Sponsored by the Programme on Modern Burmese Studies at St Antony’s College and the International Gender Studies Centre at Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford

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Gender Policy

Daw Khin Mar Mar Kyi, Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford

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Myanmar has taken another important step toward democratization, following the 2015 election victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. But decades of military repression, ethnic conflicts, political exclusion, abuse of natural resources and the environment, neglect of health, education, and infrastructure, and mismanagement of the economy, have left serious challenges for this new government.

On Monday 15 February, 2016, the Programme on Modern Burmese Studies at St Antony’s College and the International Gender Studies Centre at Lady Margaret Hall convened a workshop entitled “Towards Democracy and Reconciliation: Challenges Facing Myanmar’s Incoming Government.” Co-organized by Dr Daw Khin Mar Mar Kyi and Dr Matthew J Walton, the workshop brought together over a dozen UK experts on Myanmar, drawn from academic, advocacy, and activist communities.

Presenters focused on the challenges facing the new NLD-led government, identifying key stakeholders, persistent and emerging impediments, and potential policy responses. Subjects considered included military legacies, governance concerns, social issues, land and resource management, and conflict and displacement.

With the success of the event, the co-organizers saw an opportunity to effectively channel the insights of the participants into policy-making conversations in Myanmar’s government, civil society, and other political institutions. They also sought to contribute to the developing public discourse on political reform in the country. Participants were asked to transform their presentations into short policy briefs that could be of use to ministries, parliament, and other decision-making bodies in Myanmar. The collected briefs were edited by the co-organizers and translated into Burmese.

Please note that the views and positions presented in these briefs represent the authors and are not necessarily the views of the Programme on Modern Burmese Studies, St Antony’s College, the International Gender Studies Centre, Lady Margaret Hall, or the University of Oxford. In some cases, the views of different authors may diverge or conflict. We believe that including multiple different perspectives in a collection of policy briefs is valuable in fostering public debate in Myanmar.

We intend for this to become a regular event and policy brief series, which can draw on existing expertise among those studying Myanmar, including increasing numbers of scholars and advocates from the country. These and future briefs will be available electronically at the Programme on Modern Burmese Studies website (www.sant.ox.ac.uk/research-centres/programme-modern-burmese-studies) and the Oxford Feminist E-Press (theoxfordfeministepress.wordpress.com/). Please feel free to contact us with any questions or feedback.

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ယနေ့ကြား မိမိတို့အစိုးရရှိသော နိုင်ငံရေးအဖွဲ့အစည်းများ (NLD) ရဲ့ ပြည်သူများကို အကြီးကြီးများ ဝေးကွားပေးနေပါသည်။ ယင်းအချက်များကို မိမိတို့သည် ဆောင်ရွက်နေကြပါစေ။ ယင်းအချက်များကို မိမိတို့သည် အေန်အရှက် ကြည့်ရှုနိုင်သည်။

သို့သော် ယင်းတို့ကို ပြောသွားသည်။ ပြည်သူများကို အကြီးကြီးများ ဝေးကွားပေးနေသည်။ ယင်းအချက်များကို မိမိတို့သည် ဆောင်ရွက်နေကြပါစေ။ 

နောက်ဆုံး၌ မိမိတို့သည် အေန်အရှက် ကြည့်ရှုနိုင်သည်။ ပြည်သူများကို အကြီးကြီးများ ဝေးကွားပေးနေသည်။
Recently, there has been an increase in attacks on women in public in Yangon. In April 2016, there were four gruesome, deadly attacks on women, in the shopping malls, main-streets and shops where they were working in front of horrified crowds of shoppers, colleagues, co-workers, and security guards. Shockingly, many Facebook commenters, mostly men, justified and defended these violent acts of men and even blamed women. Some comments said that is what women do with their ‘evil nature,’ suggesting that they deserved such treatment. That same month, news of women being sexually assaulted on public buses and in taxis by fellow passengers and the driver was widely shared on Facebook. In sharing these stories, many women recounted how they were routinely harassed and assaulted while they were riding. This is something they have to face as part of their daily lives as they are reliant on this transport.

These examples demonstrate that sexual harassment and assault is a shockingly routine occurrence, even in Yangon, and is likely to increase for women across Myanmar. Personal and private violence have become normalised as public violence, indicating the increase of the magnitude and pervasive level of gender-based violence in Burma. The safety and security of women deserve more attention and must be supported by broader policy initiatives related to gender.

Militarization has had an impact on every aspect of society, particularly gender power relations. Myanmar has been ruled by military and para-military regimes from the time it gained independence, except for a brief period of democracy in the 1950s. In recent military regimes, there was no female representation in the political leadership of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC, 1988-1997) or the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC, 1997-2011). Women represented only 2 percent of the leadership of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP, 2011-2016).

While Burma is the home of the most famous female politician in the world, it has one of the lowest percentages of female political representation in Asia. Under the leadership of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and as a result of the National League for Democracy’s victory in the 2015 election, the number of female representatives has increased just over the rank of the lowest level in Asia. This occurred in a country where a female politician with landslide popular support had to go to the extraordinary length of creating a new “State Counsellor” position to circumvent restrictions targeting her in the military-written 2008 Constitution. Despite these changes, Burma’s Parliament remains male dominated as nearly 87% of parliamentarians are male; it also remains at the bottom of the gender equality index in Asia.

Structural nature of gender: Constraints, obstacles and challenges

One of the major constraints for women is the influence of patriarchal cultural values in leadership positions including political representation, high ranking positions in all government institutions, and within families and personal lives. These cultural values have been shaped by the opposed political ideologies of masculine hpon (glory, power, spiritual superiority and charisma) and feminine shame and fear. Women are considered spiritually lower because they are born without hpon. As men alone have hpon, men alone can become hpon-ji (big hpon or male monks) thus securing them access to one of the highest social orders and justifying male superiority. This means that men are accepted as superior, thus giving them privileged access to power and resources. In turn, this creates a hierarchically structured gender order and normalises gender inequality. One practical effect is that the military’s guaranteed parliamentary seats function as a double discrimination against women, since there are very few women within the military and they are unlikely to be senior enough to hold military-reserved posts.

Lack of access to power and resources means women have become the lowest of the low in Burmese society. For example, the poorest of the population in Burma are women working in the agricultural sector or informal sector such as in factories. One striking example is that Burmese female farmers have less access to land and land-related decision-making processes as well as lower income; this is important to highlight in a country where 70% of the population works in agricultural sectors. According to Oxfam’s research, not only do women have a higher illiteracy rate (8%, as compared with 0% for men) and make 20% less income than men, but female
Develop, implement, and support creative, critical public engagement campaigns, including information on reproductive health and rights, sensitization to gender inequality and gender disparity.

Provide further gender awareness through:

- Trainings targeted for the military, police forces, judiciary, policy-makers, media professionals, and educators
- Policies and programs for women and men to learn about gender inequality and how it impacts society.

**Recommendations**

- Develop, implement, and support creative, critical and comprehensive gender education that would include:
  - Attention to sexist and misogynist representations of women in the media and in public life
  - Sensitization to gender inequality and gender disparity
  - Sex education and respecting women’s decisions on reproductive health and rights
- Provide further gender awareness through:
  - Public engagement campaigns, including informal education, social media, community and state radio, television, and other art forms
  - Trainings targeted for the military, police forces, judiciary, policy-makers, media professionals, and educators
- Policies and programs for women and men to learn about gender inequality and how it impacts society.
Policies and programs for men, particularly youths, to be involved in gender issues as well

- In the short term, implement a minimum 30% gender quota of women at all levels of decision-making bodies; this would include government, Parliaments, the judiciary, education, and peace institutions.

- Eliminate gender-based violence through legal reform and victim support:
  - Raise awareness of existing laws, develop and implement additional laws or regulations on gender-based violence, domestic violence, public violence, sexual harassment and gender-based insults
  - Allocate sufficient funding and support services to victims (including legal aid, health assistance, counselling, shelter, etc.)
  - Set up call centres, create a 24/7 access help line, open consultation centres where women can seek help and discuss matters with confidence and privacy and refuge centres where women and children can stay if necessary or they feel they are in danger
  - Provide resources to assist with prosecution of gender-based crimes (for example, pay legal fees for victims)
  - Train police and members of the judiciary (including female officers) to provide appropriate support for gender-based violence victims with privacy, respect, non-judgement and understanding

- Protect the labour and land rights of women:
  - Review existing and outdated laws with gender lens, possibly through the establishment of a special parliamentary committee
  - Provide and protect opportunities and rights of female low income earners and those working in unregulated, underground or informal sectors (farmers, domestic workers, women working in massage parlours, etc.)
  - Protect wages, working conditions, health and safety regulations, especially as they apply differently to female employees
  - Encourage employers, where possible, to provide a child friendly working environment (with child care, maternity leave, or other flexible options)
  - Prosecute those who exploit and violate workers, particularly those who are underage
  - Provide for the safety of women in private, in public, and in the workplace:
    - Enhance public safety by putting CCTV cameras in public places

- Require all mobile companies to provide a free number with an easy code that any victim could use to report sexual harassment in public spaces such as in buses or streets. The victims should be able to activate an alarm by texting to a free ‘helpline.’ The alarm would alert those around her, including passengers, bus drivers, and conductors, but would also directly alert transport police. Those around could then provide immediate help to the victim and it would be more likely that the perpetrator would be caught and prosecuted

- Transport should be immediately able to come to where the accident happens, so that an entire bus does not need to be diverted to the police station

Bibliography


DR DAW KHIN MAR MAR KYI is Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Gender Research Fellow based in Oxford University and the winner of ‘Excellence in Gender Research’ for her Ph.D. She has previously taught at the Australian National University and worked as a senior gender Adviser for many government departments, INGOs and NGOs in Australia, Burma/Myanmar and in the region.
ယုံကြည်ရာစာပိုဒ်များနှင့်အတူမီးရှိသော အခြေခံမှုများဖြင့် အထူးအချိန်ထိုင်ရာသည် အများအတွက် ဤပါးကို ဖြေရှင်းစွာရေးသားပေးခြင်းများကို ပြောပြပုံစံတပါကို အဓိကသော အခြေချိန်များကို မူဝါဒပြုနေသည်။ ဤပါးသည် ပျော်ရွှင်အားလုံးကို ရေးသားနိုင်သည်။ အများအတွက် အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးကို အခြေချိန်များကို ရေးသားနိုင်သည်။ ဤပါးသည် ဗုဒ္ဓရုံးကို မူဝါဒပြုနေသည်။ ပျော်ရွှင်အားလုံးကို ရေးသားနိုင်သည်။ ဤပါးသည် ပျော်ရွှင်အားလုံးကို ရေးသားနိုင်သည်။ ဤပါးသည် ပျော်ရွှင်အားလုံးကို ရေးသားနိုင်သည်။ ဤပါးသည် ပျော်ရွှင်အားလုံးကို ရေးသားနိုင်သည်။ ဤပါးသည် ပျော်ရွှင်အားလုံးကို ရေးသားနိုင်သည်။ ဤပါးသည် ပျော်ရွှင်အားလုံးကို ရေးသားနိုင်သည်။ ဤပါးသည် ပျော်ရွှင်အားလုံးကို ရေးသားနိုင်သည်။ ဤပါးသည် ပျော်ရွှင်အားလုံးကို ရေးသားနိုင်သည်။
သို့မဟုတ် အမိသားအမိသမီးဖြစ်မှုတို့အောက်ပါအား အေပ်အထိမ်းအAMLိဒ္ခါမှာ သို့မဟုတ် အဳကမ္းဖက္မှာ သို့မဟုတ် အမိသမီးများ၏ ဂုဏ္သိကၡာသမာဓိအေပ်ထိခိုက်မှာ ကာကွယ်အားလာချင်ပြီးစီးရန် တွေ့ဆိုရာမရှိပါ။

၄င်းအေပခုံးဆိုခင်းမရှိဖြင့် အမိသမီးတစ်ဦး၏ "ကာအိုခံ" ပေးပေးမှုသည် အမိသမီးများ၏ အမုန်းများဖြင့်သက်ဆိုင်သည်

ရာဇဝတ်မှာ တားဆီးကာကွယ်ရန်သို့မဟုတ် အေပ်ပေးရန် ပုံစံုလံုးလေးသည်

အမိသမီးများ၏မိမိရာယ်ပေးသူများကို ကာကွယ်ရန်အတွက် အမိသမီးများ အေပ်အထိမ်းဖက္သည့် ရာဇဝတ်မှာ တားဆီးကာကွယ်ရန်သို့မဟုတ် အေပ်ပေးရန် ပုံစံုလံုးလေးသည်

အမိသမီးများ တရားမဝင်သားဖြစ်ရာမှာ ျပားမှုမှုမားခြင်းမှာ ရာဇဝတ်ႀကာင့္ အမိသမီးများမှာ ၂င် ဧက ခန္ႀကာင့္ ျပားမှုမားခြင်းမှာ ရာခိုင်ႀကာင့္ အမီးေပးပီး ဝင်းငၾလည်း ျပားသည်မှာ ထင့္ရားသည် သာဓက်ဖြစ်သည်။ လူဦးေရခုနစ္ဆယ္ရာခိုင်ႀကာင့္ စိုက်ပျိုးရာကုန်ဆုးတတ်ကြိုး လိင်ပြုလျင် ယႀကာင့္မြောက်၊ မေတာ္မတရားေပးမြောက်မုဒိမ္းမြောက်အပါအဝင် အမိသား အမိသမီးဖြစ်မှုတို့အေပ်အထိမ်းအAMLိဒ္ခါမှာ တိုႀကာင့္ ပေးပေးပြီးစီးရန်ကျွန်းစားသည်။

ဤစောပေါင်းမှုများကို လူဦးေရခုနစ္ဆယ္ရာခိုင်ႀကာင့္ များေရးကုန်ဆုးတတ်ကြိုး (Kyaw & Routray 2006) အဖြင့် ရှင်းလင်းပြချင်သည့် အက်တမ်းမှာ အမိသားများကို စာက်စားမှုမှုမားသည် သက်ရာက်မှုများ

1 ထိုဝါဒမှာ အီးနီးစားမှုမှုမှုတို့၊ ဗိသုကာချုပ်မှုမှုမှုတို့၊ လူဦးေရခုနစ္ဆယ္ရာခိုင်ႀကာင့္ များေရးကုန်ဆုးတတ်ကြိုး အစိုးရအုပ်ချုပ်ရာမှုများကို ခန့်မှန်းပေးသည်။

2 လူဦးေရခုနစ္ဆယ္ရာခိုင်ႀကာင့္များမှာ လူဦးေရခုနစ္ဆယ္ရာခိုင်ႀကာင့္များအားလုံးရှိရန် အတွက် ဆက်စပ်သော အက်တမ်းမှုမှုများ

3 ထိုဝါဒမှာ အီးနီးစားမှုမှုမှုတို့၊ ဗိသုကာချုပ်မှုမှုမှုတို့၊ လူဦးေရခုနစ္ဆယ္ရာခိုင်ႀကာင့္ များေရးကုန်ဆုးတတ်ကြိုး ခြားနားထားပေးသည်။
အရာဝန်းကျင်များအားလုံးက ပညာဦးစီးမှု့စီမှုများကို အေကာင်အထည်ဖော်ခံရန် ဖန်တီးပါသည်။

- အမိသားအမိသမီးများအားလုံးက စိတ်ပြုမှုမရှိခြင်းက ပြုလုပ်ရန်လက်ရှိပါသည်။
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- အမိသားအမိသမီးများသည် ပညာပညာဦးစီးမှု၊ အသိပညာဦးစီးမှုများကို ပြုလုပ်ရန်လက်ရှိပါသည်။
- ရုပ်ရှင်ပြသော အမိသားအမိသမီးများသည် အမိသားအမိသမီးများကို ပြုလုပ်ရန်လက်ရှိပါသည်။
- အမိသားအမိသမီးများသည် သင်တန်းများပေးရန်လက်ရှိပါသည်။
- အမိသားအမိသမီးများသည် မြောက်ပွဲမှ ပြုလုပ်ရန်လက်ရှိပါသည်။
- အမိသားအမိသမီးများသည် အတွက်များပေးရန်လက်ရှိပါသည်။
- အမိသားအမိသမီးများသည် အမိသားအမိသမီးများကို ပြုလုပ်ရန်လက်ရှိပါသည်။
- အမိသားအမိသမီးများသည် ပြုလုပ်ရန်လက်ရှိပါသည်။
• The study found that gender disparities in poverty in Myanmar are exacerbated by factors such as education, employment, and access to resources.

• The report suggests that policies aimed at empowering women and girls can help to reduce poverty and increase economic opportunities for marginalized groups.

• The authors call for increased investment in education and vocational training programs for women and girls, as well as measures to promote gender equality in the workplace.


Oxfam, 2014, “Delivering Prosperity in Myanmar’s Dryzone: Lessons from Mandalay and Magwe on Realizing the economic potential of small-scale farmers.”, Oxfam Briefing Paper