibit an individual's confidence and capacity to meaningfully engage in decision making processes.<sup>26</sup> Promoting the inclusion and participation of women in the peace process therefore requires first improving women's leadership capacities and confidence levels. Offering free education, providing adequate numbers of trained school teachers in remote and ethnic areas, and including skill development programmes should be prioritised among EAOs and the organisations that support them.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, educational policies focused on increasing school

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20 AGIPP and UN Women. (2016).

21 As above.

22 Women's League of Burma. (2008); Women's Organisation Network. (2016).

23 Women's League of Burma. (2016); Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2017).

Forthcoming; UN-CEDAW. (2013). *CEDAW GR30*. October. Geneva: OHCHR.

24 First Union Peace Conference. (2016). Social Sector Discussion on IDP issues. Naypyidaw.

25 Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2017). Forthcoming.

26 Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2015); Women, Peace and Security Forum. (2016). Held in Kachin State; AGIPP and UN Women. (2016).

27 As above.

teachers' pay (in order to prevent corruption within this sector) and rebalancing the student-teacher ratio could further alleviate this challenge, as adequately compensated teachers often demonstrate more enthusiasm for providing quality education.<sup>28</sup>

Some agreements have taken provisional steps to address the connection between conflict and poor education. The NCA, for example, includes assurances for the improvement of health, education, and socio-economic development issues in its Chapter 6, Article 251(1). The NCA fails, however, to stipulate that these initiatives guarantee the participation of women. Again, the point cannot be understated: it is necessary to categorically mandate gender inclusion in all aspects of the peace process, as to fail to do so undermines the possibilities and exacerbates existing structural barriers to gender equality. Only by undertaking the steps will the NCA comply with international norms and standards, such as CEDAW General Recommendation 30, Article 4, and address the educational needs of women.

To adhere to these standards the GoM should bear in mind a number of responsibilities as it devises policies aimed at rebuilding the social sector following violent conflict. These responsibilities include: reintegration of war-affected girls into schools or universities, repairing and reconstructing the school infrastructure, preventing the occurrence of attacks and threats against girls and their teachers, and ensuring that perpetrators of such acts of violence are promptly investigated, prosecuted, and punished.<sup>29</sup>

In summary, some key points include:

- Poor financial resources for education create barriers for women and girls in their quest to access a quality education in conflict areas.
- Education reform responsive to the diverse needs of women and girls is crucial in achieving a lasting peace.
- War-affected young women and girls should receive free, compulsory secondary education.
- Young women and girls should be able to receive an education in a safe, conflict-free learning environment.
- Formal and informal educational settings should integrate gender sensitive school curriculums to combat gender stereotypes.

## 2.2.2 Health

Another social issue affecting women that is intricately bound to conflict is that of health. The key underlying cause of Myanmar's failing health care system is insufficient budget allocation coupled with inadequate numbers of skilled medical providers. As noted previously, amongst public expenditures, the military budget receives most of Myanmar's public spending. Thus, women and girls in remote areas have reduced access to basic health care provision.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, within this challenging landscape, the sexual and reproductive health needs of women often go completely unmet. Low quality health care systems in remote and conflict-affected areas force women to face a high risk of unplanned pregnancy, sexual and reproductive injuries and sexually transmitted infections.<sup>31</sup> Lack of proper sanitation, sewage systems, toilets, proper nutrition,

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28 As above.

29 Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2017). Forthcoming.

30 Women's League of Burma. (2008); Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2017). Forthcoming; Women, Peace and Security Forum. (2016). Held in Kachin State.

31 UN Women. (2016). *The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*; Gender Equality Network and Kachin Women's Peace Network. (2013). *Women's Needs Assessment*



and poor living conditions give rise to the worsening health situation of the IDP population. Moreover, although women require yearly check-ups to maintain their sexual and reproductive health, IDP women do not have access to this basic service, and the physical restrictions placed on women in IDPs camps which hinder their mobility often prevent them from accessing treatment beyond the camps.<sup>32</sup> While CEDAW's Article 12 stipulates that state parties are obliged to ensure that women receive access to healthcare, the GoM has failed to take this obligation seriously.

Evidence also reveals that maternal mortality rates in conflict-affected areas are consistently higher than in other areas, due to inadequate numbers of qualified birth attendants, doctors and midwives, as well as traditional mid-wives and birth attendants who do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to handle sexual and reproductive-related emergencies. A pervasive lack of medical supplies exacerbates this problem.<sup>33</sup> In 2012, it was reported that in certain regions Myanmar was experiencing one maternal death for every one hundred live births (1/100).<sup>34</sup>

In summary, some key points include:

- Minimal, or entirely absent government expenditure on women's health services contribute to poor health outcomes for women and children.
- Community-based organisations that could provide basic health care services to IDPs are needed in both government and non-government-controlled ethnic areas.
- Organisations providing essential health care services for women should consider women's varying experiences, needs and identities.

### 2.2.3 Illicit drug production and use

Illicit drug production and use is a widespread problem that negatively impacts Myanmar's economy and society. Men and women are both affected, resulting in a myriad of negative social consequences.<sup>35</sup> The national Drug Eradication Strategic Plan (2000-2015) is now in place until 2019 and is designed to tackle this issue. However, illicit drug production, distribution, and usage has continued to surge, and negatively impact the lives of women. According to forum participants, in Kachin State, some parents suffer from addiction so acutely, they often spend their meagre incomes on drugs, rather than on their children's education.<sup>36</sup>

Prevailing gender norms dictate that women and girls must be submissive to their husbands and fathers. These gendered dynamics are amplified when male relatives become addicted to drugs. Forum participants described several cases in which drug addicted parents and spouses pushed their children and wives into exploitative labor situations—often resulting in human trafficking—for money to buy drugs. Simultaneously, increased levels of gender-based violence (GBV) were said to be linked to drug addiction.<sup>37</sup> Some women reported cases in which drug-affected men harassed and committed violent acts against women. These examples illustrate the reality that

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*in IDP Camps, Kachin State*. and Yangon: GEN & KWPN; Manjoo, R and McRaith, C. (2011). "Gender-Based Violence and Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Areas." *Cornell International Law Journal*. 11 (44), pp. 11-31.

32 Women's League of Burma. (2008); Gender Equality Network and Kachin Women's Peace Network. (2013); Gender Equality Network in Kachin Women's Peace Network. (2013).

33 Gender Equality Network and Kachin Women's Peace Network. (2013).

34 Women's Organisation Network. (2016); Women, Peace and Security Forum. (2016). Held in Kachin State.

35 Women's Organisation Network. (2016); Women, Peace and Security Forum. (2016). Held in Kachin State; Women's League of Burma. (2008); AGIPP and UN Women. (2016).

36 Women's League of Burma. (2008); Women, Peace and Security Forum. (2016). Held in Kachin State.

37 Women's League of Burma. (2008); Women, Peace and Security Forum. (2016). Held in Kachin State.



women remain at increased risk of life-threatening GBV that is often tied in to the drug epidemic.<sup>38</sup> While poppy plantations are more lucrative than rice, making them a preferable crop for many farmers in economically stressful times, the escalation of drug production, distribution and use has sparked a chain of negative consequences in the lives of many women and girls.<sup>39</sup>

Responding to this, peace actors should take the illicit drug problem and its implications seriously as they work to address social issues stemming from conflict. More than simply ending armed conflict, the peace process itself must respond to by-products of the war economy, which reinforce insecurity and lack of rule of law.<sup>40</sup>

In summary, some key points include:

- The ongoing production of opium and other illicit drugs continues to negatively impact families and communities.
- Strategic policy development and implementation around the illicit drug epidemic should factor in the security, health, and survival of women, whilst considering the potential risks of drug eradication efforts to women and girls.
- Rural development committees and working committees related to illicit drugs should ensure the minimum 30% gender quota inclusion in their activities.
- Taking a comprehensive approach to tackling the illicit drug epidemic within the framework of the peace process will require the Tatmadaw, EAOs and law enforcement agencies to address issues of production, distribution, trafficking and use.
- Policies that offer long-term economic alternatives for farmers could help in tackling the illicit drug trade. Women's participation in the development of such policies could help strengthen the potential for achieving solutions.

## 2.2.4 Human trafficking

The 2008 CEDAW Committee recommended in their Concluding Observations that the GoM “prosecute and punish traffickers and support and protect victims.”<sup>41</sup> While an official Anti-Trafficking Law was put in place by the GoM in 2005, human trafficking continues to persist across the country. Failure to effectively address the trafficking problem is, in part, linked to the inability of the GoM to address the underlying causes of trafficking. Economic hardship stemming from violent conflict creates material insecurities and loss of livelihood among a range of populations in Myanmar. These conditions push both women and men to search for work—a process through which many fall victim to exploitation.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the fundamental conditions fueling human trafficking are linked to Myanmar's continued failure to provide adequate social services to its population. This, coupled with underdevelopment and violent conflict in ethnic areas, suggests that the problem would be best addressed through a comprehensive, multifaceted policy strategy.

Human trafficking has become more widespread and acute around IDP camps in Kachin State, Northern Shan State, and Palaung areas.<sup>43</sup> Facing dire living conditions in the camps, residents often seek to migrate across the border to China in search of employment, where they become

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38 AGIPP and UN Women. (2016).

39 Women's Organisation Network. (2016); Women, Peace and Security Forum (2016). Held in Kachin State.

40 Women, Peace and Security Forum. (2016). Held in Kachin and Shan States.

41 UN-CEDAW. (2008). *CEDAW Concluding Observations- Myanmar*. November, Geneva: CEDAW Periodic.

42 Women's League of Burma. (2016). *A Long Way to Go: CEDAW Shadow Report*. Chiang Mai: WLB.

43 As above.

vulnerable to traffickers.<sup>44</sup> Often, brokers and middlemen are themselves members of Kachin victims' own communities.<sup>45</sup> Some of the common experiences encountered by survivors include failure of accountability on the part of perpetrators, weak law enforcement agencies, ineffective prosecution, and difficulty in obtaining justice. Although men are also survivors of trafficking, the gender dimensions of this problem are stark. Hence, we suggest that women's specific perspectives and experiences be incorporated into all anti-trafficking policy development. Women's networks and community-based organisations can prove to be valuable resources in this regard.

In summary, some key points include:

- Women's organisations and community-based advocacy groups are conducting important research on human trafficking. Their efforts should be directly integrated into the design and implementation of anti-trafficking policy.
- Community-based women's organisations that operate without restriction are likely to provide high-quality and needed assistance and reintegration services to trafficking survivors.
- Women living near violent conflict areas face a great risk of human trafficking, and would benefit from the relocation of army bases to at least five miles away from residential villages.
- A need exists for the bolstering of trafficking prevention efforts, including the development of awareness-raising campaigns and viable alternatives for women's income generation in villages and IDP camps.
- Gender-inclusive development projects provide important economic opportunities for women.

## 2.3 The economy

In discussing the nexus between economic issues, conflict and gender, women throughout the country who participated in AGIPP's forums often expressed a view that women typically obtain awareness of the practical issues affecting human security through responsibilities involving the care and wellbeing of the family.<sup>46</sup> In conflict affected areas, they said, women's awareness of these issues is even more acute, since men participating in armed struggles frequently leave women with the responsibility of providing for the family. Due to the disproportionate economic burdens that women bear, it is imperative that actors undertaking economic policy planning engage gender analysis among their activities. Conducting such analysis could productively improve policy outcomes, decisions, and actions influencing women in conflict-affected environments.

Forum participants also discussed economic challenges persisting in conflict-affected communities which could undermine the peace process. One emerging challenge involves the impact of large-scale development projects, primarily associated with the recent influx of Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs). Many of these projects have resulted in land confiscation and appropriations of community-owned farmland. This, in turn, has caused an increase in civil unrest in many parts of the country.<sup>47</sup>

Such incidents are more visible in the extractive industry, where hydropower plants and mining operations are often accompanied by FDIs. Robust gender analysis should be undertaken to minimise the negative impacts of these development projects and ensure they are carried out in line with international practices that safeguard the environment and community. Analysis should

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44 Women, Peace and Security Forum. (2016). Held in Kachin State.

45 Kamler, E. (2015). "Women of the Kachin Conflict: Trafficking and militarized femininity on the Burma-China border." *Journal of Human Trafficking*. 1 (3), pp. 209-234.

46 Women's League of Burma. (2016).

47 Women, Peace and Security Forum. (2016). Held in Dawei, Tanintharyi Division.

also be conducted to determine what benefits, if any, women will derive from these projects.<sup>48</sup> Such analysis should be conducted prior to the implementation of these programmes, to assess their potential risks and impacts from a gender perspective. Environmental and Social Impact Assessments should also be conducted to reduce negative impacts whilst maximising the potential benefits to all communities.<sup>49</sup>

In summary, some key points include:

- Strategies required to support women's economic activities include providing female entrepreneurs with tax exemptions of up to three years after establishing a business.
- Women in rural areas need vocational schools, trainings, capacity building to strengthen their leadership abilities.
- Women in conflict-affected areas should be consulted on large-scale development projects.
- Women living with disabilities are also in need of increased support and opportunities for economic advancement.
- In addition to using tax incentives to attract FDI projects, the Government would benefit from using strategies to increase labor market competitiveness through effectively improving women's labour skills, training, employment conditions and access to labour markets.
- Women's labor rights must be considered in national economic strategies, as this will lead to the improvement of labor rights and productivity more broadly.
- Building policies that support sustainable peace requires transparent taxation and collection of taxes utilised for health, social and education sectors.

## 2.4 Security

Every violent interaction has gendered dimensions. The understanding of peace and security often also varies according to gender.<sup>50</sup> In protecting citizens against violent conflict and natural disasters, it is therefore crucial for peace actors to incorporate the gender specific experiences of women and girls into the development of protection efforts. Indeed, the rigorous adoption of gender perspectives around security is key to achieving inclusive peace.<sup>51</sup>

Insecurity is one of the biggest hindrances hampering women's access to the peace process. Forum participants throughout the country reported surges of gender-based violence, defamation, intimidation, and even death threats occurring in their home villages as a result of having demanded participation. Such experiences were hardly rare. Rather, they were frequent. Responding to this problem, AGIPP suggests that future UPCs give increased attention to the topic of ensuring the security of women.<sup>52</sup> Such demands are in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), which calls for member states to increase the participation of women at all decision-making levels of conflict prevention and peace-building.

In summary, some key points include:

- Women ceasefire monitors and commissioners bring important perspectives on security issues facing communities throughout Myanmar. Thus, their efforts should be supported in the form of a minimum 30% gender quota.

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48 As above.

49 AGIPP and UN Women. (2016).

50 Swisspeace. (2014).

51 First Women Forum. (2012). *Women's Voice from the First Women Forum*, held in Yangon.

52 Women, Peace and Security Forum. (2016). Held in Kachin, Kayah, Chin, Mon, Rakhine, Shan States, Tanintharyi Division.

- Increase of women in the Myanmar Police Force can contribute, over time, to building a more representative and responsive police service.
- Gender, peace and security specialists possess expertise that could benefit the development of security policies if more systematically included in policy deliberations.

### 2.4.1 Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is a major obstacle to achieving sustainable peace. Throughout Myanmar, many conflict actors and civilians alike commit GBV with impunity. During the second UPC it was recommended that all peace process actors focus on the issue of GBV under the rubric of Myanmar’s emerging comprehensive national legislative framework, rather than creating standalone legislation designed to respond to conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>53</sup>

The NCA includes a provision addressing the problem of violence against women; however, its framework is non-inclusive.<sup>54</sup> While intended to curb conflict actors’ committing acts of ‘sexual violence in conflict,’ the provision falls short of comprehensively addressing *all* forms of violence against women; that is, it adheres to a problematic, narrow definition of ‘violence’—one which fails to consider many other forms including psychological, physical, and economic violence. AGIPP suggests that peace process actors responsible for implementing the NCA broaden their definition of ‘violence’ to ensure that this agreement comprehensively protects women in conflict-affected areas.<sup>55</sup> An overlooked concern involves the typical spike in GBV once actual armed conflict has ended. Indeed, post-war environments are often as dangerous, if not more so, for women. Research shows that transition periods are crucial moments for safeguarding women and preventing the continued rise of GBV.<sup>56</sup>

Engaging with peace process policies that address women’s insecurities not only demonstrates state willingness to comply with international standards and norms and adherence to rule of law. Rule of law strengthens democratic norms and values, and bolsters the protection of citizens’ human rights. Establishing trust between citizens, law enforcement agencies, the state apparatus, and duty bearers is a delicate process that takes time—particularly following the legacy of decades of mistrust. Justice and accountability mechanisms are tested for their reliability. The failure to prosecute perpetrators of GBV, for example, sends a clear message that unlawful behaviour will not be met with repercussions. Therefore, incidents of GBV must be investigated in a timely manner, to ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished regardless of their status in the community. Doing so will display both the GoM and EAOs’ commitments to a robust rule of law—one that will serve as a benchmark for measuring the success or failure of the peace process. Indeed, this success or failure will further be measured according to women’s sense of security in post-conflict affected environments.<sup>57</sup>

53 Gender Equality Network & Global Justice Center. (2016); Women, Peace and Security Forum. (2016). Held in Kachin and Mon States.

54 Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2017). Forthcoming.

55 Additional recommendations on how NCA implementation should address the inclusion of women and utilise a gender lens can be seen in Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2015); Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2017). Forthcoming.

56 See, for example, R. Coomaraswamy and D Fonseka., eds. New Delhi: Women Unlimited.; Manjoo, R. & McRaith, C. (2011). “Gender-based violence and justice in conflict and post-conflict areas.” *Cornell International Law Journal*. Vol 44, pp. 11-31; UNDP. (2013). *Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence in Timor-Leste: Access to Justice Options, Barriers and Decision-making Processes in the context of Legal Pluralism*. UNDP Justice System Programme: Timor-Leste.

57 Women, Peace and Security Forum. (2016). Held in Kachin and Mon State, Tanintharyi Division.; Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process. (2015); AGIPP and UN Women (2016).

In summary, some key points include:

- Identifying, preventing and reducing GBV requires the development, implementation, and resourcing of comprehensive national legislation, as well as will and resources to enforce the rule of law.
- Coordination and integration of evidence-informed policy within existing and evolving GBV response systems, whilst recognising the good work that is emerging through community initiatives and community based organisations (CBOs), should be front and centre of policy discussions.
- Ending impunity for gender-based violence and improving access to justice for survivors can be achieved through the development of a legal framework and institutional reform in security and justice sectors.
- Implementing and monitoring the NCA will help peace actors more effectively prevent and respond to gender-based violence.
- Bolster efforts to investigate and prosecute those who commit gender-based violence.
- Amending the Constitution in accordance with international norms and standards to establish a more robust rule of law, regulations, and procedures to end gender-based violence.
- All WPS standards and norms must be effectively implemented through national programmes and projects, to eliminate gender-based violence.

## 2.5 Natural resource management and land

To achieve sustainable peace in Myanmar, all populations in Myanmar must enjoy the equitable sharing of benefits derived from natural resources and land. The sharing of land and resources must be enhanced regardless of a person's religion, ethnicity, sex, or gender. Given that natural resources and land issues are a root cause of conflict, however, it is not only crucial, but also fundamental that this topic be included in all political dialogues within the peace process. Similarly, gender analysis on existing laws, policies, and practices around women's access to and control over natural resources and land should be conducted.

Many of Myanmar's cultural laws and practices inhibit women's rights to the inheritance of land. Compounding women's lack of access to information on laws and policies relevant to land and natural resources, these prohibitive cultural legal practices render women unable to utilise land laws to claim their rights. Addressing this, AGIPP proposes that that thorough gender analysis be conducted on the land policies of the GoM and EAOs, to identify customary laws that discriminate against women's access to land, and take steps toward their reform.

Forum participants raised concerns that gendered power imbalances are commonly exhibited through women's lack of access to participation in natural resource and land policymaking.<sup>58</sup> AGIPP therefore also recommends that the GoM, EAOs, and all other peace actors engage two primary topics in their discussions of land and natural resource management. Firstly, the rights to joint ownership of lands and natural resources between spouses; and secondly, resource sharing arrangements that take into account the interests, needs, and priorities of women.<sup>59</sup>

In summary, some key points include:

- The need exists to establish national laws and policies that guarantee women's access to and control over natural resources, including decision making in natural resource management.

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58 AGIPP and UN Women. (2016).

59 As above; *Women, Peace and Security Forum*. (2016). Held in Kachin, Chin, Kayin, Mon States and Tanintharyi Division.

- Women can provide important perspectives and decision-making inputs on processes related to large scale infrastructure and extractive industry projects. Actors working on these projects should ensure that women's rights to benefit from these projects are articulated in all contracts of large scale infrastructure and extractive industry projects, and that women take part in contract enforcement monitoring committees.
- Gender perspectives should be integrated into undertakings involving water remediation for rivers, lakes, and farmland, especially areas affected by the extractive mining industry.
- Women must receive equal pay for equal work on natural resource-related projects.



## 3. INTERNATIONAL LAWS, NORMS, AND STANDARDS

The right of a woman to participate in public life is a fundamental human right, whether it is in a peace process, elected office or other forms of public decision-making. This right to political participation is guaranteed by a set of international laws and standards, including CEDAW, the BPfA, and all the UN Security Council Resolutions on WPS. As a UN member state, Myanmar is bound to respect and implement these international conventions and resolutions.<sup>60</sup>

### 3.1 Why women's inclusion matters

Peace dialogues and processes present a window of opportunity to transform many of the root causes of conflict, violence and inequality. They also invite the possibility of building a more equitable society.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, evidence shows that processes that substantively involve women reap more beneficial post-conflict social outcomes.<sup>62</sup>

All issues—be they political, social, economic, security or natural resource management-related—impact women in different ways than they do men.<sup>63</sup> For example, women and men each participate in 'armed conflict' and experience the many impacts of it. The inclusion of women and their experiences in peace agendas, therefore, expands and the possibilities of such agendas, enabling them to address a broader range of issues.

Recent international studies found that peace processes that include women were 64% more likely to realise sustainability.<sup>64</sup> When women are prepared and equipped for participation in these processes, they are able to make a substantive, influential contribution (i.e., 'quality participation'), which, in turn, brings about better results for peace agreement implementation.<sup>65</sup> An analysis of 156 peace agreements found that women's participation in these processes has a lasting and sustained effect, and that durable peace is linked to the success of having implemented gendered electoral quotas.<sup>66</sup> This correlation demonstrates the growing influence of women, due to the institutionalisation of gender parity in national legislative bodies.<sup>67</sup>

Women participating in peace processes can take on many roles, including:

- Mediators, or members of mediation teams
- Delegates for negotiating parties
- Members of all-female negotiating parties representing a women's rights agenda
- Signatories

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60 As above

61 Villellas, A.M. (2010). *Peace processes, gendered processes*. Barcelona: Institut Catala Internacional.

62 Stone, L.A. (2014). *Women Transforming Conflict A Quantitative Analysis of Female Peacemaking*. Social Science Research Network.

63 Anderlini, S. (2007). *Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publisher.

64 Sandole, D., J.D., and Staroste, I. (2015). "Making the Case for Systematic, Gender-Based Analysis in Sustainable Peace Building." *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*. 33 (2), pp. 119–147.

65 As above.

66 Stone, L.A. (2014).

67 As above.



- Witnesses
- Members of technical committees
- Representatives of civil society women's organisations
- Gender advisers to mediators, facilitators or delegates
- Advocates in parallel forums or working groups focused on gender equality issues

## 3.2 Global evidence

Including women in peace processes is not difficult. Fundamentally it requires men to share political space. In the absence of this women around the world have found and created various ways to ensure their participation is guaranteed in peace processes. Some examples include:

**Aceh**, where, as a reaction to having their participation in the peace talks excluded, Acehese women held a parallel peace conference, in which 500 women presented 22 recommendations to various parties, including to the President, and lobbied for the involvement of women in the negotiations. The All Acehese 2nd Women's Congress, organised in 2005, brought together over 400 women who articulated their concerns over the lack of consultations in key related decisions regarding land ownership, distribution of relief, and lack of protection for IDP women and girls.<sup>68</sup>

**Guatemala**, where women were successful in influencing the talks that led to the 1996 Peace Accord. Key to this advocacy effort was the presence of two women on the negotiating teams of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity and the Government of Guatemala.<sup>69</sup> Women actively participated in their country's civil society forum, ensuring that this forum was linked to the formal peace process. They routinely updated members of civil society on the negotiation of outcomes, and challenges relating to the process.<sup>70</sup>

**Northern Ireland**, where, after forming a women's cross party political group and winning seats in the election, women gained a seat at the peace table in 1997. The resulting Northern Ireland Women's Coalition could work across religious lines, bringing together Catholics and Protestants, and promoting reconciliation and the reintegration of political prisoners.<sup>71</sup>

**Somalia**, where women employed new strategies for taking part in the peace talks taking place among male clan leaders. Women who found commonalities with women from other clans could mobilise, creating what they called a 'sixth clan', in which other women were encouraged to affirm that they belonged.<sup>72</sup>

**South Sudan**, where a Gender Adviser in the mediation team in the 2006 Abuja peace talks for Darfur facilitated the creation of a Gender Expert and Support Team. Following this, female delegates worked together to draft a statement on women's priorities, which was translated into a common gender platform and largely incorporated into the Darfur Peace Agreement text. The priorities identified related to wealth sharing and land rights, physical security, affirmative action and special measures, and women's participation in Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration.

68 UN Women. (2012). *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence*. New York: UN Women.

69 As above.

70 Anderlini, S. (2007).

71 As above; Villellas, A. (2010).

72 Anderson, S. (2005). *My only clan is womanhood: building women's peace identities*. Utrecht: International Fellowship of Reconciliation.

**Colombia**, where the final peace accord between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia contained several measures ensuring women's rights to land ownership, protection of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender rights, and protection of women from GBV. The peace accord also addressed women's specific needs. The accomplishment of ensuring the agreement's inclusion of a gender focus resulted from the active and dedicated participation of women's rights advocates promoting gender parity. Parallel to the peace talks, members of civil society mobilised to advocate for gender equality in the process. In 2014, both sides agreed to establish a sub-commission on gender, which was responsible for ensuring the agreement had an 'adequate gender focus.' The Government also established a position of Gender Adviser to the President. In addition, in Bogota, a women's agency was formed to support the incorporation of gender issues into all peace negotiations. The successful inclusion of gender in the peace accord is the direct result of the relentless advocacy efforts of women's organisations and CSOs determined to ensure that the Government complied with international norms, standards, and practices.<sup>73</sup>

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73 For more the Colombia process see: Washington Office on Latin America. (2016). *Colombia Peace: Monitoring Progress in Peace Dialogues*. <http://colombiapeace.org/> and Colombia Calls <https://vbouvier.wordpress.com>

## 4. CONCLUSION

The ability to participate in politics and public life—including at all levels and in all aspects of peace-building—is a fundamental human right of all women. This right is not only supported, but guaranteed by the policy frameworks of CEDAW, BPfA and all UNSCRs on WPS. Global evidence has shown that women’s participation in the development of peace agreements strengthens them and increases the inclusion of diverse members of society, contributing to sustainable peace.

As this Policy Brief has shown, participants in Women, Peace and Security Forums throughout Myanmar have urged an increase in women’s participation within the peace process. This call, supported by international good practice, is essential to effectively resolving security, economic, social, land and natural resource issues affecting the lives of all members of society—including women. As powerful agents of change, women are uniquely positioned to draw on their experiences of conflict and bring needed perspectives, ideas, and solutions to the peace table at every stage. AGIPP remains firmly dedicated to promoting women’s participation and gender inclusion across all thematic areas of the peace process—including politics, social life, the economy, security, and natural resource management. We urge all peace process actors to join us in this commitment, and actively promote women’s participation and gender inclusion as they continue to work toward a sustainable peace.

## About the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP)

### **AGIPP was formed to address two persistent challenges:**

1. The low levels of women's involvement in peace and security-related negotiations and agreements to date in Myanmar.
2. The critical necessity to improve the inclusion of gendered analysis and outcomes in ceasefire and wider peace agreement texts and implementation.

AGIPP includes associated civil society organisations/networks from across Myanmar and welcomes collaboration with national women's rights organisations/networks and peace organisations that substantively address gender in their work. The work of these organisations/networks spans community level mobilisation to advocacy and policy engagement. Collectively, AGIPP amplifies the voices of its associates and provides an arena for civil society concerns to be brought into the unfolding peace process.

AGIPP is guided by a Steering Committee comprised of seven organisations: Gender and Development Institute, Gender Equality Network, Kachin State Women's Network, Mon Women's Network, Nyein (Shalom) Foundation, Women and Peace Action Network (Shan State), and Women's Organisation Network. A small Secretariat operates in Yangon.

For more information about the Alliance visit:

Website: [www.agipp.org](http://www.agipp.org) (English) [www.agipp.org.mm](http://www.agipp.org.mm) (Myanmar)

[Facebook](#) Alliance for Gender in the Peace Process (AGIPP)

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