Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process

Analyzing Myanmar’s National Dialogues (NDs) from a gender perspective:

WHAT IS GENDER INCLUSIVE POLITICAL DIALOGUE?
## Contents

### List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Acronyms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.......................................................................................................................... 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SECTION I. Introduction

1. Purpose of policy brief ......................................................................................................... 5
2. Structure of policy brief ......................................................................................................... 5
3. The conceptual framework and key research questions ...................................................... 6

### SECTION II. Analyses and Findings

1. Rationale: Gender sensitivity in the NDs of Myanmar ....................................................... 7
2. National dialogues (NDs) ....................................................................................................... 8
   2.2.1 The Framework for political dialogue (FPD) review process .................................... 9
3. Analysis of the Myanmar NDs design and process from gender perspectives ...................... 11
   2.3.1 Selection criteria ....................................................................................................... 11
   2.3.2 Gender inclusion in the ND’s design ......................................................................... 13
   2.3.3 Quotas in NDs ......................................................................................................... 14
   2.3.4 Gender sensitive and responsive budget design for greater participation ............... 16
   2.3.5 Gender perspectives, sensitivity and responsiveness in the ND process ................... 17
4. Gender perspectives in the contents of policy proposals & proposals development process .. 19
   2.4.1 General analysis on the policy proposals arising from the NDs ................................. 19
   2.4.2 Textual Analysis of the policy papers arising from the NDs ...................................... 22
   2.4.3 Policy papers’ drafting process .................................................................................. 25

### SECTION III. Strategies and ways of working deployed by women in NDs to advance gender inclusion

1. Women’s perception of their participation in ND ................................................................. 27
2. Gender differential level of participation and roles in the ND .............................................. 28
3. Recommendations ............................................................................................................... 30

### SECTION IV. Global Evidence: lessons learned from other political dialogues/peace processes

1. Assessing Gender Perspectives, Sensitivity, Responsiveness, and Inclusion in Peace Processes ... 34
2. Ways to create gender inclusive peace processes ............................................................... 35
3. Methods and approaches in explicitly and implicitly advancing the gender equality agenda in political dialogue from other countries ......................................................... 38
4. Gender-responsive features ............................................................................................... 41
5. Gender-sensitive features ................................................................................................. 41
6. Transfer strategies .............................................................................................................. 42

5. Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 43

ANNEX 1 ................................................................................................................................ 45

ANNEX 2 ................................................................................................................................ 47
# List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGIPP</td>
<td>Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOs</td>
<td>Community Based Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO Forum</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPD</td>
<td>Framework for Political Dialogues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAOs</td>
<td>Ethnic Armed Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender Based Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEST</td>
<td>Gender Expert and Support Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoM</td>
<td>Government of Myanmar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCA</td>
<td>Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND</td>
<td>National Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPD</td>
<td>National Political Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSPAW</td>
<td>National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PoVAW</td>
<td>Protection and Prevention of Violence Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSR</td>
<td>Security Sector Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCCPF</td>
<td>Union Level Committee of CSOs Peace Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council Resolutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPC</td>
<td>Union Peace Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPDJC</td>
<td>Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPS</td>
<td>Women, Peace and Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ</td>
<td>Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWD</td>
<td>People Living with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USIP</td>
<td>The United States Institute for Peace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF POLICY BRIEF

AGIPP developed policy brief No. 6, entitled “Analyzing Myanmar’s National Dialogues (NDs)\(^1\) from a gender perspective: What is gender sensitive political dialogue?” The key objectives of the brief were to:

1. Undertake a comparative analysis on political dialogues conducted in Myanmar and other countries from a gender perspective and develop a policy brief on gender sensitive political dialogue
2. Draw on the global evidence base to examine what are the key features of gender sensitive, responsive and inclusive political dialogue/peace processes and inform AGIPP of the gaps and key takeaways from the Myanmar process.

1.2 STRUCTURE OF POLICY BRIEF

This brief begins with an explanation of the purpose of Policy Brief No. 6. Next, the PB6 introduces the conceptual framework and key research questions that guided the analysis. The paper outlines the brief introduction of National Dialogues concluded in Myanmar thus far. The policy brief relied on primary and secondary data. The analysis looks at primary data collected by AGIPP from 181 respondents (survey respondents and key informant interviewees) and further examines from a gender perspective how data either confirms or challenges the existing understanding of how gender sensitive NDs were in Myanmar. This paper has three sections. First, the process: the design of the ND and the contents of the emergent policy papers from the respective NDs. Second, the PB6 gathered knowledge of how women’s groups and gender equality advocates used a wide variety of strategies to advance gender equality in the Myanmar ND. It also has a section on examples and good practices from other countries that integrated a gender perspective in

---

\(^1\) National Political Dialogues (NPDs) are being referred to as National Dialogues (NDs) thus this policy brief used ND.
their NDs, and it sheds light on how gender sensitive NDs look. The methodological overview is detailed in **ANNEX I**.

### RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

**KII participants at the CSO Peace Process Review Workshop**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Male} & : 9 \\
\text{Female} & : 12 \\
\text{Total} & : 21
\end{align*}
\]

---

**Survey respondents at the CSO Peace Process Review Workshop held in July 2020**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. How in practice, from a gender perspective, was gender inclusiveness undertaken in the National Dialogues conducted in Myanmar?
2. What strategies and ways of working to further gender inclusion in peacebuilding are used by Myanmar peace and gender equality activists and advocates and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)?
3. What can peace actors in Myanmar, including AGIPP, learn from other political dialogues and peace processes in view of a comparative analysis?
SECTION II. ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

2.1 RATIONALE: GENDER SENSITIVITY IN THE NDS OF MYANMAR

Given that National Dialogues are mechanisms for fundamental change and the establishment of new state-society relations/social contracts, it is critical to analyse the Myanmar NDs from gender perspectives. AGIPP uses the gender lens to analyse the three main components of NDs: the design/process, content, and the extent of gender inclusivity. Rhetorically, in Chapter 2’s Basic Principles section of the Framework for Political Dialogue (FPD), it is stated that, “no citizen shall be discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity, religion, culture, or gender” and matters relating to gender equality must be included under the agendas for political dialogues, more specifically, the social thematic areas. How, in practice, gender inclusion was undertaken in the National Dialogues conducted in Myanmar is worthy of an analysis.

BOX 1

What is gender sensitive, responsive and inclusive?

Gender-sensitive: The awareness of gender inequalities, differences and issues affecting women, men, boys, girls, and sexual and gender minorities, and taking these concerns into account within a formal agreement, policy, project, program, theory of change or statement. Gender-sensitive approaches seek to secure change to achieve gender equality wherever possible.

Gender Responsive: Informed by gender-sensitive analysis, provisions, policies – ideas are operationalised through gender-responsive actions - the practical capacity to address gender inequalities, exclusions and differences through implementation efforts that are feasible, monitored and evaluated.
Gender Inclusive: The combination and result of ‘sensitive’ (theory/design) and ‘responsive’ (operational) approaches that enable and enhance women’s equal representation and meaningful participation in decision-making processes.


What is gender perspective?

Gender perspective refers to the consideration of gender-based differences when examining social, cultural, or political phenomena, policies, and processes. In particular, gender perspectives focus on the ways in which gender correlates to differences in status and power, as well as how gender-based discrimination shapes the present and long-term needs and interests of those with marginalised gender identities. The application of a gender perspective to political dialogue and policy formulation is a strategic decision that centralizes gender-based concerns and experiences, thereby ensuring any resulting policies and programmes benefit all genders and other identity markers. This multifaceted approach to the incorporation of a gender perspective also ensures that those of all gender identities benefit equally from new policies and programmes and instances of gender-based inequality will not be perpetuated in the future.


2.2 NATIONAL DIALOGUES (NDS)

Following the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in 2015, the Framework for Political Dialogue (FPD) was negotiated and drafted by the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC). The FPD is a document designed to guide the convenings of National Dialogues whilst its outcomes are supposed to serve as consensus among stakeholders. These outcomes provide inputs to the solutions for peace in view of establishing a Union that is based on the principles of democracy and federalism.

The FPD, both first 2015 and second 2018 versions, describes in Chapter 4 the holding of the National Political Dialogue and Union Peace Conference. National Dialogues remain as one of the essential elements of Myanmar’s peace process. National Dialogues are political dialogues allowed under the UPDJC’s terms of reference and are organised in three categories: The Ethnic-Based, the Region-Based and the Thematic-Based.

Whilst in the 2015 version of FPD, in Chapter 4, the organisers and participants of the NDs were identified as follows:

---

(4.1.1.) Under the direction of the Working Committees, and in accordance with the roadmap laid out by the UPDJC, state and region governments, ethnic armed organisations, or civil society organisations, either individually or jointly, may hold National Political Dialogues.

(4.1.2.) Representatives of the government, parliament, Tatmadaw, ethnic armed organisations, registered political parties, ethnic nationalities, civil society organisations, and relevant stakeholders may participate in National Political Dialogues.

In the second version of FPD 2018, in Chapter 4, it identified the organisers and participants of the NDs as follows:

(A. 1. (cc)) Under the supervision of the political dialogue supervisory committee (State, Region, and Naypyitaw Council) and in accordance with the directions of UPDJC the political dialogue, regional and state governments (government, parliament, and Tatmadaw) ethnic armed organisations, elected political parties, and CSO are all qualified to hold National Dialogues individually or collectively.

(A. 2) Representatives of the government, parliament, Tatmadaw, ethnic armed organisations, registered political parties, ethnic nationalities, civil society organisations, and relevant stakeholders may participate in National Political Dialogues.

There have been nine NDs concluded so far. The FPD, Chapter 4, Holding of National Political Dialogue and Union Peace Conference, Paragraph 4.1.3. describes that “issues under the six (6) major sectors to be discussed during national political dialogue relating to ethnic nationalities, specific regions, or citizens at large, may be discussed at the state and regional level, or at the nationwide level.” The FPD identified five thematic areas to be discussed at National Dialogues and consultations: these are Political Affairs; Social Affairs; Economic Affairs; Land and Natural Resources Affairs; and Security Affairs. However, the National Dialogues Terms of Reference (ToR) clearly sets the limits on the thematic areas of discussion. “The Ethnic-Based, Region-Based, and Issue-Based National Dialogues will focus on the following major topics: political, economic, social, land and environmental policies, whilst, in general, omitting the security theme.” In each of the ToR of Ethnic-Based, Region-Based, and Issue-Based National Dialogues, it was specifically outlined which of the topics are to be discussed in the National Dialogues, among which the security theme was not included. Therefore, none of the NDs have had the opportunity to discuss security affairs which is considered a sensitive area.

2.2.1 THE FRAMEWORK FOR POLITICAL DIALOGUE (FPD) REVIEW PROCESS

Whilst the current NDs are guided by the FPD, this framework has areas that require improvements. Given the limitations that the current FPD has regarding scope, criteria for participation, and thematic areas where National Political Dialogue participants provide policy prescriptions, stakeholders have been proposing to review and amend the framework since October 2016. It has been an ongoing process with 11 versions concluded so far.

3 ibid
Identifying the gaps in the current FPD, AGIPP submitted a set of recommendations for NCA-S EAOs, government and political parties in an attempt to assist the review of FPD from the women, peace and security and gender perspectives. The key points provided are the following:

(1.) AGIPP provided recommendations for a framework for political dialogue from the women, peace and security and gender equality perspectives.

**Women’s Participation in the National Political Dialogue**

The original text in the FPD stated:

- 10.2. Attempt would be made to let women representatives participate up to 30% of the total number

AGIPP proposed to replace the original text with:

- Support and carry out to ensure at least 30% participation of women

Include gender perspectives in results of political dialogue and the peace process

- Form and implement the national technical team of gender experts and advisers in Myanmar to provide technical assistance and give technical input in the FPD review and PD processes.

(NB: gender language will become more robust if the next version of FPD includes specific clauses stating that any concerned parties and agencies can draw on the expertise and technical input from the National Gender Expert Team)

Include women, peace and security and gender equality perspectives in every thematic area of political dialogues

AGIPP proposed:

1. In every thematic area, include gender and gender related issues
2. Invite participants and representatives with gender perspectives and, if needed, AGIPP stands ready to provide the list
3. Solicit gender related advice and technical input from national gender experts and the gender technical team, and if necessary, AGIPP stands ready to provide technical input

(2.) AGIPP to provide recommendations for the guidance note on the national level Political Dialogue from women, peace and security and gender equality perspectives.

Regarding women’s participation in the process, AGIPP proposed in the guidance note to put in place a technical expert team to provide necessary technical input.

**Enable an all-inclusive peace process**

For discussion, release the current limitations on the thematic area.

In discussions, prioritize the political sector policy dialogue because the political sector is important for gender equality. When discussing the political sector dialogue, it is imperative to form and include the gender technical expert team to create ways through which civil society can raise their voices and provide recommendations.
2.3 ANALYSIS OF THE MYANMAR NDS DESIGN AND PROCESS FROM GENDER PERSPECTIVES

2.3.1 SELECTION CRITERIA

Selection criteria and procedures are essential to make all the phases of a peace process effective and legitimate. The general observation is that among all the NDs, as there was no one set of standardised criteria for selection of participants, a wide array of selection criteria was used. The most common forms of criteria for selection of participants were knowledge, geographical representation (township affiliation), gender (in some NDs, gender was set out as a criterion for selection, whilst in others gender inclusion was encouraged and sought after in practice) and ethnicity. Overseas diaspora groups were also included in the criteria in some NDs. That said, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), refugee status persons, People with Disabilities (PWDs) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBTs) people were not clearly specified in the selection criteria. For further information on each ND and its outcomes, see the Summary of ND Information, ANNEX II.

Ethnic Based National Level Dialogue - Chin, Kayin, Pa-O, and Mon have taken place thus far.

Chin- there was a set of criteria to select the participants of the ND. These criteria enabled the division of seats among the political parties’ representatives and candidates who represented the communities and those who are subject experts on the topics that were to be discussed. All participants have to be Chin nationals, with a reservation of 30% representation for women. There is a policy derived from the Union Peace Conference design requiring that there must be 30% women participation and there has always been a push for a 30% inclusion of women in Chin NDs. That said, during the Htantalan the 30% quota objective was not met, ending up at 17%. Geographical representation was also considered. Out of nine townships, the number of representatives from one township could not be more than a tenth of the total number of representatives.

Kayin- the criteria included someone who has the ability to discuss and give substantive input and understanding about the peace process. Some view that setting criteria is good to ensure that those who participate in the ND have knowledge and ability to substantively contribute to the discussion. However, this could be limiting to women who may have some language barriers, who may have family responsibilities that have caused them to not be regular in attending meetings to be updated with peace process matters and women who may have a lower level of education and general knowledge.

Mon – the criteria were people who are active in political parties, can understand the peace process and its related issues, can discuss the pertinent issues in-depth and who have been active with civil society groups, as well as in Mon literature and cultural groups. Whilst there is no written policy on gender quota, the responsible planning committee members must abide by the guideline to increase the proportion of women participants in all the sectoral discussions. Therefore, de facto gender inclusion work was at play.

Pa O- the criteria for selection were set from the onset of the pre dialogue coordination meetings.
The criteria for the stratification of constituencies were developed. These included: political party, EAOs, CSOs, and Community Based Organisations (CBOs). The organising committee was comprised of 83 members of which 30% were women. Within the organising committee, there is a working committee which has its own 30% reservation for women. All in all, women’s minimum 30% quota was achieved. There was no gender discrimination as to who could attend the pre-dialogue coordination meetings, but the attendants had to be those who were nominated by their respective organisation or by their respective communities, and ethnicity must be Pa O. Whilst gender was not specified in the policy and there was no gender quota set as one of the selection criteria, participation of women and youth was highly encouraged and prioritised.

**Region Based National Level Dialogue - Shan State, Thanintharyi, Bago** Unlike Issues based and ethnic based NDs, region based NDs were weak from the inclusion standpoint in relation to their selection criteria. Participants were not selected on the basis of gender, minority, and PWD status. According to the steps laid out by the UPDJC, state and regional governments, ethnic armed organizations, and civil society organizations, either individually or jointly, may hold national political dialogues. The region based NDs are mainly organized by the state and regional governments. Looking at the region-based ND’s selection criteria, it is appeared that the State and regional governments’ gender and inclusion capacity and competencies are still low.

**Bago** - as per mixed findings from the Key Informant Interviews (KII), it was not clear whether criteria were set for the selection of participants. Rather, selection was based on the familiarity of participants among the organisers with a limit of inviting two persons per organising committee member. Thus, there were not enough people to participate in the thematic discussion. Among the stakeholders and ethnic representatives, it was presumed that gender was included in the criteria for selection, not via policy, but rather in practice. Non-NCA signatory groups needed to be included, which did not happen.

**Thanintharyi** - this ND did not appear to have an extensive set of criteria for selection. Someone had to be a representative from an organisation, but that said, individuals were invited based on their subject expertise (mainly academics). Some ‘high profile’ individual females were invited to the region-based ND that was organised by the regional government. Among the organising committee members, MPs, and state level officials, there were a few individuals who were aware of the 30% gender quota specified in the NCA. But gender was not set out in a 30% quota system as one of the criteria for selection for Thanintharyi ND. Other identities, such as LGBTs, and PWDs were also not included in selection criteria.

**Shan State** - While the research team was unable to interview participants of Shan region based ND, the general assumption based on the anecdotal evidence is that its selection criteria is not gender inclusive and other identity markers such as minority, LGBTs and PWDs are not specifically identified as key social groups to be invited.

**Issue Based National Dialogue**

Civil Society Forum or UCCPF – There was a set of criteria for selecting the participants of Civil Society Forum but there were also some additional criteria set at the State/Region level for CSO Forum participants, i.e., the participant must be someone who has a familiarity with the peace
process and who has been regularly participating in every working committee meeting and pre-forum meeting. There is a quota criterion to ensure women’s inclusion in the ND used by the Issue-Based ND. In every thematic discussion, a 30 per cent women inclusion was made a mandatory requirement which had its own pros and cons. Such an inclusion model is merely counting the number of women. Consideration was given to making efforts to include LGBT groups but this goal was not realized. However, according to the interviews, inclusion of PWDs was achieved to the extent possible. The other criteria are such that a participant’s organisation has to be a social organisation, non-governmental organisation or a non-religious group.

Analysis of selection criteria and process of the NDs from a gender perspective: The configuration of a National Dialogue should reflect the society structure which is relevant for addressing the issues under discussion in the five thematic areas. Importantly, it should always include key stakeholders that (1) are ‘entry points’ to the larger population, or to various key stakeholder groups, (2) have leverage to influence opinion or affect change, and (3) are, if it is to be sustainable, part of an agreement development. Well-designed selection criteria and procedures are directly linked to the representativeness of participants, and particularly to the level of women’s influence in practice. AGIPP is fully aware that a gender inclusive process does not imply that all stakeholders have to participate directly in a formal dialogue. Different methods can facilitate the design process of NDs to have interaction among stakeholders and inclusion of a wide range of perspectives, including gender perspectives, in the National Dialogue process.

Using a gender perspective informs that gender is not only a binary choice between men and women, but it serves as the most used identity marker. However, inclusion of other gender and social identity markers such as LGBT groups, People with Disabilities (PWDs), age, and social and economic status (including IDP and returnee refugee status) must be considered in the participants selection criteria in order to truly represent different groups in Myanmar’s society. Since women are not monolithic, it is critical to use the intersectional approach in the selection of women participants in order to represent women of different socio-economic class, rural vs. urban, occupation and family and education status. Whilst familiarity with, and knowledge of the peace process seems to be a primary requirement for participation in all the NDs, it was not clear among the criteria of all NDs that gender expertise and gender perspectives were used as prerequisites for selection of resource persons, discussants, and participants. The other gender and social identity markers were not considered and were effectively excluded in the selection criteria and actual selection procedure in all three ND types. Some NDs seemed to have done more in this regard than others. In sum, as a result of the efforts of women’s groups’ sustained advocacy with EAOs and CSO Forum organising committees, they considered, to some extent, gender inclusion in the selection criteria of all Issue-Based and some Ethnic-Based NDs.

2.3.2 Gender inclusion in the ND’s design

Gender inclusion in the design of the NDs has two components – numerical/quantitative aspect of women’s access to NDs and women’s strategic influence on NDs in shaping the outcome of the political discussions to be more gendered. It was reported that some of the NDs adopted a policy to set a gender quota as part of their selection criteria. Some did not have a policy, using instead gender as a criterion for selection.
Despite having the gender quota set either in policy or implemented in practice, it was reported that, except for the Issue-Based National Dialogues organised by CSOs Forum, the minimum 30% gender quota was not fulfilled. Among the 159 survey respondents, 80% of those surveyed indicated that the NDs they had attended had a greater number of men than women participants. Myanmar’s NDs could do more in the future to include at least 30 per cent women in all NDs at every level and strive for a 50-50 gender balance. Qualitative data suggested that most of the interviewees agreed to the need to increase women’s inclusion in National Dialogues’ design, but not all the NDs had a written policy requiring a gender quota in their participants selection. Some NDs appeared to have practiced a gender quota system instead of specifying it in the organising event’s rules of procedures. This may be partly because of some resistance against the gender quota, and to mitigate the potential push back as some ND organisers did push for it in practice.

Some KIIs reported that they made efforts to include women and youth in all levels of planning and proceedings of the NDs. Thus, survey data reveals that 57% of respondents advocated for at least a 30% gender inclusion in the respective NDs they attended. Yet again, the common narrative that there are not enough qualified women available to participate in the NDs continues to appear in the findings.

2.3.3 QUOTAS IN NDs

General Views on Quota – Sceptics or Proponent

Quota sceptics continue to be found in the AGIPP study. Although a gender quota of 30% is internationally recognised as an effective instrument to fast-track gender inclusion in peace and political processes, male interviewees resisted it during the interviews. This fact consistently emerged in the interviews with male interviewees. The allocation of quotas has proven to be critical in ensuring women’s involvement in the consultation type of inclusion which is what the NDs were about. According to the findings on quotas, one of the reasons for a low level of women’s active participation during the discussions was given by respondents as women’s low level of capacity to meaningfully and substantively contribute to the peace process.

The gender breakdown of quota sceptics was overwhelmingly male respondents. Male respondents tend to say that when women gain sufficient level of skills and capacity to contribute, they rise to participation in the peace processes. Thus, one of the most common findings on the quota question is that a quota would not necessarily be needed. The argument from the male respondents is that once women gain adequate skills, they automatically join the NDs. This quota sceptic statement has the unspoken assumption that women are underrepresented because they do not have adequate skills nor the capacity to be peacebuilders and peacemakers. This view continues to exist despite the evidence of women contributing based on their respective thematic expertise and sectors in the peace process. The growing evidence was documented and recorded in a mapping and cataloguing of women’s contributions to peace in every state and region in Myanmar.


Design must support the maximisation of quotas

Whilst there is merit for having a greater percentage of women’s inclusion in the National Dialogue (numerical/quantitative aspects of women’s access to dialogues), the quality of female participation is equally, if not more important. As for the design enabling women’s meaningful participation, it was not indicated that NDs’ design was made to ensure that women’s strategic influence on National Dialogues was intentionally facilitated through having sessions dedicated for women’s caucuses for issues that they cared about and where they could produce a united view and comprehensive joint document/position. There was also no indication that the NDs’ design was made for the deployment of gender experts to be in the sector wide discussions. Nor was there any indication of the securing of gender experts to cast a gender lens in the planning, executing and evaluation of ND events as well as the outcomes of NDs. The design could have been more accessible for women’s groups if women CSOs and gender experts were assigned in each of the four thematic sub-working groups dealing with key issues. Any gender equality gains that were secured in the NDs were described as hard-earned achievements of female participants and groups in these events.

Quotas plus inclusion of gender perspectives and facilitation of women’s participation

The lack of equal numbers of women and men in National Dialogues confirms the Myanmar social stereotypical assumption that NDs are matters that exclusively concern men and are to be dominated by men. Hence, having a greater number of women in NDs challenged the traditional social norm that National Dialogues are the realm of men. That said, the global evidence base shows that mere presence does not guarantee voice and influence. To be more productive in providing gender perspectives, women must be supported with gender knowledge and capacity through pre-dialogue strategising meetings, preparation of talking points to articulate the perspectives strategically and effectively, and have their practical and logistical needs met. Similarly, for the purpose of facilitating increased women’s participation in decision making positions, one must be supported to become technically sound in the relevant subject matters. Even in the Issue-Based NDs, the interviewees identified that those women who could meaningfully participate via substantive contribution to the discussions were in a minority, pointing to the need to support messaging, communication skills, and technical capacity building. Overall, AGIPP’s findings showed that there exists more work to be done on the strategic influence of women, inclusion of gender perspectives and facilitation of women’s participation in the decision-making positions of NDs through carefully designed technical supports.

2.3.4 GENDER SENSITIVE AND RESPONSIVE BUDGET DESIGN FOR GREATER PARTICIPATION

ND design is crucial: women’s inclusion is most beneficial to peace processes when they can exercise influence, yet this has only been possible when gender responsive procedures were

---


in place for selection of women candidates. It has not been fully demonstrated that all the NDs concluded so far have adopted gender responsive procedures, including the budget design and allocation. Thus, there is room for improvement.

Women should be financially supported for their participation in NDs and where appropriate, the costs should be reimbursed. One inhibiting factor was the inability to make political processes accessible for women to raise their voice and exert influence. It was reported that in the first CSO Forum there was no special gender integration budget line set aside, but by the time of the Third CSO Forum, held from 18 to 20 March in Myitkyina, Kachin State, the gender integration budget line item had started to operationalise. Expenses of women with small children are covered, although the budget is prioritised for the expenses of female committee members. It was suggested that the coverage for expenses of women with small children should be expanded to those who are not part of the organising committees.

Women from remote areas were also compensated for air travel to half the travel time. Whilst certain women’s specific needs, including travel expenditure of nursing mothers and mothers with small children were considered covered in the ND’s budget, separate room costs for transgendered people remained a matter of negotiation. Similarly, PWD’s participation cost and that of their personal assistant was assumed by the pre-CSO Forum’s budget. But as for the practical matters linking to gender budgeting, it was found that there remained a need to broaden the concept to be inclusive of LGBTs in budget consideration and allocation. Gender budgeting is one of the important tools in making the ND process gender responsive in fulfilling gender specific needs and the inclusion of other minorities. For example, the premise of gender budgeting is based on resource allocation in the ND process which has to be equitable and gender responsive. This means inclusion costs for some categories of population will be prioritised. This should be needs based, not equality based. Findings suggested that whilst the end donor has it included, the gender budgeting practices are yet to be applied in resource allocation in its ToR. The funds distributor did not follow this practice. By not focusing on extra costs incurred from some groups’ inclusion, it left other groups in need of more resources in order to participate. Findings suggested that CSO Forum organised Issue-Based NDs and CSO Forum pre-meetings have had a greater sense of gender budgeting than the other NDs.

The organisers’ awareness and understanding of the concept of gender budgeting is crucial because through the finance policy it makes a difference in promoting and enabling equal opportunity to participate in NDs. Many respondents reflected and noted that when the organisers are aware of gender budgeting, their ability to conceptualise the expense policy to be gender responsive and their willingness to make necessary adjustments to ensure minorities are able to participate have improved. This could facilitate the conduct of participatory and inclusive National Dialogue.

This must start with the resource allocation. The finding supported this observation in one Region - Based National Dialogue. The organisers, having a relatively lower level of awareness of gender responsive budgeting, exhibited this lack of awareness by equating the participation cost of women as a gender budget item. Respondents articulated that the gender budget could entail the cost for inviting mothers with small children and their care giver. However, some organisers find this expensive.
Respondents noted that whilst the EAOs have exhibited some awareness on gender budgeting, it is still not high on their priority list. Gender budgeting is not second nature to finance and policy planners and is rarely adequately reflected and specified. For instance, at first, the Union Level Committee of CSOs Peace Forum (UCCPF), had ambiguity around what gender budgeting is about. The UCCPF later agreed on the concept of gender budgeting and what it meant in actual implementation. But due to the budget limitations, despite consensus having been reached on the importance of gender budgeting, they were unable to implement the concept at all levels. Both CSOs and the government sector had, to a varying degree, a misconception on gender budgeting.

The same applies to donors who are supposed to be in compliance with WPS global good practices and guidelines to support women’s meaningful participation in ND. Donors have the gender budgeting policy and practices to promote equality through their finance policy, using instruments such as gender budgeting for gender equitable distribution of resources for gendered outcomes. But more often than not, the policy will be in vain without being supported by a proper utilization of a gender budget line with a specified percentage set aside from the onset for different types of participants to be included.

Implementing gender budgeting should be done with care, not as a box ticking exercise, but rather with strategic intent to ensure women and underrepresented groups from diverse backgrounds can participate. Willingness to monitor the roll out of the gender budgeting tool, track the progress and learnings from the lessons and preparing to adjust if necessary, without being concerned with the bureaucratic hurdles, is important for donors. As one respondent cited “as far as I understand, the back donor adopts gender budgeting principles and practices, but the fund manager/disperser did not seem to be excited about having to renegotiate with the back donor and finance team on rearranging the budget items to cover costs of the women with small infants and their care giver.”

2.3.5 GENDER PERSPECTIVES, SENSITIVITY AND RESPONSIVENESS IN THE ND PROCESS

Gender sensitive and responsive approaches are important features of making the ND accessible for the traditionally marginalised minority groups and their participation effectiveness. Findings show that one of the biggest challenges identified by the participants was a lack of adequate time to prepare before the ND. In a similar vein, the agenda of the ND was not circulated well in advance making the people not prepared on the points that they wanted to influence strategically and to push forward during the discussion. Over 60% of respondents mentioned that they did not obtain the agenda well in advance. All women participants suggested that a lack of preparation time and not getting the agenda well in advance are challenges to be addressed. One good practice is recommended in Beyond Consultation, an international good practices compilation and tool for meaningfully engaging with women in fragile and conflict-affected states. The good practice is that in creating the enabling environment for traditionally marginalised communities to participate in NDs, “women and women’s organisations should be engaged as equal partners in the planning, designing and implementing of decision-making processes including they should be able to set and shape the agenda.” In this case, AGIPP noted that the agendas of NDs were not made available in advance, nor were they collectively developed among the organising committees and women’s organisations. If gender sensitive and responsive NDs were in place, they would make an effort
to facilitate the traditionally marginalised, including women’s group participation, by sharing the agenda in advance. Then women’s groups can collectively strategise how to provide gender analysis for agenda items.

Whilst 20% of respondents felt there was room for improvement regarding gender perspectives in the ND they had attended, 74% agreed that NDs were an avenue for women’s practical needs and that their concerns were discussed. Meanwhile, 78% of respondents viewed the women’s groups who participated in the ND as a bridge for women in the communities with peace actors. Therefore, the role of the women’s groups was valued and deemed essential. A minority of respondents pressed the need to continue to form linkages between women in the communities and women representatives to NDs. Women’s groups from communities and women representatives who were able to attend the NDs were in agreement to transfer the message and key outcomes. Bringing back to the community the discussion points and synthesising the policy papers into the form of user-friendly briefing points was highlighted as an important component. Another area considered weak by the KIIs is the post event follow up: sharing of information and exchange of views with the wider community. It was raised by respondents that the follow up activities were not planned strategically to share back with the community members. If gender sensitive measures were adopted, the NDs would, from the onset, put in place in their ToRs and project documents a way to seek perspectives of women, men, boys and girls and to share the outcomes with communities as part of a participatory and transparent approach.

Issue-based NDs seemed to have adopted some gender responsive measures by having child-friendly space set up for those who had to bring small children and gender specific travel arrangements were made. Such a practice was not reported by the respondents who attended other NDs.

Some interviewees distinguished the capacity building needs for women to effectively participate from the need for consciously reducing the socio-cultural and structural barriers to participation in decision making positions. Global evidence shows that quotas and transparent criteria for participant selection procedures have proven useful. However, if selected women have no decision-making power, participation can become meaningless.10 In order to exploit the possible opportunity to exert control, it is critical to be able to participate as working committee members, discussants, and in other decision-making positions. A low level of women’s participation in the working committees (those who had the decision-making power) of sector wide discussions was evidenced. In one Ethnic-Based ND, women were virtually absent in the politics and security sectoral working committees and therefore women’s voices were absent from the discussions. A few women participated in the lands and natural resources and economic sectoral discussions. For instance, among the survey respondents, a greater number of men participated as main committee members and resource persons, whereas more women participated as facilitators, documentation team members, and participants. In the breakout group sessions, women were usually outnumbered by men so that might have, to a certain degree, inhibited women participants, signalling the need to achieve the critical mass of 30% in every group (main committees, resource persons, break-out sessions) in future NDs to become gender sensitive. Similar to the findings

from other parts of the world, women’s effective meaningful participation was very much linked to how gender responsive the process was designed and how gender sensitivity was promoted in the design and substance of the NDs’ ToRs and policies. Below infographic depicts the three types of NDs’ performance on gender sensitivity and responsiveness.

2.4 GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN THE CONTENTS OF POLICY PROPOSALS & PROPOSALS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

2.4.1 GENERAL ANALYSIS ON THE POLICY PROPOSALS ARISING FROM THE NDs

The majority of the National Dialogues produced policy papers on various topics. Via their textual commitments, the NCA, FPDs, and Union Accords support women’s participation and gender inclusion in the peace process. AGIPP has done specific analyses of Union Accords delineating gender perspectives in these texts as well as gender analyses on different sector wide policy proposals. In addition, work was done on the Mon ND and Issue-Based ND and CSO papers.¹² But the scope of this policy brief is to focus on the highlights of women’s roles in developing policy proposals, gender perspectives and processes of the development of policy proposals derived from the 9 NDs concluded in their entirety.

Generally, as for gender perspectives in the policy proposals, the 30% gender inclusion point and the need to elevate the role of women to decision making positions were the ones that appeared most often in policy proposals. According to the survey respondents, they feel that most of the policy papers that emerged from the NDs included some gender perspectives although qualitative data suggested that, as yet, there was no standalone policy paper concerning gender. Gender perspectives in discussions were not satisfactory according to some of the interviewees. Respondents’ views on the gender perspective in the policy proposals are such that whilst 83% of survey respondents expressed that gender issues appeared in the policy proposals which stemmed from the NDs they attended, 17% highlighted these issues as not being substantive.

Some felt that differential gender impacts of issues were not adequately imparted, whilst others felt that the gender analysis could be made stronger. For example, during the topical discussion of federalism and lands and natural resources, gender analyses were not prominent. The number of women who joined in the lands and natural resources and politics topical discussion were reported to be low. Social sector discussion gained more women contributors. There were many areas linked to gender and federalism which could be imparted but in some Ethnic-Based and Region-Based NDs, the discussion of gender perspectives was lacking. As for the participation and needs of people with non-binary gender identities, findings showed that some NDs did not reach consensus on including policy proposals related to the rights of LGBT. Gender inclusive perspective therefore is needed to ensure that LGBT, PWDs and other excluded groups are considered and discussed in the policy papers. One Issue-Based ND’s policy proposal did include


3 Types of National Dialogues

The below visually depicts the level of gender inclusiveness in the three types of National Dialogues regarding design, selection criteria, and gender budget:

**Ethnic-Based**
- Most of the policy papers are gender blind
- Gender budgeting was not adopted
- Not all the NDs set gender as one of the criteria for selection

**Region-Based**
- Gender perspectives were weak
- Technical inputs from gender advocates were not solicited
- Two of the three NDs did not set gender as one of the criteria for selection

**Issue-Based**
- Gender sensitive in design and selection process
- Every thematic discussion included 30% women’s participation
- Gender budget was practiced
a wide range of gender related to terminologies and clauses: these were “women, mothers, PWDs, women’s rights, the role of women in peacebuilding, gender differences and other gender identities – LGBT.”

Whilst the strength of the arguments and extent of the gender perspective may vary, there were some good examples. One noteworthy example of how women’s groups utilised the national dialogue platform to address the generational gender-based discrimination appeared in the policy paper discussion of the Chin Ethnic-Based ND: the issue of inheritance for daughters in the Chin community and the continued consideration of interethnic children of Chin mothers as Chin. On such issues women’s groups had one unified voice in favour of women’s right to inheritance and that the children of Chin mothers should continue to be considered as Chin. This is a testament to how women’s groups during the Chin Ethnic-Based ND used the political platform to raise very critical issues of socio-cultural norms and traditions that discriminate against Chin women and tried to instill a transformative agenda within the ND process.

In the Mon policy proposal, women, children and the elderly’s need for secure lives and safety were the gender related highlights. In the Pa O policy proposal, the gender issue was integrated in the political sector discussion in terms of women’s participation in political processes and leadership positions. Whereas in the economic sector discussion, the gender issue was highlighted through the need to support and facilitate the role of women entrepreneurs, women innovators and women’s economic empowerment. Regarding the land and natural resources discussion, although there was no customary law that discriminates women’s rights to inheritance in the Pa O community, in order to have one unified position with other ethnic groups in gender, land and natural resources issues in Myanmar, the need for customary laws and practices for reform was intentionally discussed to be gender equitable in the Pa O paper. This type of collective women’s advocacy strategies for gendered outcomes was in line with the global evidence from the other National Dialogues and will be discussed further in Section III.

In terms of gender perspectives in the contents, it was stated that women from the CSO sector are the main discussants, although gender cuts across the society and everyone is concerned with gender. It was brought to attention that women government representatives could improve upon their gender analytical skills. According to interviewees, the reasons for both men and women government representatives being weak on gender perspectives can be attributed to a lack of exposure and capacity building opportunity. Those women who took up seasoned discussant roles and substantively contributed at the level that signals meaningful participation are the ones who came from political and CSO backgrounds. These were a handful of women. Hence it can be stated that, generally, women participants are still not very strong in discussion.

When asked to describe further the specific clauses and provisions vis a vis gender: women/girls, Gender Based Violence (GBV), needs of mothers and children, and factors affecting women were reported to have been included in the policy proposals of NDs. Regarding identifying the ‘factors’ affecting the lives of women in the NDs’ policy papers, the issues of human trafficking, women migrants, land confiscation and women and federalism were reported to have been covered. However, not found were the issues of women combatants and their reintegration, the livelihood issues concerning the female ex combatants from the Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs), their
gender specific needs in the interim arrangements, the reparation budget allocation for sexual violence survivors and ways in which the affected population will participate in decision making of issues affecting their lives at all levels, in the interim period, and in the post conflict era.

Another important technical procedural issue was that the UPDJC accepts the policy proposals from those entities and agencies that are eligible according to its ToR. Not just any organisation or association can submit proposals. Therefore, it is a matter of great importance that those papers that could be submitted to the UPDJC have solid gender inclusive elements and step by step implementable and realistic detailed proposals to advance the gender equity agenda. Doubt was further highlighted in terms of the UPDJC absorbing all the policy proposals from each ND and its ability and willingness to assume the proposed points including gender perspectives.

2.4.2 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE POLICY PAPERS ARISING FROM THE NDs

The study reviewed and analysed the respective policy propositions which emerged from the Ethnic, Region/State and Issue-Based National Dialogues.

General Observations
The gender analysis of these ND papers points to the fact that most of the papers missed opportunities to include gender systematically and comprehensively in the policy paper design and policy recommendations. Some of the gender inclusive papers from Ethnic-Based and Region-Based national dialogue are superficial at best and completely missing gender analysis at the worst. Thus, AGIPP recognises that these were missed opportunities where women’s perspectives and gender equality agenda could have been better integrated. As well, the discourse on the role of gender analysis and perspective could have been included in the discussion concerning post conflict era reconstruction and rehabilitation. Ethnic-Based national dialogue papers, whilst the gaps can be identified, have more robust gender sensitive provisions and express greater commitment for the improvement of gender inclusion when compared with the Region/State based national dialogue papers. By far, the Issue and Ethnic-Based National Dialogues ranked more highly in their gender inclusion in the process and design. However, their policy papers still had gaps in comprehensive gender integration in the policy design and recommendations. To this end, in June 2018, AGIPP did extensive gender analysis on the CSO Forum’s paper entitled, Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Social Development Policy Recommendations. For further information, please view the AGIPP’s gender analysis paper.

Region-Based National Dialogues: Bago ND produced three papers with topics of Economic Sector, Land and Natural Resources, and Political Sector. Tanintharyi ND produced two papers, totalling five, that this policy brief reviewed and analysed. The Shan Regional ND’s papers were not part of the analysis due to the inability to access them. In the Thanintharyi regional ND’s economic paper, in its socio-economic development section, a few points on women’s access to the regional development policy formulation, economic policy and promoting livelihoods in the region including providing equal opportunities for men and women, were mentioned.

The trend is that women and equality between genders were included in the discussion points related to socio-economic policy and economic development. Lack of gender perspective was noticed in other important policy discussions on taxation, protection of private property, public
infrastructure, access and control over natural resources and tangible assets of the State and Region. As gender implications are significant in public infrastructure projects, a lack of gender analysis is concerning as it could leave out the impacts on women and LGBTQ+ in the infrastructure planning and designs.

There remain gaps in understanding the ubiquitous nature of how gender differential affects every policy design, prescriptions and recommendations, and how gender differences are easily overlooked. These issues were manifested in the papers. Many of the policy discussion papers were written with an assumption that the default reference to people, the public and community would take care of women’s and other LGBTQ+ concerns. AGIPP is of the view that this is not the case given the gendered nature of linguistic systems. It is paramount to have gender inclusive and specific language addressing gender concerns and needs. Generic and gender-blind words like ‘people’ and ‘community members’ were used instead of men, LGBTQ+ and People with Disabilities. For example, in the discussion of basic infrastructure projects in the Tanintharyi’s paper, the need to increase access to electricity and basic infrastructure for low-income households was discussed. If gender inclusion was considered in the policy paper, it would have listed as a priority policy attention to the poor women headed households, single mothers, widows and the elderly community.

**Ethnic-Based National Dialogues** - Kayin, Pa-O, Chin and Mon drafted fourteen policy recommendation papers with topics of Economic Sector, Land and Natural Resources, and Political Sector/Federalism.

**Kayin**: In the paper entitled, Security and Protection Principles which emerged from the Kayin National Dialogue, it was specified in the basic principles for the security and defence sector that they pledge to promote and protect women’s’ rights, and recognise the contribution of women to the defence sector. Further, in the basic principles for the Federal Union Army, it was underscored that entry to the federal armed forces shall not be discriminated based on sex, ethnicity, and religion. With regard to the implementation of the peace process agreement, the Kayin political sector policy paper contains a vow to promote women’s participation through the expansion of capacity building and training efforts to better prepare women for a greater role in peace process and peacebuilding. In its land and natural resources paper, there is discussion about the need to ensure gender equality for men and women in the land management with the women and men having equal rights in public participation. These are good examples of how gender can be included in the defense and security topics, land and natural resources management and public participation. However, gender inclusiveness should not stop at inclusion of and participation of women but should go further by including sexual minorities and other traditionally excluded sectors across the population, which the policy papers from the Kayin National Dialogue did not highlight.

**Pa-O**: The paper entitled Reconstruction and Human Development and Resettlement which resulted from the Pa-O National Dialogue, contains a decent amount of gender inclusive provisions. Notably, in the Basic Principles on Reconstruction and Human Development Section, the definition of community members included the elderly and Persons With Disabilities (PWDs), indicating the broadening of community concepts to include various strata of people.
In the principles to be upheld during the resettlement period, it pledged to effectively protect and promote the rights of women and children. Further, there were provisions discussed on the need to provide reproductive health education to women including special attention to pregnant women and children under 12. In terms of health coverage in the human development sector, it called for the vaccination of pregnant women and children under 12. In the Social Development section, there is a discussion to modernise practices that undermine women’s rights. In the paper on Land and Environmental Policy Issues, especially for the Land Ownership and Management section, it was set forth that men and women must have equal rights to land ownership and management.

However, in the paper for local development, the key discussion points were gender blind with no mention of women, LGBTQ+, and other excluded and underserved groups. A similar trend (the lack of gender differential specification) was observed in the federalism and State-Union sharing of political power discussion paper which produced policy recommendations for the political sector theme. Gender analysis could have been better included and emboldened in many of the discussion points, but that was not figured in the policy paper for the political sector theme.

Mon: In the Economic Sector Paper from the Mon national dialogue there is discussion of the development of federal and state economic policies that must be based on women’s participation at all levels. In Section 2 on Foreign Direct Investment, the need to protect the cultural practices of local ethnic groups with special attention paid to the potential impact of FDI on children, the elderly and Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) was deliberated.

Deliberated areas were also respect for women’s rights and transparency in public knowledge about the flow of FDIs to the region and their timely monitoring. With regards to the land and natural resources, women’s participation should be prioritised by way of promoting equality between women and men. Whilst there are some good practices that need to be recognised, notably the case of inheritance, the name of the woman should be used in the transaction and the land ownership document. There will be laws and regulations that allow both men and women to cohabitate. A number of social protection measures dedicated for women, children and the elderly were recommended in the sector concerning natural resources extraction. Exceeding the gender performance of other Ethnic-Based National Dialogues’ policy propositions, Mon papers called for increased participation of at least 30% women in all sectors of society including in political decision making. The Social Sector Paper of Mon National Dialogue contained exemplary points on gender inclusion in the resettlement and rehabilitation efforts including policy considerations to be given for women with disability and expectant mothers. These points highlighted gender differential needs in every policy design and formulation. Regarding combating gender-based violence, it was discussed on the need to establish a Centre for the Protection of Women and Children to be run by the federal and state governments whilst decision makers and coordinators of this Centre should be women. One other important key point discussed in the paper is not permitting an amnesty grant for perpetrators of rape.

Chin: The national dialogue of Chin ethnic group produced one paper entitled Federal State Building Principles. In the section for Equality, Self-Determination, Federal Principles, Ethnic Minority Rights, Multi-party Democracy System, Secular State, and other Principles, there is no
mention of gender differential needs and priorities according to these above-mentioned topics, 
indicating gender blindness and overlooking the importance of distinguishing gendered impact 
on state policies across the board. However, gender issues were discussed extensively in Section 
6, Democracy, Human Rights and Gender Equality. For example, it was stated that women should 
not be discriminated against in any way based on gender and opportunities for women must be 
created to take up public space in all sectors. There is a siloing of gender and women in the gender 
equality section only, thus failing to integrate gender across other areas such as gender and ethnic 
minority rights, gender and self-determination etc. One encouraging sign was that the Chin policy 
paper recommended that the Government create a safe space environment by enacting laws 
that protect the safety of women. Furthermore, under the gender equality section, what came 
to the fore was the need for implementation of a special affirmative action plan to ensure full 
participation of women in all sectors.

2.4.3 POLICY PAPERS’ DRAFTING PROCESS

In terms of the policy papers’ drafting process, in one ND, when women participants suggested 
the revision of the policy papers to be more gender inclusive, there was strong resistance on the 
part of the organising committees in that as these policy papers were drafted by subject experts 
and academics, they should not be edited, thereby negating the substantive contribution of the 
participants in terms of gender perspectives. In effect, the papers contained biases of some groups 
of participants whilst ignoring the views of others. Evidently there was favoritism displayed 
toward people in powerful positions over others. Findings suggested that, the point of view of 
academics and government officials were given consideration and were included whilst those 
of the CSO, whose perspectives represented those of the communities, were set aside. There 
was a struggle in one ND between the elite (business stakeholders, academics, and government 
officials) and the grassroots-based groups (CBO and CSO representatives) to push the views to 
be included in the policy proposals. Participants shared that such a process is not democratic and 
participatory as the collective papers should be jointly revised as is required. It appeared that the 
organising committee members were more focused on the end itself than the process involved in 
creating a participatorily negotiated outcome document to be submitted to the UPDJC.

Women’s participation in and delineation of gender perspectives in the political sector policy 
proposals need to be strengthened, mainly because the tendency in a few NDs, although this 
cannot be generalized, was that gender perspectives and women’s issues were outlined only in 
social sector policy proposals. This line of thinking is stereotyping of women and reduces the 
gender issues to the social realm only whilst there are in fact gender concerns with every aspect 
of society.

As for the participatory process generated around the policy papers, some of the respondents and 
KIIIs noted that they did not get the finalised version of the paper before it was sent to the UPDJC. 
This was identified as a point of contention as respondents who felt excluded in the process 
pressed the importance of a participatory approach. In the same vein, the role of focal points was 
discussed. There were focal points from States and Regions who could improve on the delivery 
of their duties. KIIIs highlighted that the peace talks, without an established channel to influence 
inner circles, are not fruitful. Therefore, the focal points serve as a conduit in the Myanmar NDs.
Having a gender lens is essential in examining the papers from NDs to see if they are gender inclusive. For example, respondents highlighted that in the Issue-Based forum, there was more gender technical capacity to dissect the papers and examine proposed alternatives. But in the Region-Based NDs, it was underscored that looking at issues with a gender lens could be improved.

Regarding the role of women participants in imparting gender perspectives in policy papers, the majority of answers highlighted the fact that the gender perspectives in policy papers were due to the lobbying efforts and hard work of women’s groups and gender equality advocates who were at the NDs. For this purpose, women’s contribution was noted for gender sensitive clauses and provisions in the papers submitted to the UPDJC. Yet the current level of gender clauses and achievements are less than ideal and need more robust efforts in the future.
SECTION III. STRATEGIES AND WAYS OF WORKING DEPLOYED BY WOMEN IN NDs TO ADVANCE GENDER INCLUSION

Under the circumstances mentioned above, the barriers to gender inclusion remain significant in Myanmar. Yet, there are female and some male peace and gender equality advocates, activists, and change-makers deploying various methods and approaches to advance the gender equality agenda explicitly and implicitly in national dialogue. Understanding this will add value to the existing evidence base and literature on gender inclusion in peacebuilding in Myanmar and beyond.

3.1 WOMEN’S PERCEPTION OF THEIR PARTICIPATION IN ND

A wide range of social norms and expectations in Myanmar impact women's perception of their participation in political processes. The usual narrative is that national dialogue and processes are natural extensions of men’s roles and duties. That said, men and women both consider their participation in the ND useful and important. 65% of respondents disagreed with the idea that their participation in the ND made them feel somewhat irresponsible for their family given that they may have some family duties that might not get attended to because of ND. 30+% felt that being at ND made them feel that they were leaving their family duties behind. Of this 30% of respondents, despite the stereotype that women feel more obligated to take care of family responsibilities, a greater number of women than men do not feel irresponsible for leaving their family for the ND. Instead, women feel that their participation is critical and beneficial for the wider community because they can bring to the surface issues affecting communities and, besides, it is their right to participate in Myanmar’s peace processes.

Influencing and shaping the discussion

In the National Dialogues where AGIPP members had access, it deployed a wide range of creative strategies to exert its influence and shape the discussion in order to achieve gendered outcomes.

Everything, from the discussion of which issues to be selected, when to select the land and the resources issues etc., was all thought through and carefully planned. Against this backdrop, AGIPP also took note of important creative trends deployed by women’s groups in getting their message across, coordinating among themselves to leverage their presence; and secure gender clauses and gender outcomes. **Being at the table has its own advantage; if effective transfer strategies are deployed, this has a huge potential to bring the gender perspective to the peace process and to shape the negotiated outcomes as highlighted by KILs.**

Women’s groups reported to have advocated for and lobbied the resource persons who were chosen for certain thematic discussions to highlight gender perspectives and make gender a standalone thematic discussion. This was fruitful when the resource person’s existing gender expertise was solid. It was observed that the gender of the resource person makes a difference in pushing gender concerns. A female expert on federalism revealed that in leading the discussion on federalism, as she is gender sensitive and willing to include gender perspectives in the discussion, it provided a window of opportunity to push the gender perspective. This willingness to push gender inclusion is also very much linked to whether or not the resource person voluntarily wants to push it forward.

**Creating a common platform to advocate for gender perspectives**

One of the potential challenges of having diverse women’s groups in national dialogue as derived from the literature of women’s participation in Peace Dialogues is the lack of a unifying force and voice due to their diverse backgrounds and intersection of other identities - ethnicity, religious, and political party allegiances. But the policy brief found 75% of survey respondents revealed that in the ND in which they participated, women of diverse groups came together on a common platform to advocate for gender perspectives. However, women’s varied levels of knowledge, technical capacity and ability to meaningfully contribute and advocate gender perspectives were highlighted by interviewees. Certainly, some women possess greater articulation skills and the ability to press their points than others. That suggests that training and capacity building efforts are needed for women to effectively articulate their gender inclusion points and political negotiation. It was noted that there was no massive structural slip nor was there a fundamental difference among the women’s groups.

### 3.2 Gender differential level of participation and roles in the ND

**Higher standards are set to measure women’s participation**

Existing studies and data in Myanmar show that women participate at a significantly lower rate than men in meetings and public discourse owing to the natural assumption that leadership and political discussion are associated with maleness. The survey data supported this assumption. In the NDs that 88% of the survey respondents attended, a greater number of men participated in the discussion than women. This can be explained in two ways: there were simply more male participants than female in all the NDs, and naturally, a greater number of people who spoke up would be men. There have been other qualitative reports suggesting that more women than men...
feel that they still have to prove their ability and contribution in the NDs. Some qualitative data suggested that women feel that they were being watched over by male counterparts, whereas men do not have to prove that their participation added value. Therefore, it might be a case where women are measured against higher standards than their male counterparts. Despite the fact they might have contributed in discussions, the survey respondents and interviewees did not perceive their contributions as being as valuable as those given by male participants.

This double standard of expectation on the performance between genders was noticeably higher in the political party representative category implying that women tend to face challenges in ascending party ranks. This experience is highlighted by the KIIs. One other issue that keeps appearing in the testimonies of female respondents is that there are mixed findings of the perceived respect garnered by women peace advocates in the ND in which they participated. This is expected based on their experience as the events attended were different. Some suggested that they were under greater scrutiny compared to their male counterparts. When women interject in the meeting discussion, additional scrutiny was exercised. Perhaps the male experience is that it is easier to be listened to. No male respondent raised this matter as an issue in their interviews.

Pre-assigned roles to women and their influence

Different roles assigned to women and their potential values and constraints were also raised by the respondents. The roles given to women made a difference on whether they can substantively contribute in discussions. Although the role of Chairperson was seemingly perceived as a role of importance and as leading the proceeding, a few respondents highlighted the constraints the facilitators and chairpersons could face as opposed to the role’s participants can play. Participants roles have more leeway to pose questions, interject different points, submit motions and make rejections and recommendations. Respondents highlighted that strategic positions of women are more important than facilitation and chairperson roles. Whilst leading roles are crucial for symbolic reasons, meaningful participation through strategic presence could bring about gendered outcomes with the resulting consequences in favor of gender justice in peacebuilding writ large. The CSO representatives were by and large given observer roles in certain region-based NDs. This is problematic as they could not participate in discussions. Therefore, the need to give CSO representatives status to participate in discussions was raised.

In summary, there are a myriad of challenges that act as barriers. These include, but were not limited to, speaking for the ethnic based and region-based NDs, a lack of critical mass of women to support each other, skills and capacity issues, non-substantive roles given to women and the preference for listening to elite participants over CSO representatives. There has been a push to include women in decision making positions. This push must be accompanied by strategizing among women on how to leverage their presence and role in this regard, and how opportunities should be strategically exploited. Sending women to decision making positions who have the ability and capacity to represent the gender equality agenda in the peace process and who can exert influence to shape the discussion and interject gender perspectives are critical considerations. Another equally important element raised repeatedly by informants, was that women who are in decision making positions should be the channel for passing the information from communities to the inner circle.
3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations offer suggestions to a wide array of stakeholders on how in future to facilitate greater gender inclusion in the Myanmar NDs.

To ND organizing committees:

(1) **Participants selection criteria have to be flexible and gender responsive.** In National Dialogues, continuity and institutional memories of the participants are important. But that importance should not undermine the quality of participants and their technical capability. One of the criteria used by many of the NDs was that one has to attend all the state and regional meetings - pre consultations leading up to the NDs. Such a requirement is not possible for the women leaders who are already overextended and who have been pulled in various directions in providing gender perspectives in different arenas. It would be undermining to exclude some women leaders who are able to attend the actual meetings, but had missed the pre-meetings for legitimate reasons. That is not indicative that women are uninterested in the pre-meeting. Given the competing agendas in gender equality and peace process work some are inevitably occupied.

(2) **Establish a channel to transfer messages between peace advocates/representatives from NDs and the communities.** There is a need to make more creative mechanisms to reach out to the public and get public opinion included in the discussion papers. A good rapporteur plays an instrumental role in transferring people’s views and voices to the peace table/or onto the formal track. The rapporteurs must bring the peace table’s outcomes back to the public. Therefore, they are the key bridge/platform connecting the inside and outside of the peace processes. For example, in the CSO Forum pre-meetings there is the respective focal point: the efficacy of information dissemination back to the community relies on the strength of the UCCPF’s state and regional focal points’ commitment to information sharing and information seeking from concerned main stakeholders. Forwarding emails is not enough.

(2.1) Creative mechanisms also means utilising the existing institutions mechanisms such as the MNCW, WPS TWG for the effective transfer of messages to reinforce the arguments for the importance of increased gender perspectives and gender sensitive approaches in the NDs as well as making these mechanisms be the bridge among communities and decision makers in all peace and policy architects.

(3) **Gender budgeting in the proposal for ND.** The ND organisers should think about gender budgeting beginning with the project conceptualisation stage. For instance, it is necessary for the organisers to include in the budget, items for gender specific needs, and their associated costs. As an example, there will be extra costs for a mother with small children, their caregiver, individual room costs for LGBTQI’s, if having a separate room is needed and some additional costs which may be incurred for people with special needs. These budget considerations are important to make events inclusive and give equal opportunity for participation, regardless of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, etc. Failure to include gender budgeting items in the proposal development and the follow up implementation could result in the lack of needed
resources to support the participation of a wide array of stakeholders with diverse needs.

(4) Develop the PSHEA policy and guide for ND to eliminate sexual harassment cases. Have a role ‘model effect’ on the conduct of the NDs. Every organiser of an ND should adopt the PSHEA policy and guide for participants to deter the experience of sexual harassment. It is critical to make the event a safe space that allows participants to participate freely and express their views without having to worry about harassment and repercussions.

To development partners (multi-donor funds for Myanmar’s peace processes, donor community, UN agencies):

(1) Invest in technical assistance and skills support to be more effective. One of the re-emerging themes repeated across both qualitative and quantitative data points is a need for a multi-pronged approach to harness women’s meaningful participation with technical support. Technical support is necessary to help women organise around common interests and problems that affect the lives of women from different states and regions in Myanmar. This is critical to facilitate the transfer of community level consultation and dialogue outcomes to the UPDJC which is often neglected in elite level peacemaking. The value of communication channels is vital to ensure that the valued insights from the grassroots consultations are not lost at the grassroots level but rather are transferred up to the UPDJC level, and ultimately into the Union accord. Support should be provided in terms of technicality (i.e., assisting with talking points, help with rapid research and drafting, gender and social analysis of the five thematic areas) to existing women leaders, organisations, and women’s networks by creating a plan to build their influence in upcoming NDs.

(2) Provide supports on a continuum basis, not only for the event itself. Donor communities should not only support the actual ND but also set aside funds to support women’s groups leading up to the NDs, including provision of resources to support a platform that enables strategic discussions, strategic messaging, stakeholder analysis and gender sensitive conflict analysis of any given issues.

(2.1) Carry out ‘Rapid Response Funds’ and allocate funding for projects related to NDs like childcare to facilitate the participation of women with small children.

(2.2) Provide additional supports including how to organise caucuses, thematic and public policy training, communication skills development, and mentoring. It is further recommended that a facilitation of a peer-to-peer exchange of views and strategies modelled on that of women leaders from other post-conflict countries be used to exploit political opportunities for gendered outcomes.

(3) Apply innovative and creative interventions. Support and invest resources to leverage what is the most important role that women can play, and how gender advocates can exert an extraordinary amount of influence in peace processes. The informants interviewed called for supporting the minimum 30% women’s participation at all levels and in all committees of NDs; the allocation of resources for different entry points range from practical assistance to assigning gender strategist as key persons in influencing the thematic areas of importance.
(3.1) Practical assistance includes willingness to invest financial resources to design bespoke strategies to support women peacebuilders based on individual organisational needs and, as an example, sponsoring high-level problem-solving workshops collectively on any given topics to explore ways to unlock the stalled peace process.

(3.2) Assign gender strategist key persons to aid with gender perspectives on topics related to relief and resettlement, post conflict reconstruction and security sector reforms.

(3.3) Continue to support women peace and gender equality advocates in Myanmar with curated experimental learning and sustained and longer-term accompaniment opportunities from the experiences of other post conflict countries.

(4) Gender sensitive indicators and budget. Development partners who engage in supporting the Myanmar peace process and peacebuilding efforts should adopt gender sensitive indicators, both qualitative and quantitative, in their results framework. This is especially so for those who support gender participation in the Myanmar peace process and in political bodies. This also applies to partners who attempt to promote women’s property rights, peace and civic education and ending VAW and GBV. It is important for their accountability that they use gender sensitive indicators to see what goals are being reached and what changes should be measured. The use of, and reporting on, gender sensitive indicators should be made obligatory within international development agencies, the INGO, NGOs and grassroots organisations who receive gender equality and WPS funding.

(4.1) Commit to and practice gender budgeting in all development partners, donor agencies, INGO, NGOs, and grassroots organisations finance policies and practices. This undertaking should be substantive instead of a box ticking exercise. There should be innovative gender budget tools adopted by the donors, including but not limited to, setting up a rapid response fund, investing in peace intervention to recruit a greater number of female law enforcement officers and providing resources to support women IDPs and returnee job skills for reintegration. As a principal objective, adopt the UN target of a minimum of 15% of all peacebuilding funds for gender equality.

For all key stakeholders:

(1) Systematic efforts to implement gender analysis and gender-sensitive policies are still inadequate in Myanmar’s peace entities and CSOs. This is despite the increased awareness that conflict and post conflict situations are gendered and have gender outcomes. Build gender capacity and knowledge on WPS and gender sensitivity and the UNSCR related international frameworks among peace entities and CSOs. This should be done to recognize and value women’s contribution to conflict prevention and the peace and gendered dimensions of conflict and war, violence and militarization and peacebuilding. Therefore, in all their initiatives, at the local, national, and international level, mainstreaming of the gender perspective through a gender analysis is needed to understand each peace project.

(2) Correct the misconception on gender and halt the devaluation of gender expertise. In
Myanmar, the tendency to silo gender and not give proper importance to the gender discourse translates into the devaluation of gender expertise and concerns. This bypassing of the gender issue in the peace process has demonstrated that the lack of a standalone gender policy paper generated by the previously concluded nine national dialogues is not an accident. The excuse may be given that gender is mainstreamed and therefore there is no need to elevate it to another level. Yet the gender implication of conflict is very visible. It is recommended that resource people who are thematic experts on topics in their respective panels need to make conscious efforts on the part of resource persons/experts to systematically mainstream gender and strive for gender sensitisation, responsiveness and inclusivity in all the related policy discussions.

(2.1) Gender should be viewed as any other subject that requires expertise. There has been a systemic devaluing of gender in Myanmar and the resource people for future ND should have gender sensitisation.

(2.2) Continue to support a dual track or multi-track approach for NDs to participate in the future by way of maximising local peace capacities. Organizing peace fora are important avenues to bring the voices from grassroots to the government officials and donor community. It is important to develop a broader strategy for outreach to the involvement of Track II actors in the elite level peace processes and to adopt strategies to enable effective transfer of messages to inner circles to initiate an information exchange channel between CSOs and authorities/some of the UPDJC members. This is to ensure that women on Track II are not left without a mechanism to influence Track I.
SECTION IV. GLOBAL EVIDENCE: LESSONS LEARNED FROM OTHER POLITICAL DIALOGUES/PEACE PROCESSES

4.1 ASSESSING GENDER PERSPECTIVES, SENSITIVITY, RESPONSIVENESS, AND INCLUSION IN PEACE PROCESSES

One of the best ways to understand how well one peace process incorporates a gender perspective is to juxtapose it with peace proceedings in other contexts. Whilst acknowledging the context specificities of other countries’ experiences and uniqueness that they have, both in terms of opportunities and challenges, comparative studies enable a critical analysis of where one peace process is at in terms of gender inclusion and women’s meaningful participation. In the two decades since the adoption of Resolution 1325, gender perspectives have been incorporated to some degree or another in several peace-making and peacebuilding negotiations and agreements. Four of the most prominent conflicts which have made some inclusions for gender in their post-conflict negotiations are Sudan-Darfur, Liberia, Guatemala, and Colombia. Each serve as useful comparisons to highlight the ways in which gender perspectives are utilised in Myanmar. Please see the textbox sidebars for explorations of the ways in which these conflicts have implemented aspects of gender perspectives, sensitivity, responsiveness and inclusion within their unique peacebuilding efforts.

Women’s participation alone is not equal to meaningful participation and it should be differentiated. Headcounts alone cannot reap gender perspectives.

Simply put, the presence of women at the negotiation table is not a sufficient means by which peacebuilders can integrate a gender perspective within peace proceedings. Women must actually exert influence within all stages of the peace process to make a meaningful difference with respect to both conflict resolution and prevention of future conflict.\textsuperscript{15} Below research analysis is helpful in understanding not only why women’s participation in peace proceedings

are useful, but why it is absolutely necessary in creating lasting peace. The landmark report, a multi-year research project entitled “Broadening Participation in Political Negotiations and Implementation” (2011-ongoing) “Making Women Count—Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women’s Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations,” revealed several key findings related to the necessity for women in the peace process:

1. Despite continued challenges to women’s place within the peace process, women have made significant contributions with respect to peace-making and constitution-making negotiations as well as to the execution of final arrangements.
2. The depth of women’s influence correlates positively with the achievement, sustainability, and implementation of peace agreements.
3. Contrary to popular belief, the participation of women within peace proceedings does not weaken the overall process or outcome.
4. Women’s inclusion is not exclusive to primary negotiating tables—nor should it be.
5. Certain contextual and process-related factors work together to either facilitate or constrain women’s ability to participate and influence peace proceedings.  

4.2 WAYS TO CREATE GENDER INCLUSIVE PEACE PROCESSES

A core component of the women, peace, and security framework endows recommendations for increasing gender inclusiveness within peace proceedings. The broad themes within these recommendations include the consultation of women within every aspect of peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts, which is women’s right to participation. It also requires making the process gender equitable by the diversification and intentional structuring of the mediation and dialogue process, and the purposeful tripartite engagement of quotas, transparent leadership criteria, and instillation of meaning within women’s roles.

The following countries’ experiences are presented here for the reader to better understand how other peace processes created ways to include gender.

Liberia
The 2003-2011 peace proceedings in Liberia offer a plethora of case studies which illuminate the multitude of ways in which women can impart meaningful influence on peacemaking efforts. The most memorable anecdote involves parties of women physically blocking the doors of the negotiation spaces and threatening to publicly disrobe until involved actors had signed a peace


This approach took advantage of both cultural customs and the rising resentment which had developed in the face of stalled negotiations. This expression of mass action, however, is one of many tactics utilised by Liberian women.

Another notable approach was the extension of the Peace Hut as a space for women to conduct local mediation. Peace Huts are typically occupied by key role throughout the entirety of the lengthy peace process. For example, women leaders participated in the Liberian transitional government as stipulated by the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. They exerted profound influence within their capacity as observers because they worked in tandem with prevalent women’s organisations and movements outside of formal negotiations (thus facilitating the transfer of knowledge). They organised mass action campaigns to gain access to mediation and negotiation meetings (thus gaining greater systemic access to peace proceedings); and formed strong coalitions whose objectives primarily involved common gender-based concerns. As such, women peacebuilders in Liberia played a crucial role in many aspects of the peace efforts, largely reflecting the aim of Resolution 1325.

Men (particularly village elders) assist in resolving community disputes. In the post-conflict environment of rural Liberia, women peacebuilders altered the concept to accommodate women within that fundamental role, thereby providing women with a greater voice in local politics. Monitoring mechanisms have revealed that Peace Huts are incredibly useful in reducing violence and tension in smaller communities that have the potential to escalate on a wider scale. Peace Huts require a small investment, but they have paid off in dividends with respect to increasing women’s political profile and participation, building justice system networks, providing avenues for effective civic engagement and access to legal and social assistance, increasing community awareness of human rights and empowering women economically.

Darfur - Sudan

During the 2006 peace talks in Darfur, UNIFEM (now the UN Women) proposed the inclusion of a gender expert within the negotiations’ mediation team. The designated gender expert would be tasked with coordinating the establishment of a Gender Expert and Support Team (GEST), engaging female delegates to assist in drafting reports which delineate women’s concerns and priorities, and formalising a common gender-focused platform to be instilled within the text of the greater Darfur Peace Agreement. The agreement included, “gender-responsive provisions on wealth sharing and land rights, physical security, affirmative action and special measures, and women’s participation in the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration programme.”

---


In another instance of outside pressure, the Canadian Special Envoy to the Darfur Negotiations questioned the lack of women in the male-led mediation process. Whilst men from various rebel groups affected by the diaspora were included in mediation, women were not. The chief mediator from the African Union, which led the negotiations, was receptive to the inclusion of women. Shortly thereafter, women from the refugee camps of Darfur were brought into mediation and their contributions were quite valuable—largely because they had a clearer understanding of immediate issues facing Sudanese civilians than that of the rebel groups. Thus, though their participation was quite delayed, Sudanese women’s contributions were ultimately quite valuable within the purview of the representation and consultative modalities of inclusion.

Colombia

The Colombian peace process serves as a particularly multifaceted example of best practices with regard to meaningful, gender-inclusive approaches to peacemaking. Multiple gender provisions were woven throughout the process. These gains are as a result of the roles of women and civil society organisations, the determination of the conflict parties to include women in negotiations, the exertion of pressure from women’s groups and the overarching Colombian feminist movement, the effects of education and training on gender inclusion provided to all negotiation parties, and the will of the international community all to speak to the desire to advocate for gender issues whilst also striving toward lasting peace. These collective efforts culminated in the creation of the Gender Sub-Commission as a formal element of the architecture which underpinned the peace proceedings. The Sub-Commission was composed of women from each delegation and enjoyed the assistance of three international experts on gender and policy. Together, they took on the responsibility of reviewing the texts which emerged from the peace process (partial agreements, proposals, recommendations) to certify the inclusion of gender-sensitive rhetoric, provisions, and approaches to new agreements and policies.

The establishment of the Gender Sub-Commission helped illuminate the gendered facets of the conflict. Further, it provided a connection between official peace proceedings and civil society organisations working on a variety of gender-related causes, thereby allowing the latter to present their insights with regard to the implementation of a gender perspective within peace processes to the former. The result was the creation of new spaces within which women could meaningfully participate in peacebuilding and post-conflict transitions. Further, the Gender Sub-Commission benefitted from the inclusion of women delegates from a number of contexts who represented a variety of political views, ethnic backgrounds, and rural and urban perspectives. Likewise, the Sub-Commission consulted with representatives from other former conflict zones to gain their perspectives on the peace process. The Sub-Commission’s inherent diversity allowed for the creation of a peace agreement which positively impacted a wide swatch of Colombian society—an integral element of any peacebuilding process which helps ensure the establishment of stability and enduring peace.

25 ibid
27 ibid
28 ibid
Guatemala

Women were instrumental in the negotiations which ultimately led to the 1996 peace agreement—despite the fact that merely two women were among the negotiation teams formed by the Government of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity party. The United Nations lent significant support to a variety of Guatemalan civil society organisations, and urged the participation of women’s groups in particular, whilst the Group of Friends of member States, facilitated and sponsored negotiations. Additionally, Jean Arneault, a French diplomat who served as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guatemala and chief mediator of the proceedings, “endorsed the formal tabling of women’s concerns and recommendations for the parties’ consideration”.29 Though women did not enjoy equal representation at the negotiation table in Guatemala, their concerns, proposals, and recommendations had been conveyed through the proper channels and the primary actors in the peace proceedings were receptive to the inclusion of a gender perspective. As such, the subsequent peace agreement contained a number of notable women-focused and gender-inclusive provisions.30

Another anecdote which illustrates the ways in which women’s aims might reach success in the face of underrepresentation is the story of Luz Mendez. Mendez served as a delegate for the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity party during the peace negotiations of the 1990s and was profoundly influenced by her work with civil society organisations as well as the Fourth World Conference on Women. Though Mendez ostensibly represented the aims of her own political party, she also advanced numerous gender-focused concerns, thereby ensuring they would be addressed in any proceeding negotiations, agreements, and policies.31 Mendez’s example highlights how one woman made a significant impact on overall peacebuilding by communicating the concerns of all women.

4.3 METHODS AND APPROACHES IN EXPLICITLY AND IMPLICITLY ADVANCING THE GENDER EQUALITY AGENDA IN POLITICAL DIALOGUE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

The key to women’s meaningful participation lies in a structured approach to modalities of inclusion. Oftentimes, women are invited to the negotiation table as an afterthought or to fill a quota. Their inclusion during primary negotiations and elsewhere, however, is integral to both the incorporation of women within the process and the attainment of benefits women peacebuilders bring to peace processes32.

Whilst quotas are effective in widening women’s representation in a purely numeric respect, they do not correlate to women’s increased influence. Rather, women with party loyalty often impede the inclusion of genuine, gender-based points of interest. Approaches of direct representation which have been effective, however, include the creation of women-only delegations and the coordination of women from different delegations based on the advancement of common interests. This approach allows for the formulation of joint positions and the formation of overarching women’s coalitions. 33

Women within the position of observer status rarely exert measurable influence within peace proceedings. No patterns emerged which reflected women’s influence within that position; rather, women’s influence as observers varied based on contextual factors.34

The creation of formal and informal consulting forums intended to consider primary issues and demands proposals presented by women is the most common modality of women’s inclusion within peace-making case studies. Within a consultatory context, women exerted the most influence when they communicated joint positions, typically within succinct documentation which explained their aims to the main negotiating parties. The negotiating parties then were either informally pressured or formally compelled to consider these joint positions in the crafting of resulting peace agreements.35

This modality is reflective of the importance of the exchange of information and perspectives between women’s groups as a key strategy. Coordinated information exchange allows delegates to encourage those within negotiating parties to raise gender-related concerns, thereby strengthening the possibility that any resulting peace agreements will improve gender equality and defend women’s rights.36 37

Another common modality is the creation of inclusive commissions throughout all phases of the peace process. Within the modality of three types of commissions there are: those which prepare and execute peace and post-conflict transition proceedings, those which assist with post-agreement affairs such as ceasefire monitoring and the creation of transitional justice mechanisms, and permanent commissions. The formation and implementation of these various commissions, and especially post-agreement commissions, are largely the result of gender-sensitive provisions included within negotiations and peace agreements. The achievement of women’s participation in this arena, however, must be secured early within proceedings to be effective.38

33 ibid  
34 ibid  
38 ibid
A facet of this and the first modality which must be considered is the way in which women’s voices are often muted, either by more powerful actors within the peace negotiation phase (such as interest groups or more coordinated members of civil society), or by virtue of cultural custom. As such, some regions beset by conflict, such as Darfur and Sri Lanka, have instituted separate gender-based expert groups which serve in an advisory capacity. 39 40

Women enjoy much less representation within problem-solving workshops—with the exception, of course, of workshops specifically created for women. These women-centred workshops are largely designed to assist women in overcoming various political grievances and hostilities. Interestingly, women-centred workshops also resulted in the formation of joint positions which helped women gain greater influence.41 42

The United States Institute for Peace (USIP) organised a notable problem-solving workshop in 2012, which featured women leaders from Afghanistan and Iraq in dialogue with one another. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss their own experiences and best emerging practices to increase women’s profile and participation within peacebuilding processes. Thus, the workshop also serves as a model for other workshops which might be held in peace-making and peacebuilding contexts.43 44

On some occasions, the results of peace negotiations (such as overarching peace agreements or newly-drafted constitutions) are presented to the public for their approval. Though it is difficult to assess voting patterns based on gender in these instances, it does not appear as though women’s voting patterns diverged dramatically from those of men. However, prominent women’s groups have had success in campaigns intended to mobilise the wider public to vote on peace deals as evidenced in Northern Ireland. 45

Though somewhat less formal, the avenue most open to the inclusion of women and conducive to their exercise of influence is that of mass action. Women are largely responsible for many peace-oriented campaigns of mass action. Women’s groups have successfully insisted upon the commencement of peace negotiations and signing of peace agreements. Further, women’s groups have also championed mass action campaigns to create space within official peace-making practices.46

---


processes which traditionally excluded them.46

4.4 GENDER-RESPONSIVE FEATURES

Closely related to various modalities of inclusion are the ways in which the structures which facilitate peace negotiations implement certain gender-responsive and gender-sensitive features. Indeed, peace and security efforts which centre gender-responsiveness and gender-sensitivity as part of their overall conflict-related analyses help ensure gender consultants and advisors impart a degree of influence within negotiations.47

One approach to improving gender-responsiveness is to consider the ways in which budgetary and operational procedures might be revised so women are not forced out of proceedings. As mentioned, invitations to proceedings are tendered to women oftentimes as an afterthought in order to meet quotas. The inclusion of a gender-responsive approach in such cases might involve a) issuing invitations at the same time to all parties, regardless of gender, and b) creating a rapid-response fund specifically dedicated to travel and childcare expenses for women to ensure invitees have ample time to address logistics and prepare for consultations, workshops, negotiations, or other activities. These baseline features of a gender-responsive approach address several problems at once (removing financial and childcare-related barriers to travel, the lack of intentional and meaningful inclusion of women within peace proceedings and giving women equal footing within proceedings by providing them with equal preparation time) and are fairly simple to implement. Thus, altering practical elements of the peace process to be more gender-responsive has the potential to produce dividends with respect to women’s increased significance within peacebuilding.4849

4.5 GENDER-SENSITIVE FEATURES

The placement of women at the negotiation table in formal roles—and as gender advisors or legal professionals within mediation in particular—imparts a profound effect on any resulting texts with respect to the inclusion of gender-sensitive language and provisions.50 Bearing this in mind, the United Nations Department of Political Affairs suggests the infusion of gender-sensitivity and inclusion within the design of mediation and peace proceedings. The enhancement of mediation at the regional, national, and international levels with principles of gender-sensitive consultation and mediation practices promotes both the participation of women within the overall peace process and the inclusion of gender-based concerns and stipulations within subsequent agreements and

46 ibid
49 Buchanan, Cate, Adam Cooper, Cody Griggers, Lira Low, Rita Manchanda, Rebecca Peters and Antonia Potter Prentice and (2012), Women at the Peace Table Asia Pacific: From clause to effect, Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.
policies. As such, the United Nations Department of Political Affairs has compiled pragmatic strategies and tools for both individual mediators and mediation teams to use in their efforts to build gender-sensitive mediation methods. Gender sensitive features can be incorporated even in the post conflict security system reforms. As an example, one policy proposal worth further exploring is that UN peacekeeping forces, contingent on having a clean record in relation to SGBV, provide an incentive for gender-sensitive behaviour and models of good practice.

One such strategy involves the real-time implementation of monitoring, verification, and evaluation systems which identify key gender-related advancements, impediments, prospects for improvement, and gaps in achievement within the overall women, peace, and security agenda in the crucial post-conflict period in which the practical aims of a peace agreement are executed. Such mechanisms fundamentally support gender-sensitive peacebuilding by responding to both opportunities and challenges as well as by providing timely feedback to advisors, consultants, and various decisionmakers.

4.6 TRANSFER STRATEGIES

One theme which largely underpins the inculcation of gender-responsiveness and gender-sensitivity is the power of knowledge transfer. Whether information and perspectives are compared and exchanged among women’s civil society organisations, delegations, consultation meetings, workshops, or advisory forums, the transfer of that knowledge in its most complete form is key to impacting peace proceedings. Put another way, whilst these avenues for gender-based discussion might be facilitated as part of overall peace-making processes, if the knowledge, demands, and recommendations gathered from these discussions does not make its way to the negotiation table, such meetings are nothing more than exercises in virtue signalling. For consultations, workshops, advisory forums, and other such proceedings to move beyond glorified debate meetings and be truly effective, transfer strategies which preserve the essence of exchanged knowledge must be clearly established. Such transfer strategies systematically convey the results of gender-focused meetings to mediators, negotiators, and decisionmakers, thereby successfully including useful gender-based perspectives on the overarching proceedings.


52 Buchanan, Cate, Adam Cooper, Cody Griggers, Lira Low, Rita Manchanda, Rebecca Peters and Antonia Potter Prentice and (2012), Women at the Peace Table Asia Pacific: From clause to effect, Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.


5. CONCLUSION

Research has revealed that women’s peacebuilding organisations are taking lessons and good practices from conflicts from other parts of the globe, as well as the women, peace and security framework and scholarship, to build a peacebuilding infrastructure which includes the meaningful participation of women at all levels. These efforts have resulted in the preliminary inclusion of women’s concerns within subsequent resolution texts as well as the heightened participation of women in the political processes in many post conflict contexts. This policy brief used the NDs of Myanmar in comparison with those of other contexts by way of informing gaps and key takeaways from the analyses and case studies. The search for a sustainable peace in Myanmar is predicated on women’s and other gender identities’ equally meaningful participation in all national political dialogues.

In sum, the lessons show that NDs are important platforms to address gender-based inequalities and find peaceful means of resolution toward gender injustices which often play a significant role in conflict itself. However, for NDs to achieve genuine gendered results/outcomes, symbolical and ad-hoc gender inclusion which places a handful of women at the negotiation table is simply not sufficient. Such a way could not delineate and implement a gender perspective within peace processes, nor does it make the national dialogue process gender inclusive. Rather, women’s participation, concerns, insights, recommendations, and abilities must be included, structurally supported and with resources allocated at all stages of political dialogues, formal and otherwise. A true gender inclusive process is one that yields the result of a gender ‘sensitive’ approach in political dialogue’s theory, policy and design which must be underpinned by gender ‘responsive’ operational approaches that enable women’s representation and meaningful participation in all levels and sectors of NDs.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (2015),
*Women, Peace, and Security Policymaking in Myanmar*, Yangon: AGIPP.

Alliance for Gender Inclusion in Peace Process (2018),
*Gender Analysis on the Issue Based Political Dialogue’s the Resettlement, Rehabilitation, and Social Development Policy Paper*, Yangon: AGIPP.

Bell, Christine (2018), Assessing Political Power:

Buchanan, Cate, Adam Cooper, Cody Griggers, Lira Low, Rita Manchanda, Rebecca Peters and Antonia Potter Prentice and (2012), *Women at the Peace Table Asia Pacific: From clause to effect*, Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.


Centre for Development and Ethnic Studies (2019),

Cobar José Francisco Alvarado, Emma Bjertén-Günther and Yeonju Jung (2018),


ANNEX 1

Research Method and Tools
The PB6 uses a mixed research method - both quantitative and qualitative. The research has a two-part data collection process - primary and secondary. The primary data was taken from the survey data, KII, and FGDs and includes the participants of previous Political Dialogues/ National Dialogues (PDs/NDs) in Myanmar - Ethnic-Based, Issue-Based and Region-Based National Dialogues. For the secondary data sources and collection details, please see the Bibliography above.

Sampling
Purposive and stratified sampling methods for data collection were used. AGIPP will seize the opportunity to conduct surveys and KII with the participants of the CSO Peace Process Review Workshop at the end of July 2020. Total number of key informant interviews was 21 individuals, 9 males, and 12 females.

Survey
Paper surveys were deployed. Size: 10% to 15% of the participants at the CSO workshop in July. Gender ratio for survey respondents 1:1. The survey questionnaire was designed
slightly differently for male and female participants: the majority of the questions were the same but there were some gender specific questions featured in the survey questionnaires of respondents. The estimate of survey time was 1 hour for each respondent. Total number of survey respondents was 160 persons, 81 females and 79 males. Grand total was 181 individuals who were part of the NDs.

**Key informant interviews:** in-depth interviews were conducted with various stakeholders including CSOs leaders, CSO Forum participants, UCCPF Committee members and participants of a previous National Dialogue (ND) in Myanmar who have been through the PD processes - Ethnic-Based, Issue-Based and Region-Based National Dialogues. These interviews provided an opportunity to obtain a deeper picture of people’s experiences, what they consider to be gender inclusion’s challenges, opportunities, and missed opportunities to make the Myanmar ND more gender sensitive. These interviews provided an opportunity to triangulate the data gathered from the survey.

**Data Analysis**
The consultant carried out analysis of all data, notes, recordings, etc. from the fieldwork of enumerators. The analysis was conducted in NVivo to facilitate coding to distil key learning and evidence into overall trends situating the status and type of gender inclusion, if any, in the entire process. A similar process was undertaken with the secondary data. The findings discussed what experiences other parts of the world suggest to us, what the findings from the Myanmar policy dialogue indicated to the wider WPS scholarship and evidence base, and how to create enabling conditions to reduce barriers and expand opportunities for gender inclusion in the future PD in the form of recommendations.

**Types of Respondents**
For Ethnic/Region/Issue-Based ND
1. Respective EAO Leaders
2. Government (Parliament etc.)
3. Political Parties
4. CSOs Forum
5. UPDJC (for instance; Pa-Oh EAOs who are the members of UPDJC and UPDJC WC),
6. Participants at PD
7. Facilitators/Consultants
8. Documentation Team/ Note Taker

**The role of the respondents and key informants at their respective NDs**
1. Main committee member
2. Resource person
3. Facilitator
4. Documentation team member
5. Participants
## ANNEX 2

### SUMMARY OF NATIONAL DIALOGUES

(1) Ethnic-Based National-level Dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Date of Dialogue/ Summary</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Submissions</th>
<th>Number of participants Total</th>
<th>Female participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
2. Land and Natural Resources Principles  
3. Security and Protection Principles  
4. Karen National Resettlement and Social Development Principles  
5. First time, Guidelines for Building a Union Based on Democracy and Federalism | Not specified               | Not specified                      |
| 2. | Pa-O nationality, National Political Dialogue (First time) | 16-20 February, 2017 | Pa-O Self-Administered Zone, Hophone Township. | 1. Political Parties  
2. Social Fact Sheet  
3. Land & Environment Document  
4. Economic sector | 684 representatives; 1,100 people (total observers) | Not specified |
| 3. | First National Political Talks (Chin) | February 2 - March 1, 2017 | Thanitin Township, Chin State. | 1. Federal Building Principles | 652 people | 15%  
10- Males  
10- Females 3% |
| 4. | Mon nationality, National Political Dialogue | May 5-7, 2018 | Ye Township, Mon State. | 1. Federalism-Based Political Principles  
2. A document on the principles of federalism  
3. Federal Economic and Financial Principles  
4. Proposals for Land and Environmental Policy | Not specified               | Not specified                      |
(2) Region-Based National-level dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Date of Dialogue/ Summary</th>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>Submissions</th>
<th>Number of participants Total</th>
<th>Female participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>National-level political dialogue at regional level</td>
<td>April 23-25, 2017</td>
<td>Taunggyi Shan State</td>
<td>Unable to Access</td>
<td>Unable to Access</td>
<td>Unable to Access</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### (3) Issue-Based National-level dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Date of Dialogue/ Summary</th>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>Submissions</th>
<th>Number of participants Total</th>
<th>Female participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>First Civil Society Pre-Forum</td>
<td>February 21 – 23, 2017</td>
<td>Kokang Hall Taunggyi Country, Shan State.</td>
<td>The document does not exist.</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>First CSOs Forum</td>
<td>February 24 - 25, 2017</td>
<td>MICCI, Naypy-Itaw.</td>
<td>The document does not exist.</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Second session of CSO Pre-Forum</td>
<td>December 28 to 31, 2017</td>
<td>Mabel Hotel Mandalay</td>
<td>Two papers were collected. 1. Resettlement; Rehabilitation and Social Development Policy Recommendations 2. Federal Policy Paper</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Second CSOs Forum</td>
<td>January 2 – 3, 2018</td>
<td>MICCI, Naypy-Itaw.</td>
<td>Two papers were submitted to UPDJC.</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Third session of CSOs Pre-Forum</td>
<td>March 18 - 20, 2019</td>
<td>Manau, Myitkyina Township, Kachin State.</td>
<td>1. Environmental Policy Paper 2. Federal Policy Document 3. Three Land Policy Papers were consolidated.</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>