

BETTER IN POLITICS:

A Female Politician's Guide towards Knowledge and Empowerment

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Better in politics – A female politician's guide towards knowledge and empowerment
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Foreword

Democracy and gender equality go hand in hand. Strengthening democracy should always mean the strengthening of gender equality as well.

In most democracies, politics is done through political parties, and political parties consist of their members, politicians. The ultimate purpose of a politician is to serve his or her people, community and country in the best possible way. This is a demanding, time consuming and wearing work. And for many reasons, almost everywhere in the world, it is extra hard for women, for many reasons that we often do not stop to think about.

Traditional views on what is suitable for women and what kind of capacities they have, make it much harder for women to advance in politics, as compared to men. Women face a lot of discrimination, much of which is based on unconscious thinking, and for this reason they do not compete on an equal footing with men.

This ‘Female Politician’s Guide towards Knowledge and Empowerment’ is especially designed for a female politician to gain political knowledge and skills to help her have confidence in herself and the work she is doing, to understand the important elements of politics, and identify the barriers as to female political participation. On the other hand, this guide seeks to help female politicians to be happy with their choice to work as politicians and find tools of encouragement in their political path.

Since 2014, the Myanmar School of Politics (MySoP), has been working at the heart of democracy support in Myanmar. MySoP strengthens the capacity political parties at State/Region level from across the political spectrum and empowers politicians to contribute effectively to a sustainable and inclusive democracy. This long-term, in-depth and inclusive approach with political parties and politicians lies at the core of our programme.

This knowledge and empowerment guide for female politicians came together because of the continuous discussions, needs assessments and validation workshops with our female alumni. Because of their experiences and their inputs, this guide could be developed, under the EU-funded STEP Democracy project.

The participation of both men and women in politics is everyone’s cause and when the number of women in policy making is high, it creates a positive change for everyone, not just for women.

An inclusive democracy means that all citizens feel represented and be heard. Equality is the way forward.



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The empowerment guide was developed in partnership with the European Union (EU) under the 'Support to Electoral Processes' STEP Democracy project. Its aim is to support inclusive, peaceful and credible electoral processes, and enhances the capacity of stakeholders to strengthen the democratic transition in Myanmar. We would like to thank the EU, leading implementing partner International IDEA, and the consortium partners for their support and partnership.

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PART I: Skill Empowerment

Session A: I know

1. I know politics

There are many different ideas about what politics is. At the most basic level, politics is about how people make decisions in a community¹. In larger communities it is not possible for everyone to take part in all decision-making all the time. Instead, communities make rules that apply to every member of the community. Under these rules, politics is used in order to decide “who gets what, when and how” (competition) but also it is used for cooperation in order to make common agreements and foster peaceful existence in communities. In addition to seeing politics as only either unavoidable competition or necessary cooperation, some people believe that politics is about making a just community. This understanding sees politics as being related to justice and rights. According to this view, communities make rules to make sure that people are treated fairly and justly.



In democracies, politics is done most commonly through political parties. Political parties are organizations of people who have similar, particular political beliefs. Party members often share interests, identity and/or ideology and work together to achieve their political goals. Political parties aim to win positions in local or national government, through competing in elections. Political parties' main functions in a democratic society include: political opinion-making, selection of candidates and politicians, developing political programmes with goals and policies, hearing the views, needs or concerns of a group and expressing

these to the society, linking citizens to the political system, and, if given the mandate through elections, also exercising political power in councils, parliaments and governments.²

Probably in every country in the world, politics attract very different kinds of people. There are the ones who genuinely want to serve their home communities, regions and nations, trying to improve the living conditions of their voters, trying to make sure that

the future is better for as many people as possible. Then there are some ruthless individuals, who have seen the opportunity to capture for themselves the material benefits that politics may offer. With money and power around, there are always takers. For this reason, politics can be very weary for those who have come to serve others.

You, as a reader of this guide, by now probably have already first-hand experience of what politics is in practice. You may have encountered problems of the kind that you never anticipated.

To be reflected upon: Why did I become a politician?

As a politician's work is very hard, the days are full, and sometimes you feel that you are achieving nothing, it may be good to stop and practice a little bit of self-reflection:

Why did I become a politician? What are the motivations that are driving me? What do I want to achieve? Have politics changed me? How? Am I happy with that change? What are my best achievements? With what am I disappointed?

Rather than questioning other peoples' motivations, it is best that you concentrate on doing your own work as well as you can. You have had to learn to cope with people who have a lot of will power and who may use manipulative technics to reach their goals. There is always some scheming and plotting in politics. That is something you must accept. Often, this scheming is linked to the compromises that necessarily have to be made in a multi-party system. Every person/party tries to ensure for herself or himself/her party or his party, the best possible outcome in the negotiations. With wit and toughness, you get much further than with kindness. This may be difficult for some women, as women have been socialized differently than men. This means that different kind of behaviour or action is often expected from women and men. For example, in some societies women are expected to treat others kindly while men can express themselves more freely.

- ***I understand the nature of politics as a "hard game", and I am learning not to be intimidated by it.***

2. I know and understand the political system in Myanmar

2.1 The governing structure of Myanmar

After regaining independence in 1948, Myanmar exercised a parliamentary democracy system, until 1962. Since 1962, Myanmar was ruled by military rule. A mass uprising

broke out in 1988, and the pro-democracy struggle started. In 1990, general elections were held, and 2,297 candidates from 93 parties contested for 492 parliamentary seats. In this election, only 2.68 % of the candidates were women.

In 2008, the new Constitution was adopted. Article 369 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar stipulates that “Subject to this Constitution and relevant laws, every citizen has the right to elect and right to be elected to the Pyithu Hluttaw, the Amyotha Hluttaw, and the Region or State Hluttaw”. And in this same article, the Constitution guarantees “relevant electorate has the right to recall a Hluttaw representative in accord with the law”.³

According to the 2008 Constitution, Myanmar has two levels of elected parliaments (Hluttaws): at the union or national level and at the level of regions and states. At the national level, the Union Parliament(Pyidaungsu Hluttaw) consists of two chambers: the Lower House or People’s Assembly (Pyithu Hluttaw), which has 440 seats, and the Upper House or Nationalities Assembly (Amyotha Hluttaw), which has 224 seats. The People’s Assembly and the Nationalities Assembly are generally equal in status. The Constitution provides for the direct election of 75% of the members of both chambers, with the remaining 25% appointed by the commander-in-chief of the defence services. The Constitution provides for a unicameral parliament for each of the seven states and seven regions, for a total of 14 Parliaments. At the region and state levels, the proportion of military representatives is also one-quarter.⁴

State and region governmental systems consist of a unicameral, partially elected state/region Hluttaw, an executive comprised of a Chief Minister and a cabinet of state/region ministers, and state/region judicial institutions.

The Hluttaw is composed of two members elected per township and additional elected representatives for each of the “national races” comprising greater than 0.1percent of the state/region population, but not already “obtaining” an ethnic state (such as the Karen in Kayin State). The Commander-in-Chief appoints military representatives equal to one-third of these elected members (and thus one quarter of the total), the same proportion as in the national legislative institutions. The Hluttaw elects from its number, a Chairperson, Speaker, and Deputy Speaker. The township-based constituency system results in a widely varying number of constituents per representative.

The Constitution establishes a loose basis for a division of powers between the national level (the “Union”) and the states and regions. There are eight sectors each with specific responsibilities, several of which are deferred for future definition “in accord with the law enacted by the Union”.

In some sectors, such as agriculture, the assigned responsibilities are broad, while in most they are quite narrow and limited. For example, in “Energy, Electricity, Mining, and Forestry”, responsibilities are limited to power generation that is off the national grid, regulation of salt products, polishing local gems (but not mining gems), and firewood. Similarly, the social sector is limited to some areas of traditional medicine,

welfare, and cultural heritage preservation, leaving the major areas of education and health excluded.⁵

2.2 The electoral system of Myanmar and its implications

Electoral systems are not gender-neutral. The type of system in place can have a major impact on the number of women elected to office. Basically there are two types of electoral systems: proportional representation ones, where many MPs are elected from each constituency, and majority systems, where only one MP is elected from each constituency. More women are likely to be elected in countries with proportional representation systems than in countries with majority systems.⁶

In a country with a proportional system, each party sets a list of many candidates for each constituency. In some countries, voters choose the party that they like and give their vote for the whole list – not a particular member on the list. In others, voters choose a candidate that they want to see as an MP, and their vote benefits this one candidate and, at the same time, the whole party. As parties in this system have the opportunity to nominate many candidates in each constituency, they are likely to pick as candidates people who are young and old, women and men, in order to be more appealing to the voters. Thus it is easier for women to become candidates in proportional systems. In the British, so-called “first past the post” majority system, each party has only one candidate in each constituency (the constituencies are usually smaller than in countries which use proportional systems). In this electoral system, each singular candidate has much more weight than in other systems. It is up to her or him, and no-one else, whether the party will win his/her constituency or not.

This makes it much harder for women to become MPs. First the woman, who is thinking of entering politics, has to convince herself that she would be the best MP for her constituency. Then she has to convince the party selection committee that she, and no-one else, will be the best candidate for her party. This is usually tough. Party selection committees do not like taking risks. If earlier on men have been selected, they usually think that this is a good strategy for the future, too. After the aspiring woman has managed to convince the party selection committee of her competence, she still has to convince the voters, some of whom may be conservative and prefer men. This is why in countries with the British system there are fewer female MPs than in countries with the proportional system.

The bias of selection committees

*Isabel Hardman describes in her book *Why We Get the Wrong Politicians*⁷ the selection process of MP candidates in Great Britain:*

“What are these local parties looking for when they choose their prospective MPs? They’ll read the leaflets and ask candidates questions at the final selection meetings, but many members may have already made up their minds. Unconscious bias can lead people to make snap judgements based purely on appearance. Anne Jenkin, the Tory peer who has campaigned for over a decade to increase the number of female MPs, says that at one selection, the local party saw three women, who all went down very well. But when the fourth, male, candidate walked in, the response was: ‘But there is our MP.’”

Myanmar has the British system, with only one MP in the Parliament from each constituency. As compared to other systems, this has another consequence: the relationship between the politician and the people who elected her can be quite intimate. Myanmar is also a country with big developmental differences between regions and areas. There are poor people in the cities, but especially many of the rural areas are inflicted with poverty. This means that many constituents turn to the one politician who is representing them in the regional or district parliament for help with their day-to-day problems.

Example: Learning the role of an MP

An MP tells of her experience:

When I started working as an MP in 2015, the demands and complaints from my constituents were immense. The expectations from the constituency were also huge. Due to limited civic education and knowledge about the roles of MPs and administrative functions, it was a great challenge for me to fulfil the expectations and solve all complaints.

I, like the majority of MPs in the Parliament, have limited experience in solving the issues and problems that people (men and women) encounter. I was not very familiar with the existing administrative functions at the beginning. I felt frustrated and there was far too much pressure in dealing with those complaints. I felt so tired trying to handle the cases.

Gradually, through learning by doing together with studying experiences of other countries, I started understanding my role better and saw clearer the different functions of different actors, and so I managed to handle the complaints. It is not possible to solve all the complaints/issues by yourself, and it is not your role to respond to all the problems that are reported to you.

In my role as an MP, I now coordinate well with respective administrative entities and civil society organizations, including women's organizations. In this way I can best respond to the complaints from my constituency. I know now very well who is the right person (either a government official or someone from the NGOs) to delegate the complaint to. By doing this delegating, I feel confident, both my workload and stress level have reduced, and I feel satisfied thinking of my good responses to my constituents.

- ***I understand the political and administrative systems, and when constituents turn to me with their complaints, I am able to delegate the resolving of the problems to the right person or institution.***

3. I know what gender equality means

3.1. Gender equality as a right

Gender equality is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary in the following way: *"Gender equality does not imply that women and men are the same, but that they have equal value and should be accorded equal treatment."*

The Constitution of Myanmar states the following related to equality:

"Every citizen shall enjoy the right of equality, the right of liberty and the right of justice, as prescribed in this Constitution." (Article 21)

"Citizens shall enjoy equal opportunity in carrying out the following functions: (a) public employment; (b) occupation; (c) trade; (d) business; (e) technical know-how and vocation; (f) exploration of art, science and technology." (Article 349)

"Mothers, children and expectant women shall enjoy equal rights as prescribed by law." (Article 351)

To be reflected upon: Fulfilment of rights

Think of the above mentioned rights and opportunities. Do you think that they are realised in Myanmar? If not, where do you see the biggest gaps? What do you believe to be the reasons behind the gaps?

If we look at statistics, we see that in Myanmar, as in all other countries, men are better paid than women for the work they do, they get promoted with less qualifications than women and hold a majority of leading positions. Most people think that this is because men are more competent than women. In reality women are just as competent. When in universities exam answers were given anonymously, the markings of young women went up, those of young men went down. Some companies have started inviting anonymous CVs from applicants for their open positions, and as a result women and people belonging to ethnic minorities have been called to job interviews more often than before. Research also indicates that big companies which are led by women do better than those led by men.

For millennia men's greater physical strength has been vital for the survival of human communities. But the age of technology has changed things. Do you need strong muscles to chair a meeting well? Do you need to be able to run fast to write good policies or make wise decisions? Even though the world around us has changed, most people are still holding on to the old thinking that men are innately better than women. It is really important to see that it is cultural values, based on human made norms, which grant men more credibility than women. This is the barrier which makes it harder for women to advance. Examples from many countries luckily prove that once women gain leading positions, the thinking of people starts changing.

Example: Thinking can change

In India, a simple experiment was carried out. Exactly the same political speech was given in various villages by men politicians and women politicians. Afterwards, the local people were asked if the speech was a good one or not. Their answers were: good – if a man had given the speech, bad – if a woman had given it. This held true for all villages that had a male mayor, but where there was a female mayor, the village people rated the talk given by a woman politician as good.⁸

- ***I understand that it is more difficult for women to advance because of discrimination based on gender – not because they are less competent than men.***

As mentioned above, the Constitution of Myanmar grants equal rights to women and men, boys and girls. But when we start looking at what happens in everyday life, we notice that girls and women are often not getting the same advantages as men.

Terms: Substantive equality

When we talk about “equal rights”, in the Myanmar society, people are saying, like they do in other countries, that “there are equal rights between men and women in the laws” and “we do not discriminate against women in the laws”. It is partly true, but it is not absolutely correct. We need to look at “equality” from “substantive equality” perspective. We must see whether:

- *there are equal “rights” for women and men, boys and girls*
- *there are equal “rights” for disabled people, people belonging to the LGBT group and other minority groups*
- *there is equal “opportunity” for the groups mentioned above*
- *there is equal “result” for everyone*

For example, the Myanmar Constitution of 2008 grants equal rights for men and women to education. Every citizen regardless of sex, ethnicity, and socio-economic background has equal right to access education. But, we cannot say that there is equality. Let’s look at the question from “equal opportunity” point of view.

There are 330 townships, and 13,602 wards and village tracts (consisting of 70,838 villages) in Myanmar. Even though the primary schools exist in every village tract, not every village tract has middle and high school. To continue their middle and high school education, children (boys and girls) need to go to the village tract and/or city where the middle and high schools exist. Due to limited resources (in particular, due to poverty), parents mostly cannot afford sending their children to boarding schools and can only send them to their relatives and monasteries.

In this situation, most parents usually give priority to sending sons to school, as sending daughters is seen as “unsafe”. It is thought that girls are much more “vulnerable and more likely to experience violence”. In addition, discriminatory traditional values and norms such as “just reading and writing is sufficient for girls”, “education is not so important for a woman as she will be taken care of by her husband”, and “women will marry and follow their husbands; so, it is not worth investing in women” have been prevailing in some communities and amongst some ethnic groups. Those resource limitations and cultural norms have been creating barriers for women and girls to seize the opportunity to educate themselves, although the law grants equal right to access education.

Thus, for gender equality to be fulfilled, it is not sufficient to look at provisions of equal rights in the Constitution and legislation for men and women. There are barriers that create unequal opportunities to meaningfully exercising the given right in the law. It is essential to examine whether and to what extent men and women, boys and girls, LGBT-people and the disabled are able to exercise those rights. This is called “substantive equality”.

- ***I understand that what legislation grants equally to boys and girls, women and men, often does not come to be true in everyday life. If my brothers got a better education than I did, it is not my fault – it is the fault of traditional values that are behind the parents’ or other people’s preferences. I understand that these types of barriers make it harder for me to advance – not lack of skill.***

3.2. Gender equality as a tool to policies that benefit all

Gender equality is a right. Myanmar is a party to United Nations and has ratified various human rights treaties which grant equal rights to everyone. To speed up the fulfilment of gender equality, special treaties on the rights of women and girls have been written (see Part II, Chapter 5).

But increasing gender equality is also a way to boost economies and national growth, to create well-fare, and to speed up development.

Each year, the World Economic Forum (WEF) rates the countries of the world according to how well they perform in gender equality. Why is WEF interested in gender equality? For a simple reason: there is a clear correlation between good economic performance and gender equality. As WEF puts it:

“Gender parity is fundamental to whether and how economies and societies thrive. Ensuring the full development and appropriate deployment of half of the world’s total talent pool has a vast bearing on the growth, competitiveness and future-readiness of economies and businesses worldwide.”⁹

WEF looks at how well equality between women and men has been achieved in four major areas: educational attainment, health and survival, economical participation and opportunity, and political participation. In 2018 Iceland came first, Philippines was 8th, and Myanmar 88th of the 149 countries which were rated.

To be reflected upon: What makes a country excel in closing the gender gap?

In the 2018 ranking of WEF, New Zealand was 7th, whereas Australia, which is one of the world’s richest countries, measured by gross national product, is only 39th. Try to figure out how it is possible that Philippines (8th), a developing country, ranks so well in this comparison of equality performance around the world. Why is this important from Myanmar’s point of view?

Of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; see Part II, Chapter 6), number 5 is dedicated to gender equality: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”.

According to UN:

“Disadvantages in education translate into lack of access to skills and limited opportunities in the labour market. Women’s and girls’ empowerment is essential to expand economic growth and promote social development. The full participation of women in labour forces would add percentage points to most national growth rates – double digits in many cases. Investing in education programmes for girls and increasing the age at which they marry can return 5 dollars for every dollar spent. Investing in programs improving income-generating activities for women can return 7 dollars for every dollar spent.”¹⁰

To be reflected upon: Making use of the talent pool

In Myanmar, many girls have to marry under-aged. Try to find out how common this is. Is it a bigger problem in some parts of the country than others?

Now, try to imagine the implications of early marriage for a given girl who happens to be extra talented in mathematics. Imagine for her two life trajectories: 1) getting married at 16, 2) going to school and university and marrying after she has graduated and worked a while. What are the implications 1) for her, 2) for her family, especially her children, 3) for her home country?

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), too, campaigns strongly for gender equality. Christine Lagarde, the chairwoman and director of IMF, lists some of the benefits of women taking part equally in economic life:

- A bigger boost to growth: Women bring new skills to the workplace, and thus the productivity and growth gains from adding women to the labour force are bigger than previously thought.
- Higher productivity.
- Higher male incomes: Since the productivity increases, also men benefit.
- A bigger benefit to reducing gender barriers along development paths.

According to IMF, there are several policies that can help to narrow gender gaps in the economic sphere, such as:

1. Enacting laws to ensure that women have equal rights to own property and access credit.
2. Reforming taxes, e.g. by replacing family taxation with individual taxation and providing tax benefits, as these can give incentives for lower paid women to join the work force.

3. Creating publicly financed maternity and paternity leaves, expanded childcare and care for the elderly.
4. Improving access to transportation, electricity, and water infrastructure can also help lift women's participation in the workforce.¹¹

To be reflected upon: What would work in Myanmar

*Think of the above-mentioned policies suggested by IMF. What would work in Myanmar? What would **not** work in Myanmar? Why?*

- *I understand that gender equality benefits the whole society in the long run.*

4. I know how to take care of myself while being a politician

4.1 Learning resilience

As mentioned earlier on, a politician is there to serve her constituents, her community and her nation. The core of politics is to find such rules for our shared society that everyone – also people belonging to minorities – can live by. In a complicated society with people having contradicting interests this is often very difficult work. But at the same time it is most valuable work. The importance of what you are doing is easy to forget if you are tired, and if the matters you are dealing with seem too often in your own eyes of secondary value. No politician can deal every minute of the working day with an agenda that is of utmost importance to her – there are always bound to be some matters that you'd rather not spend your time with.

All the time you are trying to learn more, prioritize, lobby, negotiate and reach compromises. And all the time there are too many demands on you, demands made by the constituents, possibly by the media, by your party, by your loved-ones.

At the same time, it is of utmost importance that the gifted people, who have chosen this career and feel that they have something to give to their people, are being supported so that they have the resilience to keep going. It happens too often that a talented woman chooses to go for politics, gets elected, grows weary of the competitive, even bullying atmosphere and decides not to run in the next elections. This is a great pity. It is possible – no-one can know for sure – that if women had been taking part in an equal way from the very beginning when democratic systems with parliaments, parties and elections were born, politics would have evolved in a less aggressive manner. But the fact is that politics has been a male dominated arena, and it is an aggressive arena. For many women this is hard. And at the same time it is so important that women are there, to

bring forward matters that are important for them, to secure that half of the population has representation.

- ***I keep in mind that what I am doing is valuable: through my work I am benefitting others.***
- ***I understand that a democracy is incomplete if half of the population is not represented. By being in my parliament, I, for my part, increase women's representation and thus contribute to the full fulfilment of our democracy.***

4.2. Sexual harassment

Harassment is any improper and unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected to cause offence or humiliation to another person. Harassment may take the form of words, gestures or actions which tend to annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, humiliate or embarrass another or which create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Harassment normally implies a series of incidents. Disagreement on work performance or on other work-related issues is normally not considered harassment.¹²



Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favor, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behavior of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected to cause offence or humiliation to another, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. While typically involving a pattern of behavior, it can take the form of a single incident. Sexual harassment may occur

between persons of the opposite or same sex.¹³

Sexual harassment is a great problem. Not one country in the world is free from it, even though the degree of it varies a lot from one society to another. This is actually very good news, because it means that it is a cultural phenomenon that we can with legislation, information campaigns, education of the young, and so on, decrease. Women are usually main targets of sexual harassment, but men may also suffer of it. Then the perpetrators are often other men, but they can also be women.

To be reflected upon: What counts as harassment?

When I was younger, men often looked at me or made comments of my appearance that made me very uncomfortable. Those days, we did not even know the word "harassment". I still sometimes come across situations that I don't like. For instance, there is a guy in my party. He is smart, helpful, and has potential to benefit the party. Once we were in the same vehicle for a party campaign. He was talking to other guys in a joking way. It was not obviously or totally a sex joke but it had two meanings. I felt uncomfortable.

How do you act? To whom do you report the incidence?

UN Women provides an online manual on sexual harassment: Towards an End to Sexual Harassment: The Urgency and Nature of Change in the Era of #MeToo¹⁴

Myanmar is a big country, and this means that politicians need to travel quite a bit to reach their respective constituencies. Women politicians have reported of violence that they have faced or been threatened with when travelling to meet their constituents, or during campaigning for the elections. This is a very serious problem. It does not help at all to know that there are other countries suffering of this. Actually, with the social media polarizing politics in many countries, this phenomenon has been identified even in such countries where it has never taken place before. And social media has given rise to another very alarming trend which is spreading and reaching more and more people: hate speech. For some reason women are targeted much more than men.

An act of violence is a crime, and it must be dealt with as such. Even though it may take a lot of time and effort, and even though the end result may be such that the perpetrators do not receive a just punishment. Hate speech is in a way harder to deal with. Many countries do not have legislation about it, and even if such legislation exists, drawing lines between what is criminal and what is not is very difficult and time consuming if taken to court. Many women who receive a lot of hate speech in the Internet say that they never read what is written about them. By doing so, they do not lose their nights' sleep.

- *I identify sexual harassment and have zero tolerance for it.*
- *I have zero tolerance for acts of violence, and I always report them to the police.*
- *I find ways to deal with hate speech.*

4.3. Combining politics and family life

Many women politicians have children who still live at home. To be a working mother is not easy. You feel guilty at work because you know your children miss you. And you feel guilty at home because you know there is so much work to catch up with. It is possible that women will never be completely rid of this guilt, but it helps to remember that you are not alone: all around the world women are feeling the same. (Oddly, very few fathers of small children suffer of this, though attitudes might slowly be changing.)

Only you can be the mother of your children. Make sure that when you spend time with them, they are good moments that all of you can look back to with fond memories.



- ***I understand that the feelings of guilt about not spending enough of time with my children are not unique – women all around the world share these feelings with me.***

And then there is the endless list of house chores. Actually, you do not have to be the only person performing them. Your husband, your children (when they are a bit older) should be able to carry a fair bit of that responsibility. What about your parents or siblings – would they be willing to help? Or maybe you can pay to someone to do some of the work?

- ***I am able to delegate house chores to my family and others.***

No-one is a machine. You cannot work, work and work. You need to look after yourself, to invest in your own wellbeing – not only in that of others'. One part of above mentioned prioritizing is putting aside time in your calendar for your loved-ones – and for yourself. You need to look after your physical condition. But you also need time to read, listen to music – whatever gives you most satisfaction – and also to rest, contemplate, or meditate.

- ***I rest enough and take time for myself, too.***
- ***I look after my physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.***

5. I know that I am a pioneer; in my pioneering work, I am able to get support from others

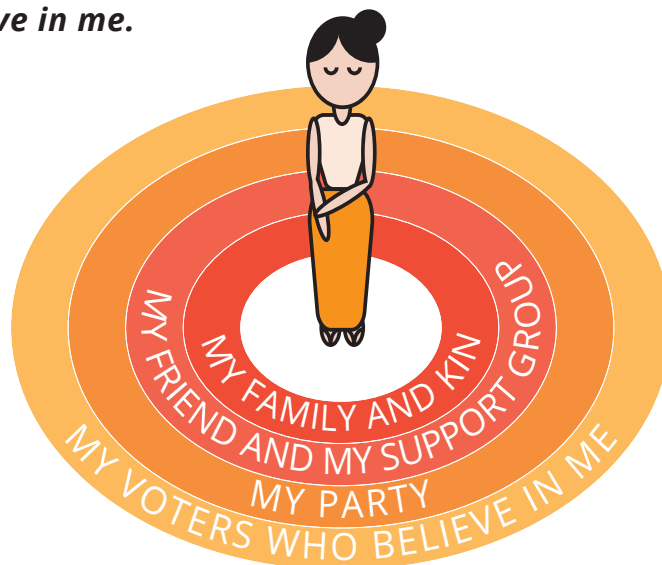


Myanmar has had female politicians for a very short time. You are a pioneer. Decades later, people in Myanmar will remember your work, as they remember the pioneering work of the first female legislators in other countries. Furthermore, the democratic system in Myanmar is young and it is still establishing itself. This has advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages is that you have the opportunity to “think out of the box”. You can find new ideas, approaches and ways of doing things, as long as you remember to hold

on to the principals of transparency and accountability. Transparency and accountability are key elements of a well-functioning democracy.

We all depend on each other. Without the help and support of those around us, we will not realise our full capacity. This simple but profound wisdom applies to all of us, but it is especially important for people who have chosen a career in politics. The loved-ones of a politician have a very demanding but probably also a very fulfilling role. It falls onto them to support in moments of disappointment or distress, but they are there also to share victories and achievements, to rejoice and celebrate. Many world famous politicians have said that without their families they never could have achieved what they did.

- ***I know that I get support and help:***
- ***My family and kin love and support me.***
- ***My friends and party support and help me.***
- ***My voters believe in me.***



Session B: I can

1. I can give a good public speech and I can debate



To be convincing, a politician needs to present herself well, in a written form and, especially, orally. This can be intimidating for women, because in Myanmar they do not get many opportunities to practice. It is worthwhile training public talking, first on your own, may be in front of the mirror, and then with family members or friends as the audience. A good way to learn is videoing your own talk and watching it.

A speech should be very clear, have only 3 - 4 main points, and it must deal

with themes that matter to the audience. So, make sure that you know the audience. Of course, the starting point must be that you know well and truly the subject matter. What is the message you want to give to your audience? First, decide on that, second, structure your talk very clearly. The audience will follow it better if you use a narrative, a story, which binds your political theme to everyday life. If possible, there should be some tension, and at the end some old fashioned wisdom (not moralism).

Talk clearly and please, do not read straight from your notes (you may glance at them). The ideal is to write down beforehand just the main points with a few lines and then talk freely.

- ***I can give a good political speech and I feel confident speaking in front of a big audience.***

Just to give a public talk is not enough. Meetings with the voters and supporters in the constituency and in public is an elemental part of a politician's work. Open and transparent discussion with citizens forms the basis of democracy. However, in a rally, when meeting constituents, perhaps on the local radio or TV channel, a politician is faced with unexpected and often very tricky questions. Or the politician is invited to a public debate, where representatives of opposing parties try to refute each other. Giving convincing answers to difficult questions under scrutiny is more difficult than just delivering a

speech. Here it helps to prepare well beforehand. You should think of all possible topics and questions that might arise, and then try draft possible answers to them. Listening to your opponent – properly listening and not just assuming that you know what she or he means – will help you raise the level of the discussion and gain approval of the audience. Not to get angry may be difficult if you find that your opponent is saying stupid or untrue things, but the debater who manages to stay calm often convinces the audience. If you did well in a debate, you have every reason to feel pleased with yourself. If it did not go so well, you should not start blaming yourself – no-one can succeed all the time. Instead, it is worthwhile reflecting on the discussion and analysing what you could have done better, in order to learn for the next time. It might be useful to also reflect on this: Is debating with a female opponent different from debating with a male opponent?

● ***I am a capable public debater.***

2. I can listen to others, negotiate and make political compromises

Multiparty democracy encourages the involvement of parties and people with different worldviews, opinions and targets. An important capacity of a politician is the ability to listen, to properly pay attention to what other people are saying. Some lucky people are innately good listeners. Fortunately it is a skill that you can practise and get better in. Becoming an attentive listener does take discipline and concentration, but it is worth learning, as it is a skill you need when you negotiate. And without the capacity to negotiate you will never be a good politician.

In a functioning multiparty democracy it is impossible for one party or one person to gain all their goals. Compromises have to be made, and in order to reach a good compromise you have to be able to negotiate. In a nutshell: via attentive listening to firm negotiating, and via firm negotiating to good compromises, where all who took part can feel that they achieved enough. These negotiations may take place within your own party, but often, to gain special political goals, the party lines need to be crossed.



● ***I listen to others, I negotiate, and I compromise, but do not give in too much.***

Let's imagine a situation where you have had a big disagreement with your rival (e.g. within the party or Women's Wing), or your opponent in the parliament. You may be boiling with anger because you lost, or because the other person said untrue things. Or perhaps you had a victory and everyone can see that you were right. The temptation to blame or ridicule your rival is great. But please, do not give in to this temptation, unless it serves a real advantage in gaining your goals! In politics, the tactic of "burning bridges" is simply stupid. Who knows – in half a year's time you might need the support of the person you just ridiculed. He or she is unlikely to give it, after receiving a public humiliation from you. Therefore, it is always worth thinking ahead, worth not burning the bridges. It might sound like scheming to suggest that you do not express your real thoughts of your rival. But just as well it could be called decent behaviour towards your fellow being. There is also another word for it: diplomacy. It is a great asset in politics. To be firm, and yet to be at the same time diplomatic should be your goal.

Example: A Burmese diplomat

The world still remembers a great Burmese diplomat, U Thant, who served as Secretary General of UN from 1961 to 1971. He was appointed as Secretary General, when his predecessor, Dag Hammarskjöld, died in an air crash. U Thant played a key role in helping prevent the escalation of the so-called Cuban missile crisis between USA and USSR. He also helped end the civil war in Congo. Although a manifest pacifist and a devout Buddhist, Thant did not hesitate to use force when required.

U Thant was re-appointed Secretary General of the United Nations by the General Assembly in 1966, on the unanimous recommendation of the Security Council. During his time in office, he oversaw the entry into the UN of dozens of new Asian and African states and was a firm opponent of apartheid in South Africa. He also established many of the UN's development and environmental agencies, funds and programmes. Being a diplomat of incredible skill did not stop him from openly criticising American conduct in the Vietnam War. Thant refused to serve a third term and retired in 1971.¹⁵

- ***I understand that a certain amount of diplomacy is necessary when trying to reach a good compromise.***

3. I can contribute to strategic level discussions/ meetings at all levels

What does “strategy” mean? Simply put it means this: You look into the future, you define a goal that you want to reach, and then you figure out the means to get to that goal. The important thing is that you know what you want, as we often have only fuzzy ideas of what we would like to see happening. Then there are the means of getting to your goal. They are often talked of as tactics, and people tend to mix these two. Both terms originate from the history of warfare, but are now also used in politics, organizations and business.



Example: Lack of strategy

A little country hospital needs repair: the walls are cracking, the roof is leaking in places and all the equipment are outdated. So the state government decides to have the hospital properly renovated, and the task is accomplished according to plans. It turns out to be more expensive than planned, but everyone seems happy.

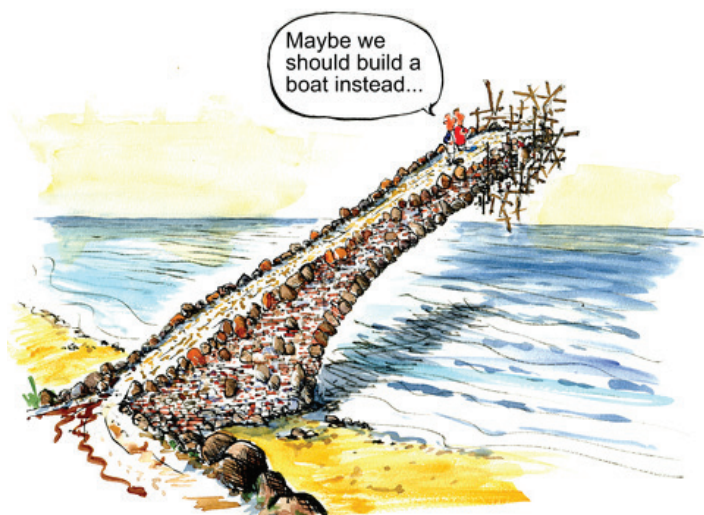
Five years later the hospital is closed down, because the country town cannot attract doctors to come and work there. The money spent on renovations is lost. What went wrong?

Clearly, an overall strategy was missing when the decision of renovations was made. After the closing down, civil servants look into to the matter, and it turns out that the country town, where the hospital is situated, is losing inhabitants. People are moving to bigger cities of the area. Also, the doctors complain that there is too much work and too little peer support. They prefer working in a bigger hospital.

The above mentioned example could take place anywhere, as moving to cities is a global trend, and as, despite this, it is difficult to foresee into the future. Yet that is what especially politicians have to try to do. The future is what politics is about. And to foresee – to know where a hospital is needed, or where doctors are willing to work – you need facts.

In this case, the facts can be data on population trends, for example: how many babies were born/year in the past years.

what is the outlook for the future based on the amount of fertile women; amount of operations/year; cost of each operation in a small unit as compared to a bigger unit, etc.



Or the facts can be based on surveys, for example:

are people willing to travel for their operations are doctors happy to work in a small unit do people trust more doctors in a big hospital, etc..

All political decisions should be based, to the degree possible, on solid facts, and all decisions should be part of a strategy, a bigger picture which helps us to steer towards the goal we set.

source: Theoryofchange.org

Some kind of successful foreseeing is a precondition for good strategizing. The goals that you set – within your party, within your organization, within your parliamentary group – have to be such that they actually can turn into reality. Ambition has to mix with realism. So, when you take part in strategic discussions – whatever level they make take place – make sure that you are loaded with reliable facts connected with the themes you are discussing. Or, if trustworthy facts cannot be provided with, make suggestions of how to find more information on the question at hand. And at the same time, try to be innovative, look at things from “outside the box” to introduce completely new ways of thinking and fresh solutions. Prepare well beforehand.

Think of the theme and ask yourself:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to go?
3. What are the means to get there?
4. Do we have a way of finding out how much it is going to cost?

● ***I can contribute to strategic level discussions at all levels.***

4. I can form alliances over party lines and civil society actors

4.1 Alliances over party lines

In a multiparty system, forming alliances across party lines is a key element in order to gain goals. Stepping over party lines always takes skill. You have to be able to negotiate. Usually you also need a mandate from your own party. If you work as an MP on union level, where the parliament is divided to the government and opposition, the norm is that governing parties negotiate and cooperate, and opposition parties, amongst themselves, negotiate and cooperate.

On the local level, with no parties carrying the re-governing, stepping over of a norm. Then you are for support, in one occasion, from your right. policy to stay in good colleagues, whether they or not. One day you might one of them and feel out port for an initiative that ing of. Or, someone will be phoning you, asking for support.



officially nominated responsibility of local party lines is more constantly looking sion from your left, in It is generally a good terms with all of you belong to your party want to phone any if you might find sup- you have been think-

Some parliaments have so called women's caucuses (see Part II, chapter 6). They are forums, where women can discuss policies over party lines. In many countries, women have achieved a lot in politics by uniting in issues that matter a lot for them as women. If a female colleague from another party approaches you and wants to have your opinion or support, please do not turn her down immediately. Stop to consider the offer of changing views. If, on the other hand, you might want to hear what other women in other parties think of some particular issue, do not hesitate to call. It is clear that when you do this, you should not share information, which is confidential and only meant for members of your own party.

● *I can operate over party lines both formally and informally.*

4.2 Cooperation with the civil society

One characteristic of a functioning democracy is a viable civil society. Luckily, there are strong women's organisations in Myanmar. They have first-hand knowledge of problems like violence and trafficking, and they know what kind of measures will bring best help. Civil society organisations and actors are a great ally to a politician. Do not hesitate to turn to them for advice. They may come forward with innovative suggestions for policies that benefit women of all ages. Just make sure that, when dealing with them, they

will not be associated with your party only, as this might compromise them. For this reason, the best way to cooperate with non-governmental organisations is to do it as the women's caucus of your parliament. This being said, if competent actors from the civil society want to join your party and perhaps run as candidates in the elections, do welcome them. Then it has been their own decision to take a step towards formal politics. With the civil society, too, the relationship is best when it is reciprocal: You, your party or the women's caucus gain first-hand information from the organisations, and with your political connections and budgetary capacities you are able to help them in their valuable work.

- *I understand the value of the civil society and I can find partners within it.*

5. I can identify obstacles/barriers for taking a leading role (within my party, within my political institution)

Myanmar has not had many women leaders. UN calls for parity in sharing of political power in the near future, in all member states¹⁶. If this is to happen in Myanmar, even the top positions must be shared much more than they are today. For this to come true, talented women with will power have to step forward and make themselves available for the leading positions.



If you have ambition to raise in the party hierarchy, plan ahead. This is exactly where you need all your strategic skills – and more! Women often make the mistake of imagining that, if only they show enough of talent, a power position will in a suitable situation be offered to them on a silver tray. This is a complete illusion. You have to work hard – even fight – to attain power. Make a plan. It may be something like in the box under (or you might find a better route).

Example: Strategizing towards party leadership

Step 1: I study leadership. I think hard of my own qualities: Are my good ones those needed of a leader? Are my shortcomings such that they will not hinder me of being a good leader? (Do not underestimate yourself – this is the pitfall that women fall into so easily. It does no harm comparing your capacities to those of the men who have been in leading positions in your party. According to research, female politicians in Myanmar are better educated than their male colleagues, and yet they lack trust in their own capabilities.¹⁷)

Step 2: I talk of my ambition to my husband and family. Do they support me?

Step 3: I tell of my plan to my nearest and loyal colleagues within the party. We make a plan: I will first try to become a chairperson of a committee that is important for me. If I get this chairing position, I get experience needed in leading, and then others, too, see that I am capable.

Step 4: I come forward with my talent in all suitable situations. I provide insights and impress.

Step 5: I make sure that my name is known by the public. I send press releases and, if only possible, give interviews.

Step 6: Together with my colleagues I start looking for allies within the Women's Wing, if there is one in my party, and the party. When we see that there is enough support, I publicise my ambition.

Step 7: We start turning towards key actors within the party and try to talk them into supporting my chairpersonship. We make it clear that I want to oust the incumbent chairperson only because I believe that under my leadership the party will grow faster and realise its policies better.

Remember that a good strategy also has to be a flexible one. Something might change all of a sudden, and then you and your supporters might be wise to revise the plan to fit the new situation. Also, when going through these steps (or the plan that you prefer to compile), act in as straight forward a manner as only possible to, in order to gain respect. As politics is a game of power, there is always bound to be some scheming. The rule seems to be this: the more power, the more scheming. But scheming should not become a habit; if it does, it is likely to compromise you. People who take obvious pleasure in plotting and scheming do generally not gain the respect of others.

If and when you reach your goal of chairpersonship of the party, remember also that power positions are lonely. Be prepared for this.

● *I know how to negotiate my way up the party ladder.*

6. I can find information if I need to



A politician of our times is bombarded with information. It comes from left and right, from up and down. And yet at times it seems that you do not have just that piece of knowledge that you desperately need. Or you are not quite sure if you can trust the information that someone provided you with.

Lack of trustworthiness is a great problem of our times. In recent years, in old and respectable democracies the voters have been misled with lies and deliberately misleading information, with grave consequences.

To be reflected upon: Can the papers in Myanmar be trusted?

In 2016, Great Britain had a referendum about leaving the European Union. The leave-campaign misled the voters by stating e.g. that the money that GB is weekly paying to EU is £350 million a week, and, if the country leaves the union, that money will be used for the National Health Service instead. Tabloid papers of the country were spreading this lie. The leave-campaign won with a margin of 52/48.

Do you trust the Myanmar papers? Do people read high quality papers in your home state/region? Could something similar to the British referendum campaigning (may be smaller scale) happen in Myanmar? How can you, as a politician, work to stop the spreading of lies? Do you know who owns the papers that you read and your constituents read? Do you know how the people, who own the papers, want Myanmar or your home region to develop – what sort of policies are in their interest?

A sound attitude is to always question the information agencies fact check their news and their information constantly. But how do you know what is a reliable news agent? It is best to read many newspapers or Internet news agencies, and to compare the information they are giving.

Of course you can also use Google or other Internet search services for specific information, but you need to be critical with the search results.

The Internet dictionary Wikipedia provides a lot of information (in English; also simple English: https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page) but can that be trusted? If you use Wikipedia, check the bottom of the article. Usually, if a lot of scientific articles are used as a source, the information should be ok. But you cannot know for 100 % sure. Always when you, e.g. in a talk in your parliament, refer to some information, name the source at the same time.

If you are looking for information on gender and development, statistics on gender, women's advancement in politics etc., there are great services, mainly in English. Here are just a few:

<https://www.wikigender.org/>

<http://www.iknowpolitics.org/en>

<http://www.unwomen.org/en>



- ***I know how to look for information.***
- ***I understand that a great deal of information in social and printed media can be misleading.***

7. I can read and interpret data



All successful decision making is based on facts, and facts very often are based on data. Reliable data is especially important for development. The UN SDGs (see Part II, Chapter 6) were created with the help of data collected from all around the world, and the fulfilment of the goals can only be monitored and estimated based on data.

As a politician, you probably spend a lot of time with budget work. Budgets are about future: how to allocate the scarce money at hand in a most effective way in the year to come, or during the parliamentary term. To be able to

figure out this, you need to know the past. The past is best known and understood in the form of data. Remember the example of the hospital that had to be closed down (see Part I, Session B, Chapter 3)? The politicians who made the decision of renovating the hospital ignored data.

Exercise: Number of births and deaths as data

Area	Number of births 2018	Number of deaths 2018	Change in population 2018
Village I	103	91	+12
Village II	357	102	+255
Village III	15	23	-8

The table above is a simple form of data. There are three imagined villages in Myanmar, and the recorded births and deaths. Even based on this simplistic model, you could make some conclusions about these villages. Try reading behind the figures: what might these communities be like? Furthermore, what is lacking here? What basic services should be provided?

UN has put special weight on getting **data disaggregated by sex**. To be able to make informed decisions, we need to know what per cent of girls go to school, and what per cent drop out, as compared to boys. To understand barriers to women's full employment, we need to know how many hours per week women spend in unpaid caring work, as compared to men.

In most countries, men's life spans are shorter than are those of women. To be able to find the reasons behind this so that we could write policies to help men live healthier and longer, we need to know more of how they live their lives. For this, we need data disaggregated by sex.

Exercise: Data disaggregated by sex

Check the Internet pages of Statistics Myanmar. Do you find statistics classified by sex? Do you find information of school attendance of boys and girls?

- *I understand the importance of data and can read data presented in a straightforward form.*

Session C: I am good

1. I am good at politics

What are the qualities of a good politician? The most important one is this: she delivers. She sets her goals, and then she works hard to achieve them. In her campaign, she has made promises to her constituents, and after she has been voted to office, she sets about to keep her word to her voters.

As financial resources are limited, it is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve a lot in a short time (even though the constituents might be expecting this). Therefore, it is a good strategy to write a list of priorities. What do I want to reach first? How is it going to effect the state/district budget? Are there alternative ways of funding? What is the timeline? With whom should I try to form alliances to get there?



A politician's work is not only about legislating and budgeting. To advance your political goals, you can make initiatives, organize seminars and other functions, give press releases and write articles, co-operate with other politicians, researchers and the civil society.

Example: How one MP made the difference

The Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) removed the provision for marrying age of 18, leaving the age as stated in the customary law. Before discussions of the bill at the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House), one female MP (who used to be a women's rights activist) made the following initiatives/actions:

- 1. a social media campaign on "why minimum marriage age should be 18";*
- 2. media interviews;*
- 3. identifying key supporters within Hluttaw (across parties including military MPs) and advocating (door-to-door visits, face-to-face during the Parliament session, phone calls, messaging); and*

4. *distributing to the MPs “post legislative scrutiny for Child law 1993” recommendation, where 18 years was strongly recommended for minimum marriage age.*

With the majority votes, eventually, the Upper House kept Myanmar’s marrying age at 18 as part of the Child Right Bill. The bill still needs to be discussed at Pyihtaungsu Hluttaw (Bicameral Parliament), but this industrious MP had a success at the Upper House.

Evaluating your own work is very difficult. In politics, of course, a very clear evaluation comes from the constituents in the next elections. However, regular following up of your progress will help you perform better. Could you perhaps learn to use a single checklist – a bit like this manual? If you have written down your goals in the start of the term, you can tick them as you reach them. Your checklist could consist of markings like these:

- done
- half-done
- process started
- postponed
- unrealistic and cancelled

To understand economic preconditions is not easy. In setting your goals, it helps if you have had the opportunity to attend training on budgeting. Always look for opportunities to learn more. May be you can ask for a special training to be given in the beginning of the parliamentary term? If your parliament does not have the resources to train its members, could you find an international organization, which could help? One possibility is online training, which is getting more widely used.

- *I set realistic goals, I form a strategy to gain them, and I follow up my progress.*
- *I look for opportunities to learn more on economics and budgeting.*

2. I am good at working for my party and constituents

2.1 Working within and for the party

The starting point is that you and your party have the same views on the political goals and policies that in the first hand have drawn you into politics. You chose this particular party, because you and the party share values. But even if the people around you share your goals, it may happen that you do not share their views on how to get to the goals.



politician's relationship with her own party is at best a reciprocal one: you give and you gain. The party is there to support you in the work you are carrying out, but at the same time, you can give your talents and insights to benefit the organization behind you. May be you have some special skills that will benefit your party? Do not feel shy to bring fourth your talents and your knowledge. But remember at the same time that people tend to dislike know-it-all type of persons.

To be reflected upon: How to lobby for gender equality within your party

Your party might claim that gender equality is very important, that there is no sustainable development without it. But when you look around, you see that all the leading positions in the party are taken by men and that is very difficult for women to be nominated as candidates in elections. You might suggest the introduction of gender quotas within your party, for positions in the party committees, and for candidate nominations in elections. This is likely to face a lot of opposition.

How to go ahead?

The worst thing you can do is turn into a "hothead" yourself. Gentle persuasion is the best policy. For instance, you can write an initiative about 30 % quotas for women to the party congress, or whichever body decides on the party by-laws. Make sure that you look for support for your initiative before taking of-

official steps. You can try to convince your colleagues by telling of other countries where the quotas have been successfully introduced. You can remind them that UN¹⁸ has set a 30 % goal for women's attendance in 1995 (and the call has actually been lifted to 50 % by 2030¹⁹). You will probably be told that quotas for women discriminate against men. Try to explain that the quotas are meant to be only a temporary measure, and in other countries voluntary party quotas have greatly increased the amount of women politicians and also men have come to understand that it benefits the whole party.

While doing all this lobbying, stay calm and stay focused. If it looks like you are going to lose, do not intimidate and start threatening that you will leave and join another party. Take the defeat graciously, and have another go later.

- ***I am respected for the work I do within the party and for the party.***

2.2 Working for the good of my constituents

As a politician, you have been given a tremendous responsibility: you are the voice of your people. The voters in your own constituency trusted that you, from all other candidates, will be the best person to look after their concerns, to make sure that life for them will turn better in the future.

It is important that you meet your voters on a regular basis. Wherever you meet them, be it a school or a community hall, a monastery or a church, try to keep regular times so that your constituents learn to know when you will be available.

Use all your listening capacity to hear what your voters are telling you. After that, try to think of policies which are doable in your home state or region, and which will alleviate the mentioned problems of your constituents. Then, when you return to your parliament, it is important that you forward the message that your voters gave to you. If your party has the governmental responsibility, suggest a reform that will ease the situation of your constituents.

In many countries opposition parties use the questioning hour of the parliament to bring the grievances of their constituents to the knowledge of government parties (and possible representatives of the media). Often they at the same time suggest solutions, which would aim to solve the problems.

Make sure that your own party, too, gets to hear about the issue. Perhaps you can suggest that the party will adopt policy goals that will help solve this particular problem?

To be reflected upon: The problems of a teacher

One of your constituents is a teacher, who comes to tell you of her worries. She says that some of her students cannot concentrate in their studies, because they are hungry. Research confirms that it is not possible to learn if the brain is not getting nutriment.

What kind of solutions could you think of to suggest to your parliament to solve the problem of this teacher?

In countries, which have electoral systems like Myanmar's, where each constituency only has one MP, the politicians often have to compete hard over the scarce resources to bring e.g. infrastructure projects to the area that they represent. The hard competition over money means that you have to learn to be tough. You have to have willpower. It helps to remind yourself: I am not doing this for myself – I am doing it for the benefit of my constituents. In the big picture, I am doing it for the good of Myanmar.

My constituents trust me, I bring their messages forward and work hard for them.

3. I am good at working with others

3.1 Team-play

Politics is team-play. No-one can achieve things on her or his own. You work within your party, to gain support, to write party policies, and so on. Especially when working within your own party, team-play is called for. Just like in a good sports team, the leaders of the party should recognize the special talents of each individual and put them to use, so that the common goals are easier to reach.

And you work within your parliament, to improve the living conditions of your own constituents, people in your region, the nation of Myanmar. While doing this, you meet and have to cope with all kinds of people. "Hotheads" may be individuals who generally in life get things done, as they often have a lot of willpower, but they are definitely not ideal politicians. Yet this type of people often drift to politics (you will be sure to find them in your own party, too), and then others have to learn to cope with them. In doing this, above mentioned diplomacy is a great asset. The person who does not get provoked (even though the other person is doing all she or he can to provoke) often walks out as the winner of the disagreement.

- ***I do not get easily provoked, and I know how to cope with the “hotheads”.***
- ***I am good at team-play: I recognize my own talents and am happy to put them to use.***

3.2 Supporting others

Working with others also means acknowledging their skill, whether they are men or women. Generally it tends to be so that women's skills are easier ignored than those of men. In Myanmar, female politicians are better educated than their male colleagues²⁰. Yet in many parties women are given the role of making tea and being a hostess in political functions. This is wasting talent – anyone can make tea, but good speech writers or innovative planners of campaigns are rare! If tea making is the task of women in your party, you should tactfully try to change this culture.

The cultural norms that give more weight to men are still very strong and make it hard for women to advance in the extra competitive field of politics. Perhaps you have a female party colleague who has ambitions? Stop to evaluate her qualities in an objective way. If you think that she is talented and suitable to be a leader, do give your support to her. Men all around the world have a tendency to support each other, to form fraternal networks, through which they give and gain. Here women have a lot to learn. Supportive, sisterly networks not only help women advance, but they also make them feel better.

It is also worth remembering this: The higher a female leader climbs in a hierarchy, the lonelier she is. Women leaders need all the support and solidarity we can give them.

- ***If I identify talent in my female colleagues, I help them 100 %.***

3.3 On mentoring

Men are very skilful in building networks and supporting each other in reciprocal ways. This is something that women must learn to practice in an effective way. Men are never accused of lacking solidarity amongst themselves, whereas women often complain that there is no mutual solidarity. Of course, the aim is not to set women, as a group, against men as a group. The aim is for women to realise that by expressing sisterly solidarity towards each other they can easier gain their goals, and at the same time they will feel better themselves.

One way of expressing solidarity is mentoring a newcomer, who has less knowledge and experience than you do. In a suitable situation you can indicate that you are willing to share with your younger colleague some of the wisdom that you have gained along the way. (Just make sure that you are not too pushy and know-it-all.) You can set up a

proper mentoring programme and agree to meet on a regular basis, e.g. once a month. Make sure that there is a trusting and relaxed atmosphere, and then ask your colleague to come forward with themes and topics which have caused her problems.

They are likely to be something like these: How to combine the busy life of a politician with family responsibilities? How to cope with the feelings of guilt that you have if you have to leave your young children in the care of others? How to cope with the feelings of guilt and inadequacy that you have if you are at home with your children, and not in your office busily working? How to deal with sexist remarks that some men make, in order to make you feel uncomfortable? How to act if you are sexually harassed or you witness someone else being harassed, possibly by a powerful, older man? What if none of your policy suggestions go forward and you feel that you are a completely wasted politician? What if no-one listens to you in your own party? How to travel safely to meet your constituents? What if the constituents demand all too much of you and do not understand that you are not their personal social worker? What if there is simply far too much work and you feel that you will soon break down?



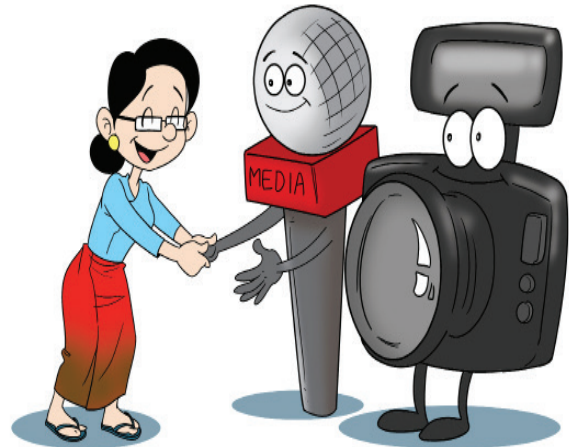
You can also help your young colleague in self-reflection: What are her special talents and capacities that she can make use of in her work as a politician? What are the areas where she needs improvement? How to set realistic, reachable goals? How to learn networking? How to trust herself enough to initiate new legislation?

If you are a young woman who has just entered politics, it really pays off to find an older, experienced female colleague – or perhaps an ex-politician –, who can give you valuable tips. There is no need for you to repeat the mistakes that other women have made before you. And if older and experienced women have found shortcuts to help them advance, there should be no reason for them not to share that knowledge with you. And one day, when you have yourself grown older and wiser, you can take your turn to help a newcomer in politics.

● ***I do not feel shy to ask for mentoring, and I am prepared to mentor others.***

4. I am good at working with the media

For a politician, making your ideas, values or goals available to the public is important. To gain this, politicians usually need to be exposed to the media. The media can be a foe and it can be an asset. If you are an aspiring politician, you really need to have some sort of strategy on how to deal with the media, both traditional and social media, so that you can use it, instead of letting it use you. The so-called yellow papers make their living out of scandals. Unfortunately, many politicians forget their roles as servants of the public and start looking for their own good, and this often leads to corruption. Everywhere in the world, the public loves it when papers write of politicians getting involved in bribery, intimidation and so on. (And unfortunately, these failed politicians may turn many people against politics completely.)



To be reflected upon: Unfair media

Elections are approaching. You have been to a rally where you and a candidate from a competing party, a man of 50, had a hot debate on how the next government should prioritize allocation of tax revenues. The next day, a local paper that everyone reads, reports on the debate. The reporter explains in detail the comments and arguments of your rival; when he talks of you, he describes your new hairstyle.

What do you do?

A frustrating fact is that most papers give more credit to male politicians than women politicians. Men are usually judged by what they say, women often by what they wear or how they look. This is something that you cannot change right now. You just have to learn to cope with it. Send matter of fact press releases or letters to the editor, telling of your views and policies, and keep doing this. If you have achieved something e.g. for your own constituency, you can point out to it, but boasting about it does not look good in people's eyes.

No one can master everything, and no one is flawless. It may happen that you made a mistake, and the papers may find out about this. Try to stay calm. If the mistake was a big one, and the papers are having a real go at you, it is probably a good policy to say

that you are sincerely sorry.

It may also happen that the papers are blaming you for something you did not do at all. This is a tricky situation. There is a danger that if you start defending yourself in the public, you will get all the more blame. It may be best just to stay calm and quiet, and keep working with political work.

● ***I know how to work with media and how to use it as a tool for gaining support for my policies.***

Politicians of our time turn to social media – especially Facebook and Twitter – to spread their messages and to communicate with voters. The speciality of social media is the fact that it breaks traditional hierarchies. On the other hand, this also poses a risk. Used smartly and with judgement, social media can be a great tool in campaigning, lobbying and gaining support for policies.

These days more and more people – especially people who do not have easy access to much money – also use it for funding. So-called crowd funding means that, to cover your campaigning costs, you ask for small donations from friends, supporters and voters. When put together these donations, even if some of them are very small, may make a difference in your campaign financing. International IDEA has an online manual on crowdfunding: [Online Political Crowdfunding](#).²¹



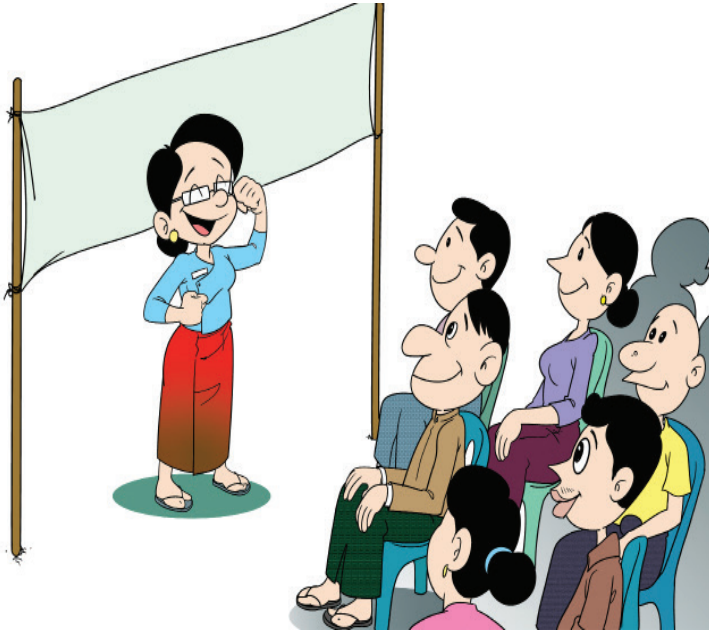
Social media, used carelessly, can cause a lot of harm. A serious politician thinks very, very carefully how she sets her words there. People get much easier provoked in social media than in face-to-face dialogue, and some people actually like to misunderstand. Never write when you are in an emotional state. Anger only breeds anger. You may use strong words, but they must always be matter of fact words. Humour – good humour – is a good attractor of attention, but even humour is easily (and often willingly) misunderstood. What applies for written texts, of course applies for pictures.

Another, new and big problem is the phenomenon of fake news, and social media is a forum where untrue news unfortunately spread very fast.

● ***I am a competent and innovative user of social media.***

5. I am good at campaigning

Campaigning for elections is an essential part of politicians' work. To be able to be elected for an office, you need to address your potential voters. There are a lot of guidelines and tips for efficient campaigning and preparations for it.



An important aspect is to be able to analyse your role as a woman politician in campaigning and be prepared, since due to the stereotypical gender roles and many barriers that women face, campaigning is often more difficult for women than men. When you decide to campaign for political office, you decide to become the star, the centre of attention. For many women, this takes a lot of courage. It helps if you remind yourself: It is not myself I want to push forward, it is my ideas, my values, the view of the future that I see for my region and Myanmar.

As a politician, you have some experience of campaigning. With every election, it should become a little easier. You have gained experiences and you have gained courage; yet it is likely that there is one thing that you have not got much further with: money.

It is not possible to campaign without money, and there is not one country in the world where women would be equals to men, as comes to financing political campaigns. Therefore, crowdfunding (see Part I, Session C, Chapter 4) is a good option especially for women.

A key factor is gathering an efficient, loyal and happy team to work for you. Ask someone that you trust to be the leader of the team. It will benefit you, if some of the members in your support team are men and people of different ages. Men working for your re-election gives you more credibility in the eyes of the voters, and if there are different people with different experiences and views, it will help you focus in bringing your message to the voters. Make sure there are also people who have organizing skills.

Campaigning feels a little bit like trying to sell yourself to the voters, and this is not an easy concept. In many countries, the competition gets so hard that rivals start, instead of promoting their good ideas, denigrate their opponents as people. In a good political campaign, ideas and policies, not people, are in the centre.

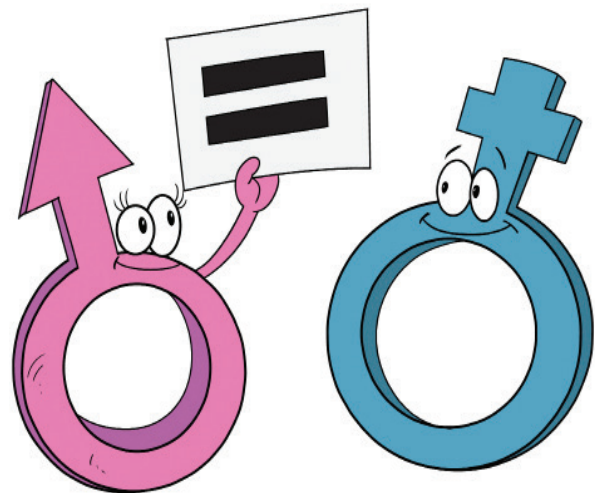
- ***I am a strong and efficient campaigner, and I focus on telling voters of my policies.***

PART II: Knowledge Empowerment

1. Things you should know about gender responsive policies

The heading may be difficult to understand. What does “gender responsive” mean?

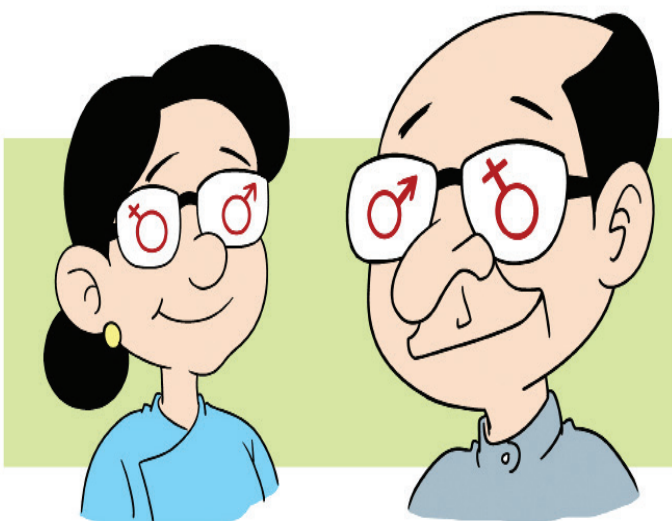
Let us think first of another term: **gender blindness**. A gender blind person treats women and men, girls and boys in the same way, often thinking that this is great from the point of view of equality. This attitude – that all people should receive exactly the same treatment – is actually a big barrier on the way towards full equality between women and men.



It means closing your eyes to the fact that women do not, for historical and also for biological reasons (e.g. only women give birth to children, and till now they have been doing most of nurturing of the young) have the same access to opportunities as men.

And, as a matter of fact, we do not treat men and women equally, even though we tend to believe that we do. Remember the anonymous CVs? Remember the Indian villagers

that rated a talk given by a man better than exactly the same talk given by a woman? A similar study was carried out in Yale University.²² Scientists there were given an application by a student applying for a lab manager position. A part of the scientists got the application with a male name, another with a female one. The result was that the “female” applicants were rated clearly lower than “male” applicants. The “female” applicants were also offered a much lower pay. The scientists doing this rating were both men and women. Scientists generally take pride in being objective, but



clearly, this was not objective behaviour and not equal treatment of women and men. These studies and experiments show that we all, both men and women, suffer of a **gender bias**, which for many of us is not conscious. It is very difficult to get rid of it: since the day we were born we have been receiving (often very subtle) messages and learning norms which teach us that men are of more value. And yet many of us believe that we treat men and women equally, and that this is how it should be.

We have to put on new spectacles: instead of gender blind we have to learn to be gender sensitive. We have to keep opening our eyes to the barriers that women face – and, in some cases also men –, and we have to find ways of changing the attitudes and practices that make us hold on to the status quo. And this is where “gender responsive” comes in. Let’s have a closer look at these words.

We know what “gender” means. Simply put it is what culture adds to biology. The World Health Organisation defines gender in the following way:

“Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed.”²³

How we see gender norms – what is suitable for men and women – has also varied across time. For instance, these days only women wear shoes with high heels. Initially high heel shoes were designed for upper-class men to wear when hunting on horseback.

We are used to thinking that man equals human being, a representative of human kind. Because of this attitude, on some level prevalent in every culture and deeply engrained in us, we tend to picture in our minds a woman when we talk of gender. **Yet it is important to remember that the word gender also refers to men. Every person has a gender role. Usually our culture, beliefs and norms determine for us, what gender role we have – and recognizing and identifying this is essential, both for women and for men.** The term “gender” is also helpful in another context. The fact that we have a concept like “gender”, which is wider than biological sex, helps us widen our understanding of what it is to be a human being. For example, not all individuals fall in to the category of boy or girl. Some are intersex. Also, there are different sexual identities, which are said to be LGBT (short for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender). So, on the one hand, gender refers to the norms that turn us into women or men in our given societies, in a given time; on the other, it gives space to people who have a different identity.

And what does “responsive” mean? It means a sensitive, easily reacting attitude, a state of mind where you do not ignore the other person and her or his needs. Thus “gender responsive” means that we: identify the presence of norms and stereotypes imposed on boys and girls, women and men, understand that these norms and stereotypes may restrict us from fully being what we want to be, behave and act, e.g. write policies, in ways which take into consideration the often varying needs of men and women, girls and boys, but also people belonging to the LGBT group.

Example: Gender responsive action to combat climate change

A talk given in a side event at the 23rd Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change:

Sheila Oparaocha, ENERGIA International:

ENERGIA International is an international network on gender and sustainable energy, working in Asia and Africa. We now have a global sustainable development goal to ensure affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for all as well as to bring women out of poverty, in a way that empowers them as well.

Over the last 20 years, we have been working with national governments and doing audits of national energy policies with the departments of energy, working with rural electrification agencies, using a variety of approaches. When we analysed our progress, we found that we were still not really reaching the most remote, the most vulnerable and marginalized, and therefore we were not hitting our target.

We adopted an entrepreneurship approach that puts women at the centre of energy service delivery system: scaling up women's enterprises in energy value chains, making sure that women occupy positions where there's value addition, and they're making real money. Also on the other side, working with enterprises that women are dominating, particularly in the agriculture sector, and providing energy inputs that are really going to make a difference to increase their productivity. Over the last three years, we have been working with over 4,000 women enterprises. Their businesses have grown by 20 per cent or more, and they are delivering energy products to 2.6 million people.

This means that we're going into areas where nobody was working to deliver energy—not the government, not the private sector—because it was too risky. We now have women who are providing energy services in these areas. This includes solar home systems so that you can read, some improved cook stoves, water pumps, and so on.

It worked because one of the biggest issues of scaling up energy in these areas is the adoption and sustainable use. That is all about behavioural change, about having the conversation. So, building on those women's networks, having that conversation between a buyer and a seller who are in the same boat, it changes the conversation as to why you should buy it and your decision to do that.

We need to put people—men and women—at the centre of our climate actions and to be accountable for the commitments, the resources and the funding that are required to operationalize people's own agency into solutions.²⁴

2. Things you should know about gender mainstreaming

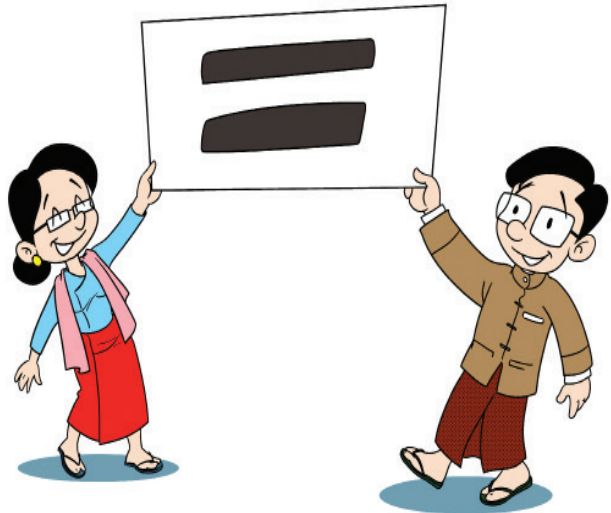
This is another difficult concept. What does “mainstreaming” mean? Mainstream, defined by a dictionary, means “that which is common; the norm”. So mainstreaming can be seen as turning something to be the norm.

Gender mainstreaming is a concept promoted by many different organizations, and by the United Nations already decades ago. UN Women defines it: “Gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality.

Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities – policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects.

Mainstreaming is not about adding on a “women’s component” or even a “gender equality component”, to an existing activity. It involves more than increasing women’s participation. Mainstreaming situates gender equality issues at the centre of policy decision, medium-term plans, programme budgets, and institutional structures and processes. Mainstreaming entails bringing the perceptions, experience, knowledge and interests of women as well as men to bear on policy-making, planning and decision-making. Mainstreaming can reveal a need for changes in goals, strategies and actions to ensure that both women and men can influence, participate in and benefit from development processes. It can require changes in organisations – structures, procedures and cultures – to create organisational environments which are conducive to the promotion of gender equality.”²⁵

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has a good guide to gender mainstreaming food security projects: Guide to mainstreaming gender in FAO’s project cycle.²⁶



Example: FAO and gender mainstreaming



The Grameen Krishi (Agricultural) Foundation (GKF) was established in 1991 by the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. GKF supports agricultural development through irrigation, credit and services. The Foundation's gender strategy evolved over time. At first only men were included in GKF's crop production activities, while women were supported in their traditional homestead-based activities, such as rice processing and small husbandry. Gradually, GKF recognised women's important and actual roles in crop production.

This recognition, combined with a serious commitment to women, led GKF to shift its gender strategy to one that involved women farmers in irrigation and agricultural activities. Agricultural production became more accessible and productive for women, who gained access to land, irrigation water, credit, seeds, fertilisers and marketing facilities. Women were able to earn more income from agriculture than from their traditional activities.²⁷

We could also think of mainstreaming as integrating gender equality as a fundamental part of all policies. If we want to succeed in this integration, we first have to give attention to **gender perspectives** in all activities across all programmes. And what does “gender perspectives” mean? It means that whatever policies, programmes, or advocacy we do, we first think of the implications of the planned actions for women and men, girls and boys. It is **making gender visible** in the planned activity.

It sounds very simple but it can be a little tricky, as we have to figure out beforehand how the planned action will effect different people. And to be able to do that, we need to know the situation of people now, before the action. But not only this: we need to know the situation of boys and girls, women and men. For this reason it is really important to have gender-disaggregated data. Another important thing is not to take stereotypical assumptions of the situations of men and women as the baseline. All information must base on facts.

Example: Gender mainstreaming a development project in Myanmar

An international organization initiated a program and provided grants to local civil society organizations (CSO) to increase household livelihood opportunities through economic empowerment. Gender mainstreaming is a key requirement of the organization. One local CSO applied gender mainstreaming into a project called “Land and Property Rights in Karen State” in 2017-2018 in the following way:

- *Conducted situation analysis of the targeted villages (who does what, who possesses land and under whose name).*
- *Explored obstacles (both direct and indirect) for men, women, and vulnerable groups such as disabled and people belonging to ethnic minorities to access land and housing.*
- *Identified entry points (key influential persons and groups) and a champion for gender equality.*
- *Organized community awareness sessions for land rights, linkages between gender equality and development, and joint registration.*
- *Facilitated joint land registration (provision assistance for registration at the township government office).*
- *Organized sharing sessions for land registration (led by the male champion for joint land registration).*
- *The project did not significantly change the traditional practice, where the land is registered under the male heads of households. However, it was a good initiative and a foundation to lead towards gender transformation.*

As a way to evaluate a project or programme from a gender perspective, ask the following questions²⁸:

1. Of what sort is the problem that you are trying to solve, seen from the perspectives of men and women, girls and boys?
2. Will the actions or consequences of the planned project target people?
3. Are there clear differences between women and men, boys and girls in the activity that the project is focusing at?
4. What is the ratio of men and women, girls and boys, in the planned target groups of

the project?

5. To achieve the planned outcome, will actions, which differ according to gender, be needed?
6. Will the planned project actions target women and men, boys and girls differently, and are the consequences different for these groups?

To be reflected upon: The consequences of austerity measures

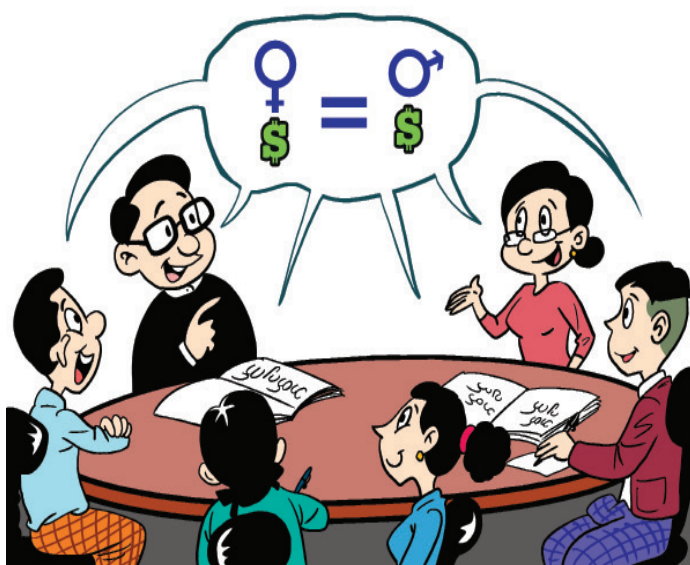
Due to tightened funding, a village school in your constituency will be closed down and the children will have to travel to the neighbouring village to go to school. Their trip will take 1-2 hours longer each day.

What are the possible consequences for girls and boys, men and women of the village where the school will be closed? Please list them!

The government needs more revenues and is therefore putting a new tax on energy. The prices of electricity and petrol will rise by 10 per cent.

How will this effect men and women, girls and boys in your constituency?

3. Things you should know about gender responsive budgeting



Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) is really one part of mainstreaming. It does not aim at creating separate budgets for women. According to Wiki-Gender, gender responsive budgeting:²⁹

Refers to the process of conceiving, planning, approving, executing, monitoring, analysing and auditing budgets in a gender-sensitive way, Involves analysis of actual expenditure of revenue (usually of governments) on women and girls as compared to expenditure on men and boys,

Helps governments to decide how policies need to be made, adjusted and re-prioritized, Is a tool for effective policy implementation where one can check if the allocations are in line with policy commitments and are having the desired impact.

Wiki-Gender also lists five steps of gender budgeting:³⁰

An analysis of the situation for women and men and girls and boys (and the different sub-groups) in a given sector.

An assessment of the extent to which the sector's policy addresses the gender issues and gaps described in the first step. This step should include an assessment of the relevant legislation, policies, programs and schemes. It includes an analysis of both the written policy as well as the implicit policy reflected in government activities. It should examine the extent to which the above meet the socio-economic and other rights of women.

An assessment of the adequacy of budget allocations to implement the gender sensitive policies and programs identified in step 2 above.

Monitoring whether the money was spent as planned, what was delivered and to whom. This involves checking both financially and the physical deliverables (disaggregated by sex).

An assessment of the impact of the policy/program/scheme and the extent to which the situation described in step 1 has been changed, in the direction of greater gender equality.

A 2018 report by UN, Gender Responsive Budgeting in Asia and the Pacific – Key Concepts and Good Practices,³¹ looks at how different countries of the region have advanced with gender budgeting. Myanmar has taken some steps, but Philippines is the leader.

Example: Philippines and gender responsive budgeting

Stages of budget cycle where GRB adopted: formulation, legislation, implementation and audit/review

Main driver/leader: Philippine Commission on Women (PCW)

Success factors: strong institutional framework; capacity-building of government and non-government entities; monitoring and accountability mechanism

1. Context: Philippines has been engaged in gender-responsive budgeting, at the national and local levels, for over two decades.

The current Gender and Development (GAD) Budget Policy has evolved from a series of legislative mandates, including the Magna Carta of Women (1999) which requires all government agencies to allocate at least five percent of their budgets to address gender issues - with the intention for the five per cent to influence the remaining 95 per cent.

2. Implementation: Government agencies are required to produce a GAD plan and budget, as well as a report, on an annual basis. Technical support and capacity-building assistance is provided to agencies by the Philippine Commission for Women (PCW) through training, workshops, advisory services and written guidelines. Aside from the PCW, oversight agencies for the implementation of the GAD Budget

Policy include the Department of Budget and Management; Department of the Interior and Local Government; National Economic and Development Authority; and Commission on Audit.

One unique feature of GRB in Philippines is the implementation of gender audits as part of the mainstream audit processes, accompanied by strict measures for non-compliance.

Philippines has also taken steps to promote GRB at the sub-national level, including through the provision of technical assistance in conducting gender analysis of the socioeconomic situations of Local Government Units (LGUs) and integrating sex-disaggregated data into local planning and budgeting.

3. Results and challenges: Increased compliance and submission of the annual GAD Plan and Budget; institutionalization of the GAD Focal Point System in agencies and LGUs; increased attribution of regular programmes to the GAD Plan and Budget; mainstreaming of the GAD perspective in formulation and implementation of agency plans and programmes; and an increase in the number of top level champions on GAD, both at the national and local levels.

However, critical challenges also remain, including uneven level of capacities of GAD focal points and project implementers in mainstreaming GAD perspectives; lack of effective tracking of GAD spending; assignment of Focal Point positions to mostly women staff as GAD is considered “for women” only; and low GAD budget utilization since gender equality is not a priority agenda for critical agencies and local chief executives.

4. Lessons learned and the way forward: GRB in Philippines has enabled considerable advances in ensuring programmes, projects and activities are more gender-responsive. However, most agencies continue to focus on the five per cent of the GAD budget, rather than the remaining 95 per cent. Therefore, further efforts are particularly required in enhancing the understanding of gender mainstreaming principles amongst government officials.

The World Economic Forum has some tips about gender responsive budgeting:³² Legal requirements matter. Providing gender budgeting with legal status helps ensure its continuity when political actors change. Austria, Bolivia, and Rwanda mandate gender budgeting in their constitutions.

The leadership of the ministry of finance is crucial. Our analysis and experience show that gender budgeting is more likely to be sustained if the ministry of finance leads. Albania, Korea, and Uganda are three such examples.

Civil society, gender and other ministries, parliaments, and academia are also key play-

ers. In Timor-Leste, the prime minister and parliamentarians were essential in getting various resolutions passed. The United Kingdom's Women's Budget Group started in the 1980s and conducts a thorough annual, gender-sensitive analysis of the budget. Align goals with national gender equality plans or the Sustainable Development Goals. Early on, Morocco and Afghanistan aligned their objectives with the Millennium Development Goals and now the Sustainable Development Goals, and their own national development plans.

Taxes should not be overlooked. Most countries have focused on spending, but tax policies are not always gender neutral. Austria has identified a gender equality objective, and some governments—including Finland, Ireland, and Spain—have committed to undertake studies looking at the gender aspects of revenue policy. All levels of government have a role to play. Uganda's "Local budget clubs" allow citizens to discuss spending priorities and hold governments accountable. Indian states with gender budgeting efforts have made more progress on gender equality in primary school enrolment than those without.

4. Things you should know about quotas for women in politics

Article 4 of the CEDAW convention calls for **temporary special measures to fasten the process of gaining equality**, and article 7 for **state parties to make sure that women and men can take part in politics on equal terms**. No specific aims with timelines are stipulated in the convention. Since the writing of CEDAW, the UN has set an aim of raising the level of female politicians to 30 %, in the so called Beijing Platform for Action (1995). In March 2019 the UN CEDAW committee and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) gave a joint statement, calling for 50 % balance in women's leadership by 2030.³³

It is clear that this goal cannot be reached without special measures. To speed up the process, many countries have adopted quotas for women's attendance in politics, as a temporary special measure called for in the CEDAW convention. There are three main types of quotas:

Quotas stipulated in legislation: a certain amount of parliamentary seats are reserved for women only.

Legislated candidate quotas: political parties have to nominate a certain amount of female candidates in elections.

Voluntary party quotas: parties nominate on a voluntary bases a certain amount of women as candidates in parliamentary elections on their lists.

These all have their pros and cons, but they have made parliaments in many countries much more inclusive. Voluntary party quotas have the benefit of changing both parties and parliaments to make space for women. In a first-past-the-post electoral system it is

really important that parties nominate women in the winnable constituencies, as otherwise nominating women will not change anything.

International IDEA provides an online database on quotas adapted in different countries around the world: Gender Quotas Database³⁴.

To be reflected upon: Myanmar and quotas for women

Find out: Does Myanmar use quotas for women to advance in politics? What about your own party? Has there ever been discussions about introducing voluntary quotas?

Quotas for women would not be needed if equality of opportunity was realised. Then women could compete on equal terms with men to be nominated as candidates, as chairpersons of committees and political parties, as ministers of government and leaders of their countries. But as we all suffer of a gender bias (remember the Indian village people, the anonymous CVs, the scientists in Yale University?), women's playing field is not the same as that of men. And this is why temporary special measures are needed: As "equal opportunity" is, for the time being, an illusion, the quotas can strive to grant "equality of result".

A very good overview of the situation and gaps in equality of women and men in Myanmar can be found in the 2014 census report "Thematic Report on Gender Dimensions":³⁵

5. Things you should know about CEDAW

5.1 The CEDAW Convention



Myanmar is a member state of United Nations. United Nations is perhaps best known for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was written after the Second World War, in 1948.

UDHR is by far not the only UN document dealing with human rights. **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, also known as CEDAW, is an international bill of rights for women.**

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention in December 1979. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, CEDAW defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to foster greater equality. CEDAW is often referred to as the Women's Convention because, unlike conference declarations, it sets legally-binding principles and standards for realizing women's rights.

Terms: Declaration and Convention

What is the difference between a declaration (e.g. UDHR) and a convention (e.g. CEDAW)?

A declaration is not legally binding, although, if it has been in use for a long time and is referred to often, it is politically seen as soft law. A convention is stronger: it is a legally binding instrument, meaning that governments, which have ratified a specific convention – like CEDAW – are under the responsibility to fulfil its obligations.

Since 1982 the CEDAW committee has been meeting on a regular basis to go through reports submitted usually every fourth year by the nations who are members of the treaty, evaluating how the member states are advancing in fulfilling the obligations of the treaty.

Exercise: Myanmar and CEDAW

Only a few countries in the world have not signed and ratified the CEDAW treaty. Try to find out: When did Myanmar become member of the treaty? When did Myanmar last report to the CEDAW committee?

Often active civil society organizations of member countries submit their own, so-called shadow reports, to the committee.

Exercise: Myanmar and shadow reporting

Try to find out: Did women's organizations in Myanmar submit a shadow report to the CEDAW committee when the last reporting was done?

In 2000, a new instrument, the Optional Protocol of CEDAW, entered into force, enabling singular women or groups of women to submit claims of violations of their rights to the CEDAW committee. Myanmar has signed but not ratified the Optional Protocol.

Terms: Signing and ratifying

What is the difference between signing and ratifying a treaty?

After a state signs a treaty, it will start looking at the situation at home, trying to bring national legislation to the level that meets the requirements of the treaty. (After signing CEDAW, even a country like Finland, advanced in many ways and seen as a pioneer of gender equality, had to rewrite national legislation.) After these adjustments are done, the state will notify other parties that it consents to be bound by the treaty. This is called ratification.

CEDAW provides a practical blueprint for each country to achieve equality for women and girls. Providing opportunities for women and girls to learn, earn and participate in public decision-making helps reduce violence, alleviate poverty, build democracies and strengthen economies. In countries that have ratified CEDAW, women have partnered with their governments to shape policies that create greater safety and opportunities for women and their families. Examples:

Educational opportunities – e.g., Bangladesh used CEDAW to help attain gender parity in primary school enrollment and set as a goal for 2015, to eliminate all gender disparities in secondary education.

Violence against women and girls – e.g., Mexico responded to a destabilizing epidemic of violence against women by using CEDAW terms in a General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free from Violence. By 2009, all 32 Mexican states had adopted the measure. Marriage and family relations – e.g., Kenya has used CEDAW to address differences in inheritance rights, eliminating discrimination against widows and daughters of the deceased.

Political participation – e.g., Kuwait's Parliament voted to extend voting rights to women in 2005 following a recommendation by the CEDAW Committee to eliminate discriminatory provisions in its electoral law.³⁶

Many countries have signed and ratified the convention with declarations and/or reservations. For instance, Algeria, Egypt, Bangladesh, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Oman, Tunisia, and Turkey make reservations about articles that contradict with their respective family laws or are seen to be in contradiction with certain elements of the Islamic sharia law.

Myanmar has written reservations for article 29, paragraph 1.

To be reflected upon: Myanmar's reservation for CEDAW

Reservation: Article 29:

"[The Government of Myanmar] does not consider itself bound by the provision set forth in the said article."

1. Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the present Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of one of them, be submitted to arbitration. If within six months from the date of the request for arbitration the parties are unable to agree on the organization of the arbitration, any one of those parties may refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice by request in conformity with the Statute of the Court.

2. Each State Party may at the time of signature or ratification of the present Convention or accession thereto declare that it does not consider itself bound by paragraph 1 of this article. The other States Parties shall not be bound by that paragraph with respect to any State Party which has made such a reservation.

3. Any State Party which has made a reservation in accordance with paragraph 2 of this article may at any time withdraw that reservation by notification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

For the fulfilment of women's full rights, it would be very good if the government of Myanmar acted according to the principal of paragraph 3 and withdrew its reservation. Could you, as an MP, work towards that goal?

5.2 The CEDAW reporting process

As mentioned earlier, all state parties to the convention submit initial and periodic reports every four years on their implementation of the treaty to the so-called CEDAW committee. The committee is composed of 23 independent experts, and it monitors the implementation of the convention, basing its work on reports received from state parties. It is helpful to understand the steps in the process:

1. Preparation of State Party Report / Shadow Report
All state parties to the convention submit initial and periodic reports on implementation.
2. Pre-session (List of Issues and Questions)
A pre-session working group, composed of between 5 and 10 Committee members, reviews the report and prepares a list of critical issues and questions.
3. Reply to the List of Issues and Questions
This list is sent to the state party, with a request to respond within 6 weeks.

4. Constructive Dialogue

The CEDAW session begins reviewing the report and response to the list of critical issues and questions, then the committee and state parties discuss in plenary.

5. Concluding Observations

These include concerns and recommendations from the CEDAW Committee. The committee also produces general recommendations, by which it draws attention to a specific issue at the global level.

It is possible to influence the CEDAW review process in three main ways:

1. By submitting reports or country specific information to the pre-session working group.
2. By attending pre-session or session working groups and providing information in plenary.
3. By submitting alternative reports (so called shadow reports) for the CEDAW session.³⁷

To be reflected upon: CEDAW and an ordinary woman

All this talk of a convention, which was written far away, by lawyers from unknown countries, may sound puzzling. How does it bear on life in Myanmar?

Try to think of an example of how the CEDAW convention has effected the life of a woman or a girl in Myanmar!

6. Things you should know about the Sustainable Development Goals

The UN member states started to process the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2012. The aim was to produce a set of universal goals which meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges of our world. The Member States agreed upon the SDGs and these goals have been in force since 2016, and they reach to year 2030.

The SDGs are unique because they call all countries – poor, rich and middle-income – to action to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs, such as education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

There are 17 goals altogether: 1) No poverty, 2) No hunger, 3) Good health and well-being, 4) Quality education, 5) Gender equality, 6) Clean water and sanitation, 7) Affordable and clean energy, 8) Decent work and economic growth, 9) Industry, innovation and infrastructure, 10) Reduced inequalities, 11) Sustainable cities and communities, 12) Responsible consumption and production, 13) Climate action, 14) Life below water, 15) Life on land, 16) Peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17) Partnerships for the goals. It is clear that the goals overlap – if there is no poverty, there should be no hunger – and that the coming true of one effects the coming true of another: if there is gender equality, then there is quality education for all.



The UN SDG Internet site states: “Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large. Implementing new legal frameworks regarding female equality in the workplace and the eradication of harmful practices targeted at women is crucial to ending the gender-based discrimination prevalent in many countries around the world.”³⁸

To be reflected upon: Harmful practices

What are so called “harmful practices”? The UN has a listing of traditional customs, which impede the fulfillment of gender equality and the fulfillment of women’s and girls’ rights. They include practices like child marriage, forced marriage, dowry-related violence or harassment, bride price, female genital mutilation, so-called “honor crimes”, stove burning, acid attacks, forcing the victim of rape to marry the perpetrator, “pay-back” or revenge rape, disinheritance, maltreatment of widows.

The UN has a useful document of more information on these: Good Practices in Legislation on “Harmful Practices” against Women³⁹

Are any of these harmful practices taking place in Myanmar? If yes, what can be done to stop people practicing them?

You can find more about the SDGs on the UN pages: “Sustainable Development Goals – Knowledge Platform”.⁴⁰

7. Things you should know about women's cooperation

7.1 Women's Wings

According to a research report “Women's Political Participation in Myanmar”, by The Asian Foundation and a Myanmar NGO Phan Tee Eain, female politicians in Myanmar are actually better educated than male politicians.⁴¹ Yet it is difficult for women to advance in politics. In the same report, women politicians mention lack of confidence as one of their major problems. Something needs to be done about this.

In many countries political parties have special Women's Wings (WW), open only to women members of that particular party. In WWs women can discuss, they can learn to take the responsibility of chairing, they have an opportunity to gender mainstream the policies of the party and then take these ideas to the whole party platform. A Women's Wing can be a forum for learning how to do politics. But it can and it should also be a platform for emotional development. According to the above mentioned research report by The Asia Foundation and Phan Tee Eain, lack of solidarity between women who are active in politics is a big problem in Myanmar. If the WW of your party is the well-functioning, sisterly organization that a good WW aims to be, then you can, in its supportive atmosphere, learn to trust other women and to cooperate with them.

To function well, a WW should be an integral part of the party: it should have representation in the decision-making bodies of the party and it should serve as a platform to raise in the party hierarchy. In some countries wives or sisters of party leaders are chairpersons of the WW. This is not democratic: only merit of one's own must be the base of selection.

There is also a wider picture. When active women, who want to bring about change in their own communities, in their cities and countries, in their regions and in the whole world, come together e.g. in big United Nations conferences to meet and discuss policies to change things for better, they usually cooperate in a wonderful way. After the conference ends, they go back to their homes, to their own parliaments, and stop cooperation. They step back inside their silos and start seeing other women from other parties as competitors, or as enemies.

The fact is that with cooperation over party lines they could achieve much more. If there is a topic that all women in your parliament care about, e.g. domestic violence against women (VAW) or human trafficking, or sexual harassment, and women want to change legislation or allocate more money to deal with the problem, then it is really important to learn to reach over to other women, across party lines. This is much easier in a multiparty system than in a parliament with only two parties. In such parliaments the threshold for women to reach over the party line is much, much higher.

Are there Women's Wings in the Myanmar parties?

To be reflected upon: Establishing a Women's Wing

Have you ever thought about the possibility of establishing a Women's Wing within your party? Would this be a good time to start one? If you think so, there are a few things you should consider:

- *How to get women interested in starting a WW?*
 - *How to convince the party leadership of the necessity of forming the wing?*
 - *What will you identify as the main objectives for the work of the wing? It may be useful to distinguish between short and long-term goals.*
 - *What about membership – only for women who belong to the party or open to all?*
 - *Would it be a good idea to write in the bylaws rotation rules for the chairpersonship (for example one person can only serve 2–3 terms at a time)?*
 - *How to organise the relationship between the central office and the grassroots level?*
 - *How to ensure that the WW has independent financing?*
-

7.2. Women's Caucus

In many countries, parliaments have so called women's caucuses: networks for women MPs. They are meeting places for all the women MPs from all the different parties to come together to learn about themes that matter for them, as women. Someone from the civil society may e.g. come to a meeting of the caucus and tell about the United Nations Security Council 1325 – Women, Peace and Security. After that, the women MPs can discuss and think of how the parliament that they are members of could act to alleviate women's suffering in conflicts, and what could be done to increase the number of female peace negotiators.



Perhaps there is a women's caucus in your parliament? If you as a caucus really want to achieve goals and write policies to improve the situation of women, then the important

thing is to find issues and to talk of policies that you can all agree on. If you all think that gender based violence is a great problem, you can agree on a policy to try to combat it, whether it is legislation, employing more policewomen, training the police, justice sector actors and social workers to help victims, establishing women's shelters and legal and health services, or starting information campaigns. After you have discussed it together at the caucus, each one of you can bring the matter to their own parties and initiate a discussion on the need to take measures to alleviate the problem.

8. Things you should know about the political context of Myanmar

8.1 Values in the context of Myanmar

Throughout this guide book, there has been talk of values, especially of non-discrimination. It is important to learn to understand what “non-discrimination” really means, and to identify situations where people do discriminate, in order to learn not to discriminate and not to accept discriminating behaviour.

Another important value is diversity. Myanmar is a very diverse country in terms of ethnicity – there are over 130 different ethnic groups –, religion, and traditions. Traditions can vary even within the same ethnic group. We need to see the beauty of diversity and learn to see it as a strength. Instead of mistrusting people who belong to different groups from us, we have to learn to trust them. As a politician, you know that people tend not to trust politicians. Instead, especially when the general elections are approaching, politicians get blamed. We need a change of thinking: instead of seeing diversity as a threat, we must learn to understand its value. A politician can act as a role model in building this trust.

As Myanmar is so large and diverse, we need harmony. Harmony is a key element of development, and it is needed to gain gender equality.

Unfortunately, Myanmar is also a very fragile state (22nd out of 178 nations⁴²). Conflicts have been occurring for years among different armed groups (between ethnic armed groups, the military, and also communal conflicts). This is a heavy burden for a developing nation, but ending these crises is an aim, which every politician in Myanmar must keep in mind, even if the conflicts take place in a far corner of the country. A politician in Myanmar needs to learn the right approach – a sensitive approach – to conflicts.

UNSCR 1325

In 2000, United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. It has been followed by seven other resolutions (UNSCR 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122 and 2242), which make up the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. The objective is to give women a voice in conflicts, to stop gender-based violence of wars and conflicts, to bring women to the negotiation tables, to create inclusive and more democratic peace-making processes and to write more equitable peace deals.

Many countries have written National Action Plans (NAP) on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Till now, Myanmar has not. But, whether there is a NAP or not, member countries of UN should follow the 1325 and sister resolutions.

If you have the opportunity to get involved in any way in the peace processes that are ongoing in Myanmar, please, bring the Women, Peace and Security Agenda there. Or give your support to people, who will do it.

Diplomacy is another essential asset for a politician in a country like Myanmar. It was talked about in Part I, Session B, Chapter 2. In chapter 9 there will be talk of values, which are essential for any democratic system, such as rule of law and good governance.

8.2 Federalism

Many nations of Myanmar's size – geographic land area and number of population – use a federal model, where states have a lot of independence and the union level looks after key legislation and foreign policies. There has been talk of establishing a federal model in Myanmar, and many people are in favour of it. Adopting a federal model would require the rewriting of the Constitution of 2008. This reform would, to a great deal, change the legislative role of the state level parliaments.

UN Women has even produced a research report looking at possible advantages and disadvantages of a federal model from the gender equality point of view: Advancing Gender Equality within a Federal Governance Model in Myanmar.⁴³

8.3 Geopolitics

Most nations in our world have some problem neighbours, and Myanmar is no exception.

To be reflected upon: Myanmar has to pay for China's problems

*This article appeared in The Guardian, a British newspaper, in March 2019 (and it is only one example of what kinds of problems a difficult neighbour might pose):
Burmese and Chinese authorities are turning a blind eye to a growing trade in women from Myanmar's Kachin minority, who are taken across the border, sold as wives to Chinese men and raped until they become pregnant, a report claims.*

Some of the women are allowed to return home after they have given birth, but are forced to leave their children, according to an investigation by Human Rights Watch, titled Give Us a Baby and We'll Let You Go.

One survivor said: "I gave birth, and after one year the Chinese man gave me a choice of what to do. I got permission to go back home, but not with the baby."⁴⁴

What are the root causes for this? What should be done to stop this kind of thing happening? What can be done?

One of the reasons, why Myanmar is interesting to some of its neighbours, are the country's rich natural resources. Many of the earlier mentioned SDGs (see Part II, Chapter 5), deal with sustainable care of natural resources; see especially SDG 14 and SDG 15. These rich resources have a linkage to the armed rebellions. To whom does the richness of nature belong? The local people, who have always depended on their surroundings for their livelihoods, or the whole nation, which can develop the resources and create income for the benefit of wider groups? Or some big companies, which might be most effective in turning raw material into goods?

To be reflected upon: Ownership of natural resources

Are there, in the area where you live, natural resources which interest various stakeholders, also ones from further away? Is there a means with which you could help make sure that the people in your own area are the ones who benefit of the richness of nature – in a sustainable way?

8.4 Implementation of CEDAW on parliamentary level

In Part II, Chapter 4, we talked about the CEDAW-convention. As an MP, you have the opportunity to take part in Myanmar's CEDAW process. The CEDAW Committee has many recommendations for State parties, amongst them:

that parliaments participate fully in the reporting process and the implementation of the Convention and its Protocol,
that parliaments encourage MPs to inform their voters of the Committee's work,
that State parties make sure that all relevant information is made available to MPs on a regular basis,
that information received by government on its obligations as a State party and other matters of concern are brought to the attention of MPs,
that whenever members of the Committee are invited to visit a State party, it is desirable that the State party organize meetings with MPs.

The Committee stresses the importance of strengthening the national machinery dedicated to equality at the level of parliament, such as commissions on gender equality, missions and information on inquiries relating to violence against women, and improvement of legislation on equality between women and men. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement of Myanmar has written, in an inclusive process with the civil society, a National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013 – 2022 (see box); also available online.⁴⁵

Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and Myanmar:

The government of Myanmar established Myanmar National Committee for Women Affairs (MNCWA) in 1996 after participating at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). The committee was re-structured as Myanmar National Committee on Women (MNCW) in 2018, with inclusion of representatives of women from the civil society and gender networks.

To respond to the government's commitment to UN CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), the plan "National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women"⁴⁶ (NSPAW 2013-2022) was developed by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR), with technical support from the United Nations Gender Theme Group and Gender Equality network. The plan is based on the 12 Priority Areas of the BPfA and the principles of CEDAW. For effective implementation of NSPAW, the MSWRR formed, in 2018, 4 Technical Working Groups (TWG): 1) Violence Against Women and Girls TWG; 2) Women, Peace and Security TWG; 3) Participation TWG; and 4) Mainstreaming TWG.

The CEDAW Committee draws the attention of State parties to the fact that institutional linkages and informal relations with civil society and women's organizations are fundamental to the promotion of women's rights by the parliament.

The Committee encourages State parties to include in their delegation before the Committee for the examination of their report, MPs as well as a special advisor in charge of

relations between the government and the parliament in order to improve the visibility of parliamentary responsibilities.

9. Things you should know about democratic values and practices

There is no country in our world where all principles of democracy are fulfilled one hundred per cent. To attain all the goals of democracy all the time is probably not even possible, as our political systems are not built of concrete but people's actions, and people are never faultless. If a democracy is to function as well as possible, it is important that all citizens – the ones who have been elected to office and the ones who elect them – know the principles of democracy and value them. Here is a list of some important ones:

Equality and Human Rights:

All individuals are valued equally, have equal opportunities, and may not be discriminated against because of their race, religion, ethnicity, language, gender or sexual orientation. The human rights of all citizens are protected. For example:

- Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within their own country, and everyone has the right to leave and return to their own country.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- Everyone has the right to organize and take part in peaceful meetings

Economic Freedom:

The government allows some private ownership of property and businesses. People are allowed to choose their own work and join labour unions. It is generally accepted that a free market should exist in a democracy and the government should not control the economy.

Bill of Rights:

A list of citizens' rights and freedoms. This document limits the power of government, explains the freedoms that are guaranteed to all people and protects people from a government that might abuse its powers.

The Rule of Law:

All are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law without discrimination. No one is above the law – this includes elected officials, the police and members of the military. Laws are enforced equally, fairly and consistently.

Control of the Abuse of Power:

Corruption occurs when government officials use public funds for their own benefit or

they exercise power in an illegal way. To protect against these abuses of power, democratic governments are often structured to limit the powers of government offices and those who work for them.

Free and Fair Elections:

Elected officials are chosen by the people in a free and fair manner. Elections are held regularly, usually every few years. Most adult citizens have the right to vote and run for office regardless of race, gender, ethnicity and economic status. There should be no obstacles to voting and no intimidation, corruption, or threats to citizens before or during an election.

Multi-Party Systems:

More than one political party participates in elections and plays a role in government. Multiple-party systems provide the government with different viewpoints on issues and provide voters with a choice of candidates, parties and policies. Countries with only one party are usually dictatorships/autocracies.

Citizen Participation:

Citizen participation in government is more than just a right — it is a responsibility. Participation can take the form of running for office, voting in elections, becoming an informed citizen, debating issues, attending community meetings, paying taxes, serving on a jury and protesting. Citizen participation builds a stronger democracy.

Accountability and Transparency:

Elected and appointed officials are responsible for their actions and are accountable to the people. Officials must make decisions and perform their duties according to the wishes of those they represent, not for themselves. For government to be accountable, the people must be aware of the actions their government is taking. A transparent government holds public meetings and allows citizens to attend. The press and people are kept informed regarding decisions being made.

Independent Judiciary:

Courts and the judicial system are impartial. Judges and the judicial branch are free to act without influence or control from the executive and legislative branches of government. They should also not be corrupt or influenced by other individuals, businesses or political groups.

Political Tolerance:

In order to understand the importance of political tolerance, you need to understand what the concept “tolerance” means. There is a famous quote which is believed to be expressed by the French philosopher Voltaire: I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.

This thought captures well the idea of tolerance. Tolerance, understood rightly, is a positive concept: it gives us space of expression, which is necessary in all functioning

democracies. On the other hand, tolerance, if taken too far, approaches indifference.

Society is comprised of people with different cultural backgrounds, who practice different religions, represent different races, have different gender identities or have different sexual orientations. These, and people who belong to different socioeconomic and ethnic groups, all hold unique and valued political views. Democratic societies strive to be politically tolerant, and the rights of minorities and other groups are protected. Those who are not in power must be allowed to organize and share their opinions.

Accepting the Results of Elections:

Free and fair elections have both winners and losers. The losers and their supporters must accept that they have lost an election as democracy depends on the peaceful transfer of power from one party to the next.⁴⁷

Freedom of Press:

For voters to be able to make enlightened decisions, it is of utmost importance that the media is free and diverse and the government does not control it.



“Countries with more gender equality have better economic growth. Companies with more women leaders perform better. Peace agreements that include women are more durable. Parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination and child support. The evidence is clear: equality for women means progress for all.”

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of United Nations 2007-2017

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