

GUIDELINES

FOR POLITICAL PARTIES IN MYANMAR

GENDER EQUALITY:

A SHORTCUT TO DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY

Guidelines for political parties in Myanmar – A shortcut to development and prosperity.

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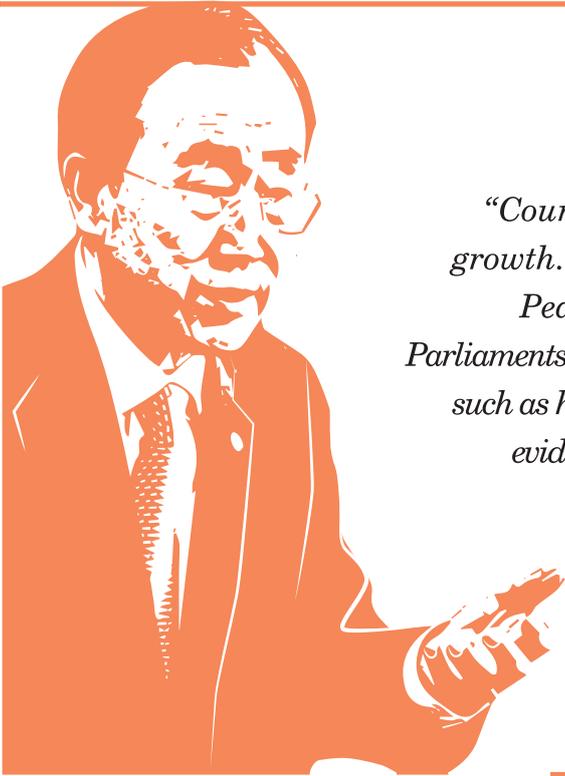
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“Countries with more gender equality have better economic growth. Companies with more women leaders perform better. Peace agreements that include women are more durable. Parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues such as 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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■ FOREWORD

Researchers have started talking of political parties as gatekeepers of democracy. Parties play a fundamental role in the democratic process: as they are the nominators of candidates in elections, it is in their power to decide what kinds of political decision makers will be on offer for voters.

Keith Hoare writes: “Candidate selection, the key door to political opportunities for both men and women is a door that too often is slammed shut on women by political parties.”¹ How political parties function and how their functions are regulated can have a significant impact on opportunities for women’s political advancement. Legislation governing political parties can directly or indirectly discriminate against women².

Thus, if there are not many women MPs or women politicians on the local level in Myanmar, it is the decision makers within political parties who should look into the mirror. It is no good saying that voters want men candidates. Voters will vote for men as long as there are no alternatives. Furthermore, examples from other countries show that parties which widen their base by enticing women to become active politicians and party members, attract voters. Thus, enhancing equality consolidates any given party.

It has been proven over and over again that there can be no sustainable development without gender equality. The two go hand in hand. And the quickest and cheapest route to gender equality is the parliamentary route: making sure that there is parity in political office. Gender equality will follow.

Asia, as a region, has not been doing very well with improving the number of women in politics as compared to other world regions. In a ten-year period from 2005 to 2015 Arab states took the biggest leap, increasing the number of women MPs from 7% to 19%.³ This proves that a change is possible if there is will.

Effective democracies reflect the diversity of their citizens. The Myanmar School of Politics (MySoP) strives to increase the capacities of Myanmar’s political actors and constructively contribute to a multiparty democratic society. Inclusivity and gender equality are at the heart of all our projects. Therefore, under the EU-funded STEP Democracy project, MySoP developed the guidelines for political parties to support them in their journey towards an inclusive democracy.

With enlightened party actors who understand the link between development and gender equality, Myanmar could, if it so wishes, become a leading actor in Asia. Remember: UN and IPU are calling for full parity in number of men and women legislators by the year 2030.

It is time to get strategic.



Htet Oo Wai
Country Director
NIMD/ Demo Finland (Myanmar)

■ Executive Summary

Gender equality and development go hand in hand. Therefore, enhancing women's participation in politics is an effective tool to foster growth and prosperity. Not only is the right to political participation a basic human right, research and worldwide experience show that supporting stronger roles for women contributes to economic growth. In short, investing in women is central to sustainable development.

This guideline helps political parties to understand the importance of gender equality. Moreover, it guides the parties to mainstream gender both within their party structure and in their party policies and practices.

Political parties have a key role to play in enabling women to gain positions of power. As the “gatekeepers of democracy” it is of utmost importance that party actors understand their role to advance women's political participation and become enablers of change.

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 guideline supports political parties to recognize these (unconscious) biases and advises how to transform and act upon harmful traditional practices.

International organizations and member states over the world, including Myanmar, recognize women's disadvantaged position. Therefore, as a shortcut to increased women's political participation, this guideline recommends that parties implement so called temporary special measures, such as quotas for women. Once women have gained leading positions, people's thinking starts changing, and voters start giving due credit to women. However, these extra measures to help women advance will only be temporary.

Thus, for this change to be comprehensive and permanent, parties ought to audit their structures, policies, and practices with gender equality as a benchmark. After this, Gender Action Plans should be written with the goal of enabling women to advance in party hierarchies and run for elected office at all levels. This guideline includes a model for this Gender Action Plan and can be used as a gender mainstreaming checklist by the party leadership.

A healthy democracy cannot be built on political parties only. Civil society organisations are a key element of a well-functioning democratic system. On the way to a more inclusive society, political parties in Myanmar would benefit of cooperation with women's rights organisations.

Gender equality, as it has been proven to be a key component in speeding up development, should be a subject that different parties can agree on. Of course, there may be varying opinions on how to get to the goal. Yet cooperation over party lines is a very effective way of bringing about change.

■ Acknowledgements

The Gender Equality: A Shortcut To Development And Prosperity which is the Guidelines for Political Parties In Myanmar is the result of a major, ongoing collaborative effort with 30 female politicians from the registered political parties NIMD and DEMO Finland are working with. During a validation workshop in June 2019, these experienced politicians discussed the learning material, shared their collective experiences and provided local insights. This helped to tailor the empowerment guide to the needs of the female politicians in Myanmar. We are very grateful for their meaningful input and cooperation.

The guidelines for political parties 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.

NIMD and DEMO Finland offer their deepest gratitude to our expert consultants Elina Hatakka, and Daw Sanda Thant for the development of both the empowerment guide and the guidelines for political parties and their ongoing support and guidance. Your passion for women empowerment, international and local expertise and experience made your input even more valuable. We would also like to extend our thanks to Eeva Koskinen for her guidance and facilitation during the validation workshop.

The development of the guidelines for political parties is also only possible due to the cooperation with our trusted political parties from the state and regions NIMD and Demo Finland are working in. The implementation will draw partly on the interest and support of these political parties.

We wish to acknowledge great appreciation to the Union Election Commission and the honorable chairman U Hla Thein. We are especially appreciative for Daw Nelly San, Assistant Director to the UEC, for her valuable inputs and support for this guide.

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1. Why gender equality in politics?

1.1 Myanmar and the global context

The number of women in national parliaments is globally one of the key ways to measure gender equality in politics. It is certainly not the only one, but definitely one of the easiest ways, since data exists from all over the world.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) keeps a database on women's situation in politics. As of January 2019, just 24,3% of MPs in national parliaments around the world were women. While the Nordic countries have over 40% women in their parliaments, there are still three small countries with no female legislators at all. Of the over 190 nations on IPU's list, Myanmar is number 158, with 11,3% women in the Lower House and 12,1% in the Upper House of Parliament.⁴ Within the parties that Myanmar School of Politics works with, there are five female Members of Parliament, two of which have ministerial positions.

Why does this matter? What difference does it make, whether MPs are men or women? Is not the most important thing that MPs are competent and work as hard as they can to realise the political objectives of their respective parties?

A parliament, or committee with no women or a handful of women only does not seem strange to us only because we are used to things being that way. In reality a parliament with minimal female representation is not democratic, as half of the population in every country are women. In Myanmar, women and men ratio is 100:93⁵. It is against the very principles of democracy, and against the rights of women that women have no say over matters that are important to them. Yet the situation does not strike us as faulty, because this fault has been with us for so long.

1.2 Two ways to justify women's participation

Researchers have identified two types of argument for the promotion of women's participation in politics. The intrinsic approach argues from a human rights perspective that women must have an equal share of politics and power. As women constitute half of the world's population, it is fair that they should also have half of the political power.

The human rights perspective: Gender equality is at the very heart of human rights, and discrimination based on gender is prohibited under almost every human rights treaty. It is unfair and wrong that women and girls routinely have their rights violated and are condemned to lives of poverty because of gender discrimination and an unequal distribution of power and resources. It is our moral duty to diminish these vast gender inequalities of opportunity and outcomes and uphold principles of human dignity, equality, justice and freedom. Protecting and promoting women's human rights is the responsibility of all states. Number 5 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; see Chapter 3.1), to which all the UN member states are committed to, is to **achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**. The right to political participation as a basic human right is highlighted here.⁶

Myanmar is a member of the United Nations, and UN has been calling for an increase of women's political representation for decades. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the so called CEDAW convention, which Myanmar has signed and ratified, calls for member states to make sure that women and men can take part in politics on equal terms. The UN General Assembly adapted CEDAW in 1979. Progress in women's political representation was very, very slow. So, in 1995, UN set the target of 30% representation for women all around the world, in the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing.⁷ In March 2019 IPU and the UN CEDAW committee gave a joint statement, calling for 50% balance in women's leadership by 2030.⁸

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)

The instrumentalist perspective: Women have a greater responsibility than men for caring for children and other family members and so are more likely to invest resources in meeting household requirements than their own consumption. Investing in women is good value for money since it reaps rewards that extend beyond women – to their children, families, and entire societies. Women, once they get elected to office, prioritize health, education, and other key development areas.⁹

There is also more and more research indicating that **countries, which make full use of their full talent pool, do better economically and socially**. As said above, UN promotes women's political participation as a right, but at the same time UN highlights the economic boost to the whole nation if women and girls have the possibilities to realise their full capacities and make use of all their talents. SDG goals will not be reached without women's equal participation.¹⁰

Not only UN, but institutions such as The World Bank, The World Economic Forum, and The International Monetary Fund have started emphasizing this. When also the poor, and when also all girls and women, have access to education, to economic life and to political representation, the talent pool of the nation is in full use. The talents of its people is the greatest asset of any nation, and it is especially important that gifted people have the opportunity to choose politics as a career. To refuse to use the talent of half of the nation – women – is economic folly. But luckily this particular folly can be cured.

It is worth remembering that women's political empowerment and economic empowerment go hand in hand. In the countries where women have a strong position in politics, they also have a strong position in the labour market. Christine Lagarde, the chairwoman and director of International Monetary Fund, lists some of the benefits of women taking part equally in economic life¹¹:

- 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.

■ 2. Temporary special measures to increase gender equality in politics

One recommended way to achieve the goal of gender equality in politics are so called **temporary special measures**, such as **specific quotas for women**. Traditionally they are used in politics, but they are also spreading to the financial and economic sectors: more and more countries are stipulating in their legislation that big companies have to have a certain amount of women in their executive boards. (One would think that companies would figure out the rationale of this themselves, as research indicates that inclusiveness increases productivity.)

How do quotas for women work in politics? There are three different types of quotas:

1. Special seats of the national parliament which are reserved for women only.
2. Legislation which forces political parties to reserve a certain amount of places on the electoral lists for women candidates.
3. Voluntary party quotas.

Example: legislation on candidate lists

Women's League of Burma has a practical suggestion to implement alternative 2 in practice: "The state could promulgate an electoral law that political parties are only eligible to contest elections if they submit at least 30% of women candidates. Such a proposal does not mean women can take up positions without being elected, but rather, enables them to get a foot on the first rung of the ladder."¹²

Different countries in different parts of the world have increased the number of women in politics using one of these quota systems. Perhaps the most successful one has been voluntary party quotas. How well this system works depends to some extent on the electoral system.

By far the best results have been achieved in some Nordic countries with a proportional system and party lists for elections. As soon as the biggest parties introduced a so called zip list – every second name on the list is a woman's – the amount of women in the parliaments started rapidly going up, as also smaller parties had to follow suit. Not to do so would have been stupid, as they saw voters liking the new system.

But also parties in countries with the first-past-the-post electoral system, the one that is in use in Myanmar, have managed to greatly increase the amount of women being elected. The trick is to nominate women as candidates in those constituencies which the party trusts it will win. In a short time the Brit-

ish Labour Party has managed to change completely the gender ratio of its MPs. As of April 2019, 47% of the Labour MPs are women. In the Conservative party there have been no such temporary special measures, and only 20% of the MPs are women.¹³

But to be able to nominate women as candidates, there have to be women who are active within the party. Not as tea-makers for functions (of course they are needed, too), but as policy-makers for the party programmes, election manifestos and so on. Otherwise there is no recruiting base for good women candidates.

Political parties need to look at themselves: Are we inclusive? Do we make space for women (and people belonging to minority groups)? Do we know what voters want? Or do we just imagine that we know?

Parties should also see themselves as part of a bigger picture, in which they have responsibilities not only to themselves. Myanmar is a developing country, and development is a continuous process through which women and men, with varying degrees of external support, increase their options for improving their quality of life. It is based on women's and men's mobilisation, utilising local resources to the utmost in a process in which peoples' needs are met, their organisations are strengthened and the environment is preserved. Development should encompass positive changes at five different levels. These are individual, family, society, organisation/institution and state. If there is a coordinated and balanced positive change at these levels, true human development can be said to have taken place.

According to Women's League of Burma: "The living standards of women, children, older people and differently-abled people are key indicators to measure the development and welfare of a society. As women attain a higher standard of living, so too, does the whole of society."¹⁴

■ 3. Key concepts which help to understand roots of inequality

3.1 The importance of data disaggregated by sex

All successful decision making is based on facts, and facts very often are based on data. Reliable data is especially important for development. For example, the SDGs (see Chapter 1.2) were created by the UN member states 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.

If we want to use any data for improving gender equality, the data needs to be 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 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.

UN has put special weight on getting data classified based on sex. There is a lot of space for improvement. Another big problem is the nature of data collection in developing countries: as it is, it is to a great deal dependant on donors, and donors come and go. There has to be more continuity, and developing countries should aim to consolidate their data collection.

Check the Internet pages of Statistics Myanmar. Do you find statistics which are classified by sex? Do you find for example information of school attendance of boys and girls? If you do, can you make suggestions to improve school attendance of all children?

UN and other stakeholders in Myanmar have started demanding for 'GESI': Gender Equality and Social Inclusion. For this, data collecting is asked to be classified based on sex, disability, LGBT, ethnicity, religion, etc.

3.2 What does “gender” mean?

Simply put “gender” is what culture adds to biology. The World Health Organisation defines gender in the following way¹⁵:

“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.”

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. They were also very fashionable amongst noble men in the courts of 18th century French kings.



This sign post is from a road leading to Naypyitaw. It is probably meant as a wakeup call for all parents, but it targets fathers. Here, a father – a **man** – is a representative of both fathers and mothers. If you stop to think of it, you realize that this sign is odd, because in Myanmar, as in all other countries, women still do a lot more of caring of the children. Why, then, a sign to fathers, not to mothers? The reason is this: we are used to thinking that man equals human being, a representative of human kind.

Because of this attitude of equalling human being with man, on some level prevalent in every culture and deeply engrained in us, we tend to picture in our minds only 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.

3.3 What does “gender 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 organisations, 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.”¹⁶

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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸

Example: Gender mainstreaming a development project in Myanmar

An international organisation initiated a program and provided grants to local civil society organisations (CSO) to increase household livelihood opportunities through economic empowerment. Gender mainstreaming is a key requirement of the organisation. 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.*
- *Organised 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).*
- *Organised 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.

We could also think of mainstreaming as integrating gender equality to be 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. “Gender perspective” 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 affect 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.

The following questions will help in defining whether a project or programme should be evaluated from a gender perspective:¹⁹

- 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?*
-

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has a good guide to gender mainstreaming food security projects: “Guide to mainstreaming gender in FAO’s project cycle.”²⁰ Even though it is about mainstreaming gender into agricultural projects, it gives a very good picture of how to go about it.

3.4 Gender responsive budgeting

Gender responsive budgeting is one part of gender mainstreaming. It does not aim at creating separate budgets for women. According to Wiki-Gender, gender responsive budgeting:²¹

1. Refers to the process of conceiving, planning, approving, executing, monitoring, analysing and auditing budgets in a gender-sensitive way,
2. Involves analysis of actual expenditure of revenue (usually of governments) on women and girls as compared to expenditure on men and boys,
3. Helps governments to decide how policies need to be made, adjusted and re-prioritized,
4. 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:²²

1. An analysis of the situation for women and men and girls and boys (and the different sub-groups) in a given sector.
2. 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.
3. An assessment of the adequacy of budget allocations to implement the gender sensitive policies and programs identified in step 2 above.
4. 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).
5. 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.

According to UN Women, gender responsive budgeting is **not**.²³

- Separate budgets for women or men. Instead, it brings gender awareness into the policies, plans, programmes and budgets of all government agencies.
- A literal 50/50 split between men and women. It should be designed in a way that fills service gaps experienced by both men and women.
- Covering all activities of government because otherwise it will be too long and complicated.
- Only “one way” of reaching set goals; gender responsive budgeting processes will differ from country to country.

Gender responsive budgeting has been accepted globally as an important and pragmatic strategy to advance women's rights. It is a method of planning, programming and budgeting that helps advance gender equality and women's rights. It also serves as an indicator of governments' commitments to meeting those needs. The government of India adopted gender responsive budgeting in 2005-06 with the introduction of its first gender budget statement, which made public the quantum of funds allocated by different ministries, and departments for gender equality and women's empowerment. Consequently, 57 government ministries/departments have set up Gender Budget cells – a major step that could potentially impact the lives of lots of women.²⁴

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 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.

3.5 Stereotypical thinking on gender

“Boys do not cry.”

“Girls are talented in languages but they cannot do mathematics.”

“Men are rational thinkers and therefore suit politics better than women.”

Statements like these represent **stereotypical thinking**. Stereotypes are actually a necessary part of human thinking, as our brains classify and make assessments constantly. Stereotypes speed up that process, but they become problematic if we start believing that these kinds of judgements are always true. If we for instance start thinking that girls are innately different from boys in their ability to add up sums.

Boys actually do cry. Forcing little boys grow up in an environment where crying is forbidden for them can be traumatic for the more sensitive boys. Research shows that when girls are repeatedly told that they are not as good as boys in maths, they start underperforming. On the other hand, if they are encouraged and told that they are capable, they do just as well as boys.

And women are very well suited for politics. Those countries, where women have a strong hold in politics, do economically very well, and they tend not to be involved in wars. This does not mean that women would be, by nature, more peaceful than men. To say so is stereotypical thinking.

Stereotypical thinking is harmful for a few reasons. First, it often leads to wasting of talent, which is economically stupid. Second, it violates human rights: to be forced into a form which you do not fit into is, not only painful, but violating your liberty. Third, stereotypical thinking is a major building block of discrimination, and discrimination, on top of being unlawful, causes problems.

Example: Thinking can change

Our stereotypical thinking can obscure our judgement. The good news is that if we are exposed to practices which challenge our pre-set ideas of how things are, our 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.²⁵

3.6 Discrimination

The **CEDAW Convention** (see Chapter 1) defines discrimination against women

*"...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."*²⁶

Discrimination can be **direct**, or it can be **indirect**. Direct discrimination has the intention of discriminating. If a person is treated unfairly by someone simply because of who she or he is, this is direct discrimination.

Forms of direct discrimination can be classified as:

1. Current discrimination;
2. Past discrimination – historical discrimination;
3. Intersectional discrimination – multiple forms of discrimination faced by subset groups of people based on their sex, ethnicity, religion, caste, language, social or economic status, geological location.

Indirect discrimination is more difficult to define. Indirect gender based discrimination is action or inaction that has the effect of denying women their ability to exercise their rights. Usually it is connected to practices, policies or rules which apply to everybody in the same way, and which place one person or some persons at a disadvantage.

If, in your political party, you are in the habit of holding important meetings in the evenings, meetings which go to the late hours, this can be called indirect discrimination. Why? Because there may be mothers of young children, who really would like to attend, but they cannot as they have to be at home putting their children to bed. (It is also worth remembering that these mothers of young children might be able to contribute a lot. Without them, talent is being wasted.) So, to avoid the pitfall of indirect discrimination, it is better to agree to have meetings at such times that all can attend.

There is also discrimination that we are not aware of ourselves. This kind of behaviour was researched at Yale University.²⁷ Scientists working for the university 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. Simply put: it was discriminative.

The problem is that we are not aware of this discriminative thinking of ours. It is a bias which is deeply ingrained in us, as we have, since the day we were born, been socialized to think in a certain way of men, and in another of women. We believe that a) we are objective, b) we always choose the person who is most competent, and c) men tend to be more competent for most positions.

When in some 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. And, as mentioned earlier on, research also indicates that big companies which are led by women do better than those led by men. Thus, this **biased thinking** of ours is giving us results which are not as good as they could be, if we were more open-minded.

It must be stressed that discrimination, on top of being economically short sighted, is wrong. It is against the constitution of Myanmar, and it is against all democratic principles.

Have you come across discrimination in your own life? What kind? How did it feel? Was direct or indirect? Do you think you might have, yourself, in some incidence practiced discrimination towards another person? If yes, try to think what you could have done differently.

3.7 Harmful traditional practices

What are so called “**harmful traditional practices**” ? UN has a listing of traditional customs which impede the fulfilment of gender equality and 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 “honour crimes”, stove burning, acid attacks, forcing the victim of rape to marry the perpetrator, “pay-back” or revenge rape, disinheritance, maltreatment of widows and polygamy.

UN has a useful document of information on these: Good Practices in Legislation on “Harmful Practices” against Women.²⁸

Example: Myanmar and harmful practices

Many harmful practices still take place in various parts of the Myanmar. Amongst them:

- 1. Many girls have to marry under-aged.*
 - 2. Girls or young women are forced to marry the man who raped them.*
 - 3. Compensating rape with material goods such as a cow, a chicken, or offering local alcohol to the whole village.*
 - 4. Holding on to the tradition where women do not inherit.*
-

Again, it must be stressed that **these kinds of practices are severe violations of girls' and women's human rights. At the same time they severely hamper development**, as they prevent women and girls fulfilling their potential. The individual suffers, her imminent family suffers, and the whole nation loses.

3.8 Substantive equality

There are two ways of looking at equality: **equality of opportunities**, and **equality of outcome**. The latter is called by scholars **substantive equality**.

People who promote equality of opportunity believe that, once everyone gets the same chances to use their talents, then it is up to the individual to reach the goals she or he has set for her or his life.

People who promote substantive equality understand that there are in our societies, hidden structures which make it harder for some people or groups of people to fulfil their full potential. Above mentioned scientists in Yale University serve as a good example of this: the hidden structures in this case is their biased thinking which automatically makes them suppose that men are more competent. And this thinking, in the Yale university case, makes it harder for the aspiring female students to advance. Unfortunately, women run into these barriers everywhere, all the time.

3.9 Gender equity

What is the difference between the words “**equality**” and “**equity**”?

Equality carries the meaning of “the same”. E.g. in front of the law everyone is to be treated exactly in the same way.

Equity is a wider concept. It carries the meaning of “fairness”. People have to be treated in a way which is fair and e.g. takes into consideration the fact that the game does not have the same rules for everybody. Someone in a wheelchair will not be made to compete with a person with a bicycle.

To bring equity to a society, so called **affirmative action**, also called temporary special measures (see Chapter 2), is needed. Quotas for women in politics is a good example of affirmative action. The goal is to be able to give up the policies of affirmative action once people's thinking has changed, so that these policies can be only temporary measures. Of course, whether this can be done, depends on what sort of group the planned action is meant to support. The person in a wheelchair will always need measures of affirmative action as compared to the person with the bike.

According to women politicians in Myanmar, lack of election financing is one of their biggest problems.²⁹ Women tend to have less money than men, as they are everywhere in the world payed less than men. Many countries have developed affirmative action measures to allocate special campaigning money to female electoral candidates.

3.10 Social inclusion

What does “**inclusive**” mean? It means that all kinds of people, belonging to all kinds of groups, can participate and feel that they belong.

Social inclusion means that people who are disabled or poor, people belonging to different ethnic and religious minorities, or to the LGBT-group have their voices heard. That they can take part in decision-making just as well as people who belong to majority groups.

It should also be remembered that often people are excluded and discriminated against for multiple reasons at the same time, and this makes life extra hard. A lesbian woman, belonging to a small ethnic minority and being desperately poor, is not a farfetched example.

The question of inclusiveness is a question of human rights. A welcome bonus is, as stressed earlier on, that inclusiveness brings economic benefit to all in the long run, as it means widening the talent pool.

3.11 Gender based violence

“If he beats you, it means he loves you” (a proverb from Russia).

“Beat your wife every morning, and if you do not know why, she does” (a quote from a movie).

“If you beat your wife until her bones are broken, she will love you more (a proverb from Myanmar).

Example: suffering and loss

A nice woman from a nice family has bad luck with her marriage: soon after the wedding her husband starts regularly beating her.

This woman is a teacher in the local school. A few times she gets so badly injured that she is taken to hospital and cannot go to work for a week, and so her students have to cope without their teacher.

This example shows that violence against women has wider consequences than only the ones to the victim or her immediate family.

According to a research report by UN, 50 000 women around the world were killed in 2018 by their intimate partners or family members.³⁰ In Myanmar, 21% of ever-married women have ever experienced physical, emotional, or sexual violence committed by their husbands.³¹ Women are beaten, raped, sexually harassed, trafficked by force, and mentally abused everywhere. Despite this, a lot of people accept this situation as part of life. Women's lot. Something that has always been there and always will. Thieves and robbers have been around us as long as we humans have. Do we accept theft? We do not. We legislate against robbery and we put robbers in prison.

It is also strange that when one man attacks another and beats him, this is seen as a crime. But when a man does the same thing to his wife, it is "culture". Or worse still, biology. Something that we cannot change. In reality we can. The World Health Organisation of UN (WHO) carried out research in different parts of the world, looking at violence against women (VAW), of women who were 15 – 49 of age. According to the results, prevalence of women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner in their lifetime ranges from 15 to 71 %.³²

Another point to note is that the level of development does not necessarily mean that a country is safer for women. Thomson Reuters Foundation has been rating the most dangerous countries in the world to be a woman, and in 2018 the most dangerous one was India, and number 10 was USA.³³ A third point to note is the fact that VAW occurs amongst poor people and amongst rich people. Belonging to upper classes or having been to university does not guarantee that a man will not abuse his wife.

A fourth point is that countries with violent conflicts and/or high numbers of small arms (e.g. USA) are much more likely to have high numbers of VAW. And a fifth one is this: if young boys see their fathers beat their mothers, or if they are beaten themselves when growing up, they are, once they have become adults and married, much more likely to physically abuse their own wives.

All above said means that VAW is not in our genes. It is practiced because we allow it to be practiced. To what extent we allow it, depends on culture. The good news is that cultures do change. But, for the change to take place, money is needed. And this is where policies and the role of political parties come in.

UN has been calling for decades for member states to take stronger actions to decrease VAW. The first step, naturally, is to strongly legislate. Other measures include employing more policewomen, training the police, justice sector actors and social workers to help victims, establishing women's shelters and legal and health services, and running information campaigns which reach all, but especially growing boys.

Example: Reducing VAW via media messaging

In many countries, one big problem with combating VAW is the fact that witnesses do not speak out.

This experiment was carried out in rural Uganda, where communal watching of films in village theatres is very popular, especially amongst young men. In 48 randomly selected villages, three short video vignettes on VAW were inserted into the intermission of the Hollywood film. In the other 64 villages, the film festivals featured video vignettes on other social issues, or just the Hollywood films. These 64 villages thus constitute a comparison group that received a “placebo” film festival unrelated to VAW.

The research team interviewed 6,449 individuals across all villages through two waves of surveys conducted 2 and 8 months after the film festivals. Importantly, the surveys were presented as opinion polls unrelated to the video campaign.

The anti-VAW vignettes significantly reduced the likelihood of VAW occurring in villages where the vignettes were shown. Results suggest that this reduction may have occurred because the videos reduced the perception that those who speak out about VAW will face social sanctions and thereby increased individuals’ willingness to report incidents of VAW.³⁴

Again, it has to be stressed that decreasing VAW is a question of human rights. But, again, there is a bonus here: even though measures seem costly in the near future, in the long run every nation which reduces VAW, saves money.

It is difficult to gain data on the accurate cost of VAW, especially from developing countries, but some research has been carried out. CARE International looked at the situation in 13 different areas of the world, and their conclusion is that VAW costs societies upwards of 2% of global gross domestic product (GDP).³⁵

According to CARE:

“The cost of violence to GDP greatly exceeds the cost of prevention and intervention. For example, in Uganda, implementing the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act of 2010 for both prevention and response was slated at just over US\$ 8 million over three years while the cost of violence occurring was estimated at US\$ 30.7 million for just one year.”³⁶

How to change culture

When we step into a car, we take it for granted that a seat belt is provided and that we use it. Before the 1950s people did not. Every day in different parts of the world, hundreds of people died unnecessarily in car crashes, as there were no belts. Now we have legislation about it, and all car manufactures follow the legislation and provide the belts.

Yet it took decades to make customers understand the benefit of doing this. Many countries have stipulated usage of seat belts in legislation, and there have also been big campaigns to make people aware of the benefit of this safety measure. Despite this, some people still refuse to use them. Every year there are unnecessary deaths due to this. Most people in most countries understand the need to protect themselves. There are no estimates of how many billions of dollars have been saved, thanks to us learning to use seat belts, but it is clear that it is a vast sum of money.

Improving safety procedures and people learning to follow the new regulations are good examples of cultures changing quite fast. To change the culture of quietly approving VAW, we need male gender champions – well known politicians, writers, musicians, movie stars – who openly talk of women's rights and the emotional and financial costs of VAW.

3.12 Gender based harassment

Another proof of the fact that cultures do change is the #Me Too -campaign. A few years ago no-one could have imagined that sexual harassment experienced by women would become so widely talked about, and so unanimously condemned. The way women are being treated is changing. What was considered acceptable earlier on, is no more.

However, buried in the structures of many organisations, old attitudes persevere. Politics and power are connected, and one element of power is its tendency to corrupt. This corruption often manifests itself in a powerful person's misuse of his/her power as unwelcome sexual advances.

Sexual harassment is defined by UN in the following way:

“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.”³⁷

Political parties must make sure that they write a policy on harassment and abuse of authority, and have proper procedures and mechanisms in place to tackle sexual harassment. These include a written and binding code of conduct for cases of harassment. Effective means to cope with the problem are e.g. 1) having a complaint mechanism: nominating within the party persons from different units as so-called focal points, to whom people who have encountered harassment can report; 2) establishing a means to report incidences anonymously, if need be, and; 3) creating support mechanisms for those, who have been harassed.

It should be noted that abuse of authority can take many forms. If in a political meeting a man in an authority position tells a woman, who is expressing her opinions (as people in meetings generally do), to be quiet, he is breaking the norm of decent behavior, and he is abusing his power position. Similarly ordering women to make tea instead of taking part in a meeting can be seen as abuse of power.

■ 4. Gender auditing of political parties

According to a research carried out by the Asia Foundation and Phan Tee Eain, a NGO in Myanmar, women politicians believe that men have a pivotal role to play in increasing the number of women in politics:

“Female representatives also noted that increasing men’s engagement and support for gender equality was the most effective way to increase the number of women in politics, with 71% stating it would be ‘strongly effective,’ and an additional 16% believing it would be ‘effective.’”³⁸

Think of the party that you belong to and then reflect on the following, simple questions:

- *Does the party that I present pave way the participation women or people belonging to minorities in any way?*
- *Does the party manifesto mention the needs of women and girls?*
- *Have the suggested policies been gender mainstreamed, that is, has there been an analysis of how the suggested policies affect women’s and girls’, men’s and boys’ situations?*
- *Does my party have gender quotas? Are they voluntary or are they written in the party bylaws?*
- *Have we ever had a female chairperson or secretary general?*
- *How many women and how many men from my party have served as MPs over the last ten years?*
- *Are there formally established women’s groups in my party?*

In the box above were only a few questions which aim to analyse whether equality has been an issue for a given party in Myanmar. If you said “yes” to a few of them, you can be pleased – your party has given some consideration to gender equality. But it is very probable that there is a lot of place for improvement. To find out what the situation really is like in your party, you need to practice some self-reflection. This is best done in the form of a gender audit of your party.

To carry out this, a work group should be established. The mandate for this group must come from the leadership of the party. It is also important that men and women are members of the group and that they come from various levels of your party.

After the work group has been established, the team should go through the following themes (and, even though we talk here of women, envision also groups belonging to different minorities):

The party manifesto:

1. How are women's needs taken into account in the policies that your party promises to carry out once it gets elected to the office?
2. Has the manifesto been gender mainstreamed, that is: what are the ramifications of the suggested policies for women and girls, men and boys?

The party history:

1. Since your party was established, how many female MPs has it had versus male MPs?
2. What about the local level: what has been the proportion of women politicians?
3. How many women were standing as candidates in the last local elections? What about the parliamentary elections?
4. In case your party has served in the office, have there been female ministers? How many versus men? How many years altogether of female ministers and male ministers, Union and State/Region level?
5. How many women have served as chairpersons in your party? How many years of female leadership versus male leadership?
6. How many female secretary generals have there been? How many years have they served versus male secretary generals?

Gender balance in positions of power at present moment:

1. How many men and women are in the party's National Executive Committee? What roles do women have?
2. How many women and men are in the Political Committee of the party? What roles do they have?

The party bylaws:

1. Are there quotas for women written in the party bylaws? If so, are the quotas for candidacy nominations? Do they also apply to the committees within your party? What about the chairperson positions of the committees – do a certain percentage of these go to women?
2. Is the selection process to nomination of candidates written in the party bylaws? If not, who decides about the nominations? How is it decided who gets nominated for the winnable constituencies?
3. Is there a Women's Wing (WW) in your party? Does this body have, according to the bylaws, a representative in the party board? Does the WW have financial resources and its own budget?

Does the WW articulate women's interests and opinions pertaining to the party's internal and external policies?

4. Is the task of writing the party manifesto and electoral promises stipulated in the party bylaws? If these were written by an elected work group, how many female members did it have last time the manifesto was written?
5. What about financial support to candidates – is this written in the bylaws? Is the system of financial support transparent? Do women get an equal share?

The practices of your party:

1. Who raises money for the party and how?
2. At what times of the day are the party meetings held? Is it possible for mothers of small children to attend? Does the party pay for child care? Is it acceptable to bring children to a less formal meeting? Do meetings often last longer than scheduled, till late at night?
3. Who gets media coverage time? Who decides about this?
4. Who makes coffee or tea for meetings? Who takes responsibility over volunteer work between the elections and during the electoral campaigns?
5. Is the membership data of your party disaggregated by sex? What is the ratio of female to male party members?
6. Has the party written a gender equality policy? If it has, but it is not followed in practice, what explanation is given? Are there any sanctions?
7. Does your party have harassment policy and a complaint mechanism? If someone gets sexually harassed in a party function, what are the proceedings?

The auditing process can be an eye opener, but in itself it does not change anything. Concrete steps are needed, the writing of a strategic **Gender Action Plan** (GAP) with definite goals, carefully planned measures of how to reach the goals, and a timeline.

■ 5. A Gender Action Plan for a political party

5.1 Principals of the Gender Action Plan

To go ahead with planning equality policies, it helps a great deal if there is a special women's association – so called **Women's Wing** (WW) – in your party. All around the world WWs of political parties have been doing invaluable work for the fulfilment of gender equality within their own parties, also cooperating with other WWs and stakeholders. The work of the WW has to be integrated in the work of the mother party. So, if there is no WW in your party, maybe it is time to establish one.

Again, the work of writing the GAP is best done if an internal work group, with a clear mandate from the leadership of the party and with representatives from the WW (if it exists), is established. After the work has been completed, the GAP must be approved of at the level where other party policies are endorsed.

International IDEA identifies the following principals as key requirements for a good gender policy (much of the following has been adopted from International IDEA's Framework for Developing Gender Policies for Political Parties³⁹):

- Promote substantive equality rather than mere formal equality (see Chapter 3.8).
- Use special measures to promote gender equality, such as quotas and parity in the decision making organs of your party.
- Seek to address the situation of especially marginalized/affected groups among women.
- Reconciliation of family and professional life – everyone must be able to take part at reasonable hours.
- Collection of sex-disaggregated statistics and gender based expertise within your party. After defining the principals, the objectives (goals) have to be set.

5.2 Objectives of the Gender Action Plan

On a general level the goals of your party's **Gender Action Plan** should be:

- Promote equal rights and opportunities for women and men to participate in Myanmar's / your region's political decision-making.
- Facilitate women's leadership in your party's decision-making and governance structures.
- Enhance the decision-making powers and resources of the WW within your party.
- Aim to attain a critical mass of women leaders within your party and achieve gender parity in candidate lists.

- Increase women's participation and influence in your party's programme development.
- Develop mechanisms to follow up how well the gender policy is being followed.

Next, these general principals have to be turned into more specific actions. Following up how well the goals are being reached gets much easier if you at the same time identify indicators for each goal. You can use the indicators as a checklist, which will help you to follow the implementation of the plan.

Here is a model for a GAP in a table format. Your GAP does not have to be exactly like this one. It is important that the measures, which you choose for advancing gender equality, are such that they can be implemented and monitored within your party. However, it is worth going through this model plan with time and thought.

5.3 A model for a Gender Action Plan

ENHANCING GENDER EQUALITY WITHIN THE POLITICAL PARTY STRUCTURES, POLICIES AND CULTURE		
Objective of the Gender Action Plan	Suggested Concrete Steps of Action	Examples for Checklist
To ensure that your party's legal framework and governing documents are gender sensitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and build party leadership's support for gender sensitivity in party documents • Establish a work group to assess your political party's legal framework and governing documents, ensure gender balanced representation in this work group, make sure mandate for the work comes from party leadership • Train the workgroup on gender equality if needed • Assess the party documents • Take needed measures to ensure that the documents are gender sensitive, for example adopt a statement on gender equality in the parties' founding documents • Draft and adopt a Gender Action Plan (GAP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political party's legal framework and governing documents have special mentions or actions for gender equality and equal representation (for example quota systems in use, role of the WW, parity in leadership) • GAP in place and implemented

<p>To improve equality and inclusion in your party membership base</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the number of women members of your political party – if the membership base is not disaggregated by gender, develop methods to estimate the number • If the proportion is low, plan steps to include more women: for example, campaigns to widen the membership base, such as head-hunting and media campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure the proportion of women in your party membership • Assess the measures, which have been taken, to increase the number of women to participate in the political party if needed
<p>To improve women's participation in your party's governance structures, also at the highest levels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the current situation: proportion of women in governance structures and the level of positions women are holding • Make a plan/target for women's participation within your political party structures • Consider stipulating the planned target in your party by-laws, for example: "principal of 40" in the party by-laws: in any committee, work group, decision making organ within your party there has to be at least 40 % women or 40 % men • Consider setting up a target also for women's participation in party conventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of men/women party members • Existence of quotas in the party governance structures at different levels written in party by-laws • Measure the proportion of women in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National Executive Committee and other internal governance bodies ○ women occupying leadership positions in these bodies ○ number of women participating in party conventions
<p>To ensure that adequate levels of power and resources are allocated to your party's Women's Wing and that it is included in decision-making processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the role of your political party's WW within your party, both at national and local levels • Describe the defined roles and responsibilities • Consider ensuring appropriate funding of the WW • Integrate WW into your party's central decision-making processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of the WW in the national executive organ of your party • Mandate/powers of the WW to participate with full voting rights in your party's decision-making organs • A clear mandate to develop and propose improvements into the party procedures and practices with the view of promoting gender equality • Amount/proportion of internal financial resources allocated to the WW in the annual budget

<p>To ensure that your party policy agendas are gender mainstreamed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the capacity of your party to analyse public policy issues from a gender perspective, organise trainings if necessary • Introduce gender-based analysis and strategic issues concerning rights of women and men, girls and boys into your policy positions • Ensure gender expertise is used here for example by including the WW members' participation, establishing a special work group for this purpose and/or reach out for civil society/academia experts for input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-sensitive & gender-specific initiatives pursued by your party as part of your party's electoral manifesto • Gender-sensitive & gender-specific initiatives pursued by your party after gaining legislative representation • Does your party engage in the systematic outreach to women's groups, particularly those affected by specific policy issues, during the policy agenda formation process?
<p>To ensure gender-sensitive training is part of training within party; mainstreaming of gender issues in regular training activities for all members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop gender-sensitive and gender-specific training curricula, accessible for women and men within party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of gender-sensitive and gender-specific training and development initiatives within party • Number of training courses on women's political empowerment and gender equality; gender ratio of participants
<p>To ensure that your party's activities are organised in an inclusive manner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess if the activities of the political party are inclusive (time and place of the activities, is there a possibility for child-care facilities, are there clear guidelines and procedures to follow if someone is sexually harassed) • Assess the roles of men and women in organising the meetings (for example supportive role or executive role) • Take appropriate steps to ensure the activities are organised in inclusive manner • Write guidelines to tackle sexual harassment • Consider nominating gender focal persons to address for example sexual harassment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of women attending the party activities • Steps taken to ensure that the party activities are organised in inclusive manner • Gender focal points nominated • Written guidelines on tackling sexual harassment exist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a written and binding code of conduct ○ clear procedures and mechanisms in cases of harassment ○ focal points to whom those, who have been harassed, can report ○ means to report incidences anonymously if need be ○ support mechanisms for those, who have been harassed • Parity of talk exists in the activities

ENHANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS AND AS ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Objective of the Gender Action Plan	Suggested Concrete Step of Action	Examples for Checklist
<p>PRE-ELECTION PERIOD:</p> <p>To enhance women's opportunities to run for elected offices and increase the amount of female candidates in the party</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider written rules/ guidelines for candidate selection within the party with transparent rules for equal representation • Consider setting up a candidate recruitment committee that follows the guidelines, and ensure that the recruitment committee has a gender balanced representation • Train the candidate recruitment committee on GE • Consider establishing high numerical quotas for final lists of candidates and place women in winnable constituencies • Enforce possibly existing candidate quota rules by election bureau or party leadership in line with the electoral timetable • Identify incentives to attract women and encourage them to run as candidates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of transparent selection system for lists of candidates • The proportion of men and women in candidate lists at State/Region levels as well as township level • Gender ratio of candidate-selection panels
<p>To adopt measures to improve female candidates' access to political finance and resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce transparent internal rules on the allocation of political party funds in campaigning • Consider setting up fundraising networks within your party to support female candidates' campaigns • Consider creating a special internal party fund for women's campaigns or providing subsidies to female candidates • Consider setting a limit for women candidates on possible nomination or primary contest expenditure, collected by the party 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of party funds allocated to gender equality-related and female/male candidates • Party finances allocated to WWs • Compliance with gender sensitive allocation of public funding (direct and indirect) for political parties and electoral campaigns • Existence of internal fund-raising initiatives to support women candidates • Allocation of internal subsidies to women candidates, reduction of nomination fees, etc.

<p>To ensure that women candidates have strong capacities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantee access of women aspirants and candidates to training that helps them develop skills in campaign fundraising and thematic issues of concern to the party, consider organising mentorship training with experienced politicians • Consider training campaign managers for women politicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of men and women in aspirant and candidate trainings • Number of training courses on women's political empowerment, gender equality, and gender ratio of participants
<p>ELECTION PERIOD: To ensure equal access to media campaigns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure women candidates have equal access to media campaigns, especially in party-funded advertising • Nominate women candidates to participate in public media debates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ratio of female and male candidates with access to party-funded television and radio advertising
<p>To ensure women candidates' safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider taking safety measures to ensure that women candidates are able to campaign without threat of violence or harassment, also online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of women candidates who have faced violence or harassment during campaigning is followed and decreasing
<p>To activate women to vote and ensure women are included as party agents in polling stations and as elections monitors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider organising advocacy campaigns so that women register as voters and vote • Train and nominate women as party agents in polling stations • Ensure that election monitoring includes gender perspective and safety of women candidates and voters • Train and include women as election monitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ratio of female and male voters • Election monitoring reports with gender perspective • Number of women as election monitors and as party agents in polling stations

Application of gender quotas in Chile, Mexico and South Africa

Chile: Party for Democracy (Partido por la Democracia, PPD)

The PPD's equal opportunity principle specifies that neither men nor women shall occupy more than 60 per cent of elected positions in party bodies. In the case of national vice presidencies, this translates into the election of two male vice presidents and two female vice presidents in order to ensure parity (Llianos 2008).

Mexico: Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI)

Article 37 of the PRI's statute requires that leadership positions in national, state, federal district, municipal and regional commitments shall have no more than 50 per cent of members of the same sex (Llianos 2008).

South Africa: African National Congress (ANC)

In 1997, the ANC stated in its constitution that at least 33 per cent of all party decision-making positions would be reserved for women. Ten years later, 'at the 52nd ANC National Congress, the Constitution was amended to increase the quota to 50 per cent. Today, 50 per cent of the elected members of the National Executive Committee are women. However, in terms of the top positions in the party, the gender parity provision is not complied with' (Kandawasvika-Nhundu 2013: 62)⁴⁰

5.4 Timeframe for the implementation of the Gender Action Plan

Each objective in the Gender Action Plan should have its own time frame. You have to plan carefully to evaluate how much of time you'll need for reaching each goal. At the same time, there is no point in pushing difficult steps into the future. Be bold. Cultures and procedures only change when active people decide to change them.

A general time frame in which your party plans to implement the whole plan, and review and renew your policy commitments should also be specified. As such, gender policies should be considered permanent endeavours that require constant efforts and regular review and adjustments in order to better respond to current and emerging needs.

To succeed with the implementation of the plan, you need to check the chosen indicators regularly. It may be a good idea to establish a work group with a clear mandate to carry out this. An alternative is to give the monitoring task to an existing party organ, but it is important that this organ can work independently and that it has, as members, both men and women who come from different levels of the party hierarchy.

■ 6. Examples of Gender Responsive Policies

Myanmar's government has started practising gender responsive policies, e.g. the following projects and policies:

1. National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) 2013-2022, as a response to Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW.
2. Formation of technical working groups, and including in the groups people with expertise on violence against women, the UN “Women, Peace and Security” (so called UNSCR 1325, see Annex) agenda, and gender mainstreaming, to implement NSPAW.
3. Restructuring the Myanmar National Committee on Women (the national mechanism for the advancement of women in Myanmar) by inclusion of representatives from women/gender networks.
4. Attaching national and international consultants to strengthen technical work groups under the leadership of Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR).
5. Promulgation of Anti Human Trafficking Law in 2005 (in process of amendment).
6. Drafting process of the Prevention and Protection Violence against Women law: comprising the government (CEDAW line ministries led by the MSWRR), UN agencies, and civil society organisations, the process has started in 2013.

The measures that the government has taken so far are not comprehensive, and the plans need to be effectively implemented. However, it can be said that these policy plans, initiatives and pieces of legislation are a good foundation towards effective equality policies.

■ 7. Working with other stakeholders

To be accountable, politics has to be team play. If one political party forms the government and thus holds power from one electoral term to another, on and on, characteristics of dictatorship begin to appear. In established democracies governments are often formed by two or more parties (USA, with only two strong parties, is a notable exception to the rule), and the governing constellations vary from term to term. Thus, parties have to learn to cooperate in the government. Often the ones in the opposition also learn to work together to challenge the parties in the government. Sometimes it also happens that parties in the opposition and parties in the government cooperate, to advance goals that are of special importance, e.g. the security of the country.

Gender equality, as it has been proven to be a key component in speeding up development, should be a subject that different parties can agree on. Of course, there may be varying opinions on how to get to the goal. Yet cooperation over party lines is a very effective way of bringing about change. In many countries WWs of parties cooperate, and, rather than looking at this type of cooperation with suspicion, parties should warmly encourage it.

A healthy democracy cannot be built on political parties only. **Civil society organisations**, also called non-governmental organisations (NGOs), **are a key element of a well-functioning democratic system**. Myanmar is a country with strong women's organisations and, within them, actors who have a lot of expertise about women's and LGBT people's rights and who are familiar with Myanmar's international human rights commitments. When drafting and developing policy suggestions, it is worthwhile cooperating with these organisations. They have first-hand knowledge of marginalized groups' problems and of situations in various parts of the country.

International NGOs (INGOs) are also important actors for countries such as Myanmar. Gender equality is a subject that many INGOs work with, starting from UN Women, which has established a country office in Myanmar in 2019. For good projects there is donor money around.

The United Nations (specifically UN Women) organises yearly campaigns to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. International Women's Day on 8th of March is one such occasion, the so called 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence another.⁴¹

The first one goes back more than one hundred years, the latter was initiated in 1991 by the first Women's Global Leadership Institute. From 25th November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10th December, the Human Rights Day, organisations and activists campaign to highlight the need to combat VAW. NGOs and INGOs are most likely to warmly welcome any political party which is willing to take part in these functions.

Some political parties in developing countries have also formed relationships with sister- or brother parties – that is, parties with similar policies and agendas – in developed countries. Some ethnic parties in Myanmar have done this. If your party has not found a cooperation body of this kind, this is a possibility that may be worth looking at, as e.g. many European parties have been very innovative in finding affirmative action measures to help women advance in politics.

■ Annex:

CEDAW

Myanmar is party to UN conventions, which legally bind it to certain international standards as comes to 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 fulfilling women's rights.

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. Usually NGOs leave at the same time to the CEDAW committee a so called shadow report, which gives the committee the possibility to evaluate the situation of a given country from a wider perspective.

Myanmar reported last to the committee in 2016. At the same time, seven civil society organisations (CSO) submitted shadow reports to the UN CEDAW Committee. There is a regular coordination mechanism among the government and CSOs that submitted shadow reports to respond to the concluding observation from UN CEDAW Committee 2016.

The concluding observations can be found at:

http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs22/Myanmar-CEDAW64-Concluding_Observations-red.pdf

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.

SDG 5

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were mentioned earlier on (see Chapters 1.2 and 3.1). Each of the 17 goals has specific targets on how to reach the goals and, to monitor the success of reaching the target, an indicator or indicators.

Goal 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls – has:

Target 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

Indicator 5.1.1: Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and nondiscrimination on the basis of sex

Target 5.6: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

Indicator 5.5.1: Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments

Indicator 5.5.2: Proportion of women in managerial positions

All the targets and indicators of SDG 5 can be found here:

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>

Key networks

As mentioned earlier (see Chapter 7), Myanmar has active civil society organisations which work hard for the fulfilment of women's and marginalized groups' rights. Here is a listing of NGOs that you can turn to when looking for information on issues to do with gender equality, empowering women and people belonging to minority groups, and inclusive peace processes:

1. Women's League of Burma (WLB) <https://www.womenofburma.org>
2. Gender Equality Network (GEN) <http://www.genmyanmar.org>
3. Women's Organization Network (WON) <https://www.facebook.com/WONMM/>
4. Alliance for Gender Inclusion in Peace Process (AGIPP) <https://www.agipp.org>

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"⁴²

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