Gender and Local Politics in Myanmar:
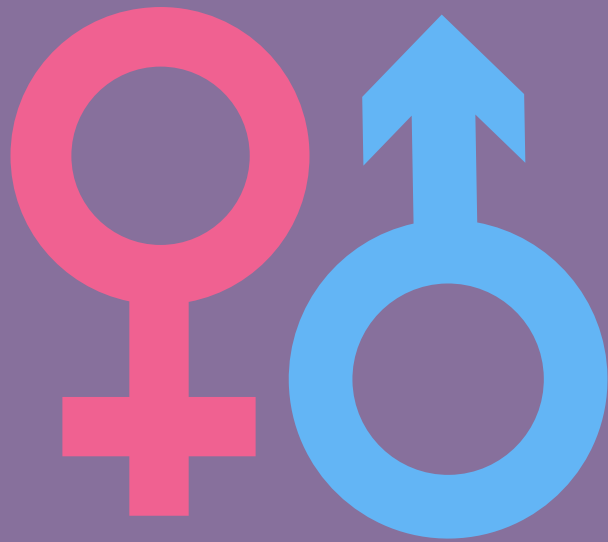
Women's and Men's Participation in Ward, Village Tract and Village Decision Making

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Abbreviations Used in this Report

10 HH	=	10 household head
100 HH	=	100 household head
CSO	=	Civil Society Organisation
DAO	=	Development Affairs Organisation
DRD	=	Department for Rural Development
EAOs	=	Ethnic Armed Organisations
FGD	=	Focus Group Discussion
GAD	=	General Administration Department
GoM	=	Government of Myanmar
MMCWA	=	Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association
MWAF	=	Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation
NMSP	=	New Mon State Party
OTH	=	'Other' community leader, e.g. a local leader that is not a W/VTA, 100 HH, 10 HH or elder
PNA	=	Pa-O National Army
PNO	=	Pa-O National Organisation
SAZ	=	Self-Administered Zone
TDAC	=	Township Development Affairs Committee
W/VTA	=	Ward/Village Tract Administrator

Executive Summary

Although formal legal, policy-making and budgetary powers in Myanmar remain highly centralised, decision making at ward, village tract and village levels has a large impact on citizens' lives – including for local development, basic administration, security and dispute resolution, and social and religious activities. This working paper explores the gender equality of politics and administration in these most local levels of governance in Myanmar, complementing another working paper recently published by EMReF that examines the gender equality of participation in Myanmar's parliamentary politics, and another forthcoming EMReF working paper that will present survey evidence on gender and political attitudes.

Women attend ward and village public meetings in large numbers, often forming the majority of meetings attendees. However, women are less likely than men to actively participate in discussions during the meetings, and young women are particularly likely to be excluded from active participation. The key local leadership positions of ward/village tract administrators, 100 household heads, and local elders are extremely male dominated, and women are still less than 1% of all the ward/village tract administrators in Myanmar. Overall, women are disproportionately likely to experience the downsides of participation (e.g. sacrificing their time to attend meetings), without experiencing the upsides (e.g. being able to influence decision making and feeling empowered).

Cultural norms influence male dominance of leadership positions and decision-making authority in ward, village tract and village governance. Particularly significant are the strong association of leadership and security provision with 'maleness', and norms that suggest that being outside of the home at night is not safe, nor appropriate for women.

Women's lesser opportunity to take on key leadership positions and to actively participate in meetings is likely to reduce their well-being. The gender inequality of representation in key leadership positions and in active participation is likely to result in decisions being made that reflect men's priorities more than women's priorities. In many local governance contexts in Myanmar, priorities remain highly gendered due to a persistent gender division of roles and responsibilities. The gender inequality of participation is also likely to negatively affect the efficiency and effectiveness of local governance.

We make the following recommendations to provide more opportunity for all residents to participate meaningfully in ward, village tract and village governance; and particularly to make participation more gender equal:

Recommendations for local leaders:
- Clearly inform local residents of when meetings will be held, and what will be discussed in the meetings.

- Ensure that meeting attendees have a chance to speak and to respond to the information that you give them. Particular attention should be given to encouraging women, and especially young women, to speak.

- Ensure that the ideas and feedback from public meetings are properly incorporated into decision making by local leaders. One practical way to promote this could be to add a compulsory agenda for leaders' meetings to include ideas and feedback from public meetings.

Recommendations for the Government of Myanmar:

- Introduce direct elections for the position of ward/village tract administrator, with universal suffrage for all local residents aged 18 and above. Consider also introducing universal suffrage for the election of the positions of 100 household head and 10 household head.

- Work to change cultural norms, so that women's leadership is no longer seen as abnormal.

- Work to change cultural norms that largely exclude women from roles as security actors, including continuing to work to increase the number of women police officers.

- Provide clear annual budget ceilings to township authorities, so that township authorities rather than higher levels of government make decisions on which projects to prioritise. Similarly, township authorities must provide a clear indication to W/VTAs of what approximate budget is available for their ward/village tract when soliciting project proposals.

- Once clear annual budget ceilings are in place, introduce rules that require consistent consultation between W/VTAs/village leaders and their communities, e.g. a requirement that public meetings are held at certain regular intervals (such as monthly or bi-monthly), or when certain types of decisions are being made.

- Require that leaders clearly communicate in advance to all community members, the time, date and topics to be discussed in local public meetings.

- Seek to promote women's active participation in these meetings, e.g. by arranging pre-meetings for women's groups and calling on them to share their views during meetings. Success can be assessed by counting the numbers of women and men that attend, and by measuring how much time women and men spend speaking in the meetings. There are easy-to-use and freely downloadable apps that facilitate this.[1]

- Ensure that local leaders have adequate funding to cover necessary travel and administrative costs.

- Introduce elected governments at township level, and assign significant decision-making and revenue collection authority to this level of government.

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[1] Two examples include GenderTimer and Time To Talk.

1. Introduction

Overview of this paper

This paper focuses on gender equality at the 'local level'[2] of politics and administration in Myanmar. It is the second in a series of three working papers published by EMREF, looking at gender and politics in Myanmar. Working paper 1 examined women's and men's opportunities to become candidates and MPs in Myanmar's union and state/region parliaments, and the impact that political participation has on their lives.[3] A forthcoming working paper 3 will present survey evidence on women's and men's political and social attitudes, political knowledge, and media use.[4] This paper complements the other two papers, by exploring women's and men's participation in decision making at ward, village tract and village levels, i.e. the most local levels of administration and politics in Myanmar. We examine who local leaders are, what they do, their future ambitions, and the factors that shape local residents' ability to become leaders. We also explore ordinary community members' ability to participate in and influence local decision making. This focus on the local level describes the dynamics of the political decision-making and governance that takes place closest to people.

Research from other countries is inconclusive as to whether it is easier or harder for women to enter local politics than to be active at the national level. Local politics are closer to home, and may therefore be easier to combine with the care responsibilities that women in many countries have. On the other hand, local politics is coded male in many contexts, and local leadership is closely connected to images of traditional male leadership and security concerns.[5]

The following parts of Section 1 discuss: why participation in local decision making matters; which leaders and decision-making bodies are present at local levels, their role, and how they are selected; and women's and men's representation in local leadership positions (based on available data). Section 2 describes the methodology used to collect the data that forms the basis of this report. Section 3 discusses how decisions get made at the local level, and who participates in decision making, and how. Section 4 presents evidence on the characteristics of the people who become local leaders, and the factors that shape this. Section 5 examines local leaders' roles in more detail, and discusses leadership styles. Section 6 looks at how local leaders are chosen, and the impact that being a leader has on their lives. Section 7 presents local leaders' future ambitions. Section 8 provides conclusions and recommendations for local leaders and for the Government of Myanmar.

Why participation in local decision making matters

Despite some limited moves towards decentralisation over the last decade, formal legal, policy-making and budgetary powers in Myanmar remain highly centralised at the union level.[6] However, in practice, decision making at ward/village tract and village level has a large impact on citizens' lives. Ward/village tract administrators (W/VTAs) and 100 household heads (100 HHs) – the main elected leaders at

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[2] N.b. In Myanmar the terms 'local governance' or 'local administration' often also include township level administration, and there are good reasons for doing so. However, for the purposes of this paper, 'local' refers to ward, village tract and village levels only, except where specified otherwise.

[3] Netina Tan and others, *Party Building and Candidate Selection: Intraparty Politics and Promoting Gender Equality in Myanmar* (Yangon: Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation, April 2020).

[4] To be published in late 2020.

[5] Bjarnegård, Elin. *Gender, Informal Institutions and Political Recruitment: Explaining Male Dominance* in *Parliamentary Representation,* Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (2013).

[6] Richard Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up: Planning and Budgeting in Myanmar* (Yangon: The Asia Foundation, July 2019), pp.19, 21; Minoletti, Paul and Nan Sandi, *Key Economic Issues for Myanmar's Peace Negotiations* (Yangon: International Growth Centre, June 2018), p.10.

community level[7] – act as key interlocutors between ordinary people and higher levels of the state.[8] Much public-service provision is organised and funded either entirely at local levels by local community organisations acting independently from the state, or by these organisations working in conjunction with the state village/village tract/ward and/or township levels. Thus, although the vast majority of the government's budget is centrally controlled, much of the de facto revenue collection and service delivery is decided at local levels. Indeed, detailed evidence from Bago Region and Kayin State suggests that households contribute twice as much money to non-governmental and semi-governmental service provision, than they pay in formal taxation collected by the Government of Myanmar (GoM).[9] Wards and villages are also the locus of many social and religious activities, and how these activities are organised as a large impact on residents' lives.[10]

The ability to participate in public life is an aspect of citizens' agency, and participating in politics and governance therefore directly impacts on citizens' well-being.[11] However, it is important to note that this depends on the quality of participation – if people are present in meetings or other decision-making bodies, but they do not have the opportunity to be heard or that body does not have the authority to make meaningful decisions, then 'participation' is unlikely to be welfare enhancing. Indeed, if people are required to give up their time to attend meetings, but are unable to influence the decisions being made, 'participation' may even reduce their welfare.

Research from many countries shows that men and women typically have different priorities for policies and budgeting.[12] New research on Myanmar shows that it is also the case here.[13] Research conducted in various developed and developing countries typically finds that women leaders are more responsive than men leaders to the preferences and needs of women (although it is important to note that this is not always the case).[14] Therefore, improving the gender equality of participation in governance bodies should typically result in policy-making decisions becoming more equitable, as they become less biased towards to the needs and preferences of male citizens.

Several studies conducted in South Asia have found that making participation in local governance bodies more gender equal can result in these bodies becoming more efficient and effective. On average, village councils in India that are led by women provide more public goods, of equal quality, at a lower price than

[7] For further details on W/VTAs and 100 HHs role, see the last part of this section.

[8] See Sections 3 and 5 below. See also, Susanne Kempel and Aung Tun, *Myanmar Ward and Village Tract Administrator Elections 2016: An Overview of the Role, the Laws and the Procedures* (Yangon: Norwegian People's Aid, January 2016), p.7.

[9] Gerard McCarthy, *Building on What Is There: Insights on Social Protection and Public Goods Provision from Central East Myanmar S-53308-MYA-1* (International Growth Centre, September 2016), p.8.

[10] See Section 3, below.

[11] Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 1999), especially p.152; World Bank, *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development* (Washington: World Bank, 2011), pp.151-52.

[12] For example, see, Amanda Clayton and Pär Zetterberg. 'Quota Shocks: Electoral Gender Qutas and Government Spending Priorities Worldwide. Journal of Politics, 80.3 (2018), Steffen Andersen and others, 'Do Women Supply More Public Goods Than Men? Preliminary Experimental Evidence from Matrilineal and Patriarchal Societies', *American Economic Review,* 98.2 (2008), p.379; Raghabendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo, 'Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a Randomized Policy Experiment in India', *Econometrica,* 72.5 (2004), p.1429; L. Edlund and R. Pande, 'Why Have Women Become Left-Wing? The Political Gender Gap and Decline in Marriage', *Quarterly Journal of Economics,* 2002, pp.917–2061; Patricia Funk and Christina Gathmann, 'Gender Gaps in Policy Making: Evidence from Direct Democracy in Switzerland', *Economic Policy,* 2015, pp.152-55, 159; J. R. Lott and L. W. Kenny, 'Did Women's Suffrage Change the Size and Scope of Government?', *Journal of Political Economy,* 107 (1999), p.1164; G. Miller, 'Women's Suffrage, Political Responsiveness, and Child Survival in American History', *Quarterly Journal of Economics,* 123, p.1287.

[13] Myanmar Institute of Gender Studies, *Gender and Participation in Budgeting in Myanmar,* (forthcoming December 2020).

[14] Kathleen A. Bratton, 'Critical Mass Theory Revisited: The Behavior and Success of Token Women in State Legislatures', Politics & Gender, 1.1 (2005), p.111; Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 'Women as Policy Makers', p.1431; Esther Duflo, 'Why Political Reservations?', *Journal of the European Economic Association,* 3.2–3 (2005), pp.674-75; Susan Franceschet and Jennifer M. Piscopo, 'Gender Quotas and Women's Substantive Representation: Lessons from Argentina', *Politics & Gender,* 4.3 (2008), pp.407-17; Jennifer L. Lawless, 'Female Candidates and Legislators', *Annual Review of Political Science,* 18.1 (2015), pp.38-59; Helena Svaleryd, 'Women's Representation and Public Spending', *European Journal of Political Economy,* 25 (2009), p.192; Irene Tinker, 'Quotas for Women in Elected Legislatures: Do They Really Empower Women?', 2004, p.539.

village councils that are led by men.[15] In the Indian state of Bihar, self-help groups that were set up by an NGO with the aim of empowering women to participate in collective action resulted in increased social capital within communities, particularly increased levels of trust and making it more likely that villagers would work together to build local infrastructure and schools.[16] In community forestry groups in India and Nepal more gender equal participation resulted in increased compliance with the rules created by these groups, and a higher rate of growth of forest cover.[17] In general, women as a group are likely to make a difference in politics when their gender roles and interests differ from that of men, and when their participation in politics is real and influential.[18] We do not have clear evidence for Myanmar on the effect that the gender equality of participation has on local governance outcomes. Nevertheless, a 2014 study stated that in several interviews with senior staff from local NGOs, it was reported that increased levels of female participation in local-level committees resulted in improved outcomes.[19]

The gender equality of political participation can affect the style of political debate and decision making. For example, in the USA, researchers found that women mayors are more willing to acknowledge and address fiscal problems; and women chairpersons of government committees tend to facilitate broader discussion among committee members, whereas men chairpersons tend to control and direct the discussion. An international meta-survey of studies on leaders in the private sector and the civil service showed noticeable differences in the leadership style of males and females, with women's leadership being more 'transformational'.[20] Several pieces of research on Myanmar have suggested that women and men leaders in Myanmar also tend to have a different leadership style, with women tending to be less confrontational, more patient, and less top-down hierarchical.[21]

This report pays particular attention to the gender equality of participation in local decision making, and how this affects people's opportunities to participate in decision making, how decisions are made, and what kind of decisions are made. However, other characteristics can also affect people's opportunities to participate in decision making including (but not limited to) age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, religion and geographical location. When conducting our quantitative analysis of interview and FGD data, we systematically looked at differences between each state and region, and between rural and urban dwellers. For our FGD data we also systematically analysed differences between FGDs with young and old participants. We refer to these differences in our analysis whenever they are particularly large or otherwise notable. We did not systematically examine other potential differences in our data, but we make occasional reference to these if they were prominent in our qualitative analysis. Further details of how we conducted data analysis are provided in Section 2.

This report frequently refers to 'participation' in local level decision making. It is important to note that this word does not translate perfectly from English into Myanmar. In English, participation often implies

[15] FLori A. Beaman and others, 'Powerful Women: Does Exposure Reduce Bias?', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics,* 124.4 (2009), pp.1518-20.

[16] Wendy Janssens, 'Women's Empowerment and the Creation of Social Capital in Indian Villages', *World Development,* 38.7 (2010), pp.983-86.

[17] Bina Agarwal, 'Gender and Forest Conservation: The Impact of Women's Participation in Community Forestry Governance', *Ecological Economics,* 68 (2009), pp.2788, 2793-95; Bina Agarwal, 'Participatory Exclusions, Community Forestry, and Gender: An Analysis for South Asia and a Conceptual Framework', *World Development,* 29.10 (2001), pp.1636-37.

[18] Anne Phillips, *The Politics of Presence,* Oxford University Press (1999), Elin Bjarnegård and Erik Melander, 'Revisiting Representation: Communism, Women in Politics and the Decline of Armed Conflict in East Asia', *International Interactions* 39.4: 558-574 (2013).

[19] Minoletti, *Women's Participation in the Subnational Governance of Myanmar,* p.22.

[20] N.b. 'Transformational leadership' involves charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. See, Alice H. Eagly, Mary C. Johannesen-Schmidt, and Marloes L. van Engen, 'Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles: A Meta-Analysis Comparing Women and Men', *Psychological Bulletin,* 129.4, especially pp.578-79.

[21] Gender Equality Network, *Taking the Lead: An Assessment of Women's Leadership Training Needs and Training Initiatives in Myanmar* (Yangon, September 2013), pp.8-15; Minoletti, *Women's Participation in the Subnational Governance of Myanmar,* p.22; Emilie Röell, *Women and Local Leadership: The Leadership Journeys of Myanmar's 42 Female Village Tract/Ward Administrators,* (Yangon, UNDP, 2015) pp.31-33.

a certain level of activity, e.g. for someone participating in a meeting to have the opportunity to ask questions or make suggestions if they wanted to. Whereas, in Myanmar the standard translation of participation (par win hmu) does not have this implication, and can often be taken to mean that someone attended a meeting to receive information but without any opportunity for active participation. In this report the English understanding of 'participation' is used, unless otherwise specified. The word 'participation' was only used in one of our interview or FGD questions, FGD question 4 – "Can you, as a group, think of any ways to get more people opportunities to participate in ward/village decision making?". This was translated as par win hmu on the FGD guides, but to make the intended meaning clear, FGD facilitators explained this as par win swe nwe hmu (being involved by participating in decision making).

Key leaders and decision-making bodies at local levels

Myanmar's subnational administrative structure is comprised of 14 states/regions, 74 districts, 330 townships, and 16,753 wards (urban) and village tracts (rural).[22] There are also five self-administered zones (SAZs), and one self-administered division – these are in between state/region and district level, and are mostly located in Shan State, although the Naga SAZ is in Sagaing Region.[23] Most village tracts are comprised of more than one village, and there are a total of 63,938 villages.[24]

Figure 1 shows the local administrative structure under GoM's framework.

Figure 1: Local Official Administrative Structure
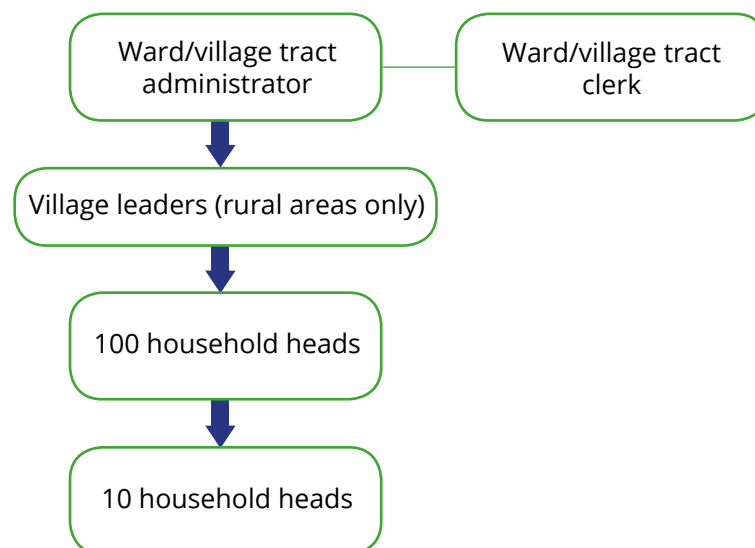
Wards/village tracts are led by ward/village tract administrators (W/VTAs) who are elected by their local community and are not civil servants. However, they are assisted in their duties by a clerk who is a civil servant from the General Administrative Department (GAD), and must report to the (unelected) GAD at township level.[25] W/VTAs also receive a monthly stipend of 70,000 MMK from GAD. In a 2014 survey, 20% of respondents said that the decisions of their W/VTA affect their lives more than any other level of government – the only level of government ranked higher was the national government (29%).[26]

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[22] Richard Batcheler, *State and Region Governments in Myanmar, 2nd Ed.* (Yangon: The Asia Foundation, October 2018), p.19.

[23] N.b. please see Figure 1 in Section 2 for the location of Shan State and Sagaing Region within Myanmar.

[24] Richard Batcheler, *State and Region Governments in Myanmar,* p.19.

[25] Batcheler, *State and Region Governments in Myanmar,* p.16; Helene Maria Kyed, Annika Pohl Harrisson, and Gerard McCarthy, *Local Democracy in Myanmar: Reflections on Ward and Village Tract Elections in 2016* (Copenhagen: DIIS, 2016), pp.2-3.

[26] The Asia Foundation, *Myanmar* 2014, p.47.

Below W/VTAs in the official administrative structure are 100 household heads (100 HHs), and below them are 10 household heads (10 HHs). These positions are also elected. Most villages only have one 100 HH, and in these villages this individual is automatically the village leader – officially now called the *kye ywa taa wan kan,*[27] although quite commonly still referred to by the old official name for village heads (*oke ka tha*).[28] In villages that are large enough to have more than one 100 HH but are part of a village tract that comprises of more than one village, the 100 HHs are required to choose one 100 HH to be *kye ywa taa wan kan.* In addition to the standardised system of W/VTAs, 100 HHs and 10 HHs, there is often a significant role in local decision making for local community elders, religious leaders, and/or leaders of local community-based organisations.

Elections for the position of W/VTA and 100 HH are not direct. Firstly, each household votes to select their 10 HH. Then, each household votes for their preferred 100 HH out of the 10 HHs. If the village tract/ward only has one 100 HH then that person automatically becomes the W/VTA. Whereas, in a village tract that has multiple 100 HHs, each household must then vote for their preferred W/VTA out of the 100HHs. [29] In addition to voting being indirect, each household only has one vote – this limits participation in the electoral process, and particularly negatively affects women, as most household heads in Myanmar are men.[30]

More than half of the responsibilities officially assigned to W/VTAs are related to security,[31] with other responsibilities including: giving permission for public ceremonies and festivals; registration of births and deaths; public health activities; fire prevention activities; land administration and land tax collection; emergency response; maintenance of local infrastructure; monitoring development projects; and coordinating with Township GAD and other government departments as required.[32] The role of 100 HHs and 10 HHs is not clearly defined in Myanmar law, but they are expected to assist the W/VTA in their safety and administrative duties.[33] Research on Thailand has suggested that it is more difficult for women to reach influential positions in local politics when the responsibilities and duties of local office holders are coded male, such as security concerns.[34]

During the last decade Myanmar has made some tentative moves towards a relatively less centralised and more 'bottom-up' planning and budgeting system. However, it is important to note how limited these changes have been:

> "…funding, policymaking and budgetary decision-making is the preserve of the Union and state/region governments, and can be described as centralised and "top-down"." [35]

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[27] https://www.president-office.gov.mm/?q=hluttaw%2Flaw%2F2016%2F12%2F06%2Fid-11347 [Accessed 31st July 2020]

[28] Source: Feedback from field researchers.

[29] Batcheler, *State and Region Governments in Myanmar,* p.16.

[30] N.b. The head of household is identified on the household registration list ('Form 10') that each household must submit to their ward/village tract office. There is no official requirement that the default head of household should be male, but cultural and social norms mean that if an adult male is permanently resident in the household, he will typically be recorded as the household head. Comprehensive data on the proportion of households that male and female is lacking, however a (non-random) 2017 survey of 393 respondents from rural households across four villages in Kayin State, Sagaing Region and Tanitharyi Region, found that 77% reported their household having a male head of household, and 22% having a female head of household. The other 1% appear to be missing observations. Sources: Hilary Faxon and Catriona Knapman, *From the Ground up: Land Governance through the Eyes of Women Farmers in Myanmar* (Yangon: Land Core Group, December 2019), p.13; author's correspondence with other researchers working in local governance in Myanmar.

[31] Action Committee for Democracy Development and Progressive Voice, Grassroots Democracy: *Analysis of the Ward or Village Tract Administration Law* (Yangon: Action Committee for Democracy Development & Progressive Voice), p.2.

[32] Batcheler, *State and Region Governments in Myanmar,* p.16; Government of Myanmar, *The Ward or Village Tract Administration Law,* 2012, Chapter VII.

[33] Batcheler, State and Region Governments in Myanmar, p.16.

[34] Bjarnegård, *Gender, Informal Institutions and Political Recruitment.*

[35] Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up,* p.19

There are no rules stipulating how W/VTAs consult with their community members in formulating proposals to submit to township level, and the extent to which this happens is also variable from place to place.[36]

As noted earlier, although the formal government planning and budgeting system is highly centralised and top-down, the high prevalence of local communities partly or entirely funding and organising service provision by themselves, provides considerable opportunity for de facto highly localised planning and budgeting. Which services are provided in this way differs from place to place, but can include: roads; irrigation; waste collection; electricity; water supply; insurance for costs related to funerals, health care or fire damage.[37] Groups for organising community social and religious events are found in almost all communities.[38] Although these various service provision, social and religious groups are separate from formal government structures, they quite often include the W/VTA, 100 HHs and/or 10 HHs.[39]

In addition to service provision by GoM and by communities themselves, in some locations in Myanmar Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) play significant roles as service providers and governance actors, providing services such as education, health, justice, security, mining and forestry management, land registration, and agricultural promotion.[40] Militias that are aligned with the Tatmadaw can also play a significant role as governance actors, although the scope of their activities is often narrower than that of EAOs. Both EAOs and militias can affect local governance arrangements, and for example in our study areas: i) several of the villages in Mon State are 'mixed authority' areas – i.e. they have a governance presence of both GoM and an EAO (in these cases either the Karen National Union – KNU, or New Mon State Party – NMSP); while all of Hsi Hseng Township in southern Shan State has a strong governance presence of the militia the Pa-O National Army (PNA).[41]

In recent years village-level committees have been established in many rural areas as part of development programmes initiated by the union government. Perhaps most prominent of these are the committees set up as part of the Enhancing Rural Livelihoods and Incomes Project, the National Community Driven Development Programme (NCDDP), and the Village Development Planning project, and the Mya Sein Yaung program. These committees are not found in any urban areas, and are not present in all villages. However, where they are present they provide the opportunity for village level committees comprised of local residents to have direct meaningful input on how government funds are allocated.[42] One other source of government funding that allows for decision making at local levels is the Constituency Development Fund, which is present in all townships in Myanmar – however, how this fund is spent is decided on at the township level by a committee including local MPs and staff from township departments, and there is no explicit requirement that this committee consults with ward/village tract/village levels.[43]

The Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA) and Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAF) were both set up during the SLORC/SPDC period, and had an active presence in many wards and villages throughout Myanmar.[44] Although these organisations claimed to be non-governmental, they

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[36] Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up: Planning and Budgeting in Myanmar,* p.27.

[37] McCarthy, *Building on What Is There; Minoletti, Paul, Fiscal Decentralisation and National Reconciliation in Myanmar: Key Issues and Avenues for Reform* (International Growth Centre, 2016), pp.8-9.

[38] See Section 3 below.

[39] Richard Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up: Planning and Budgeting in Myanmar* (Yangon: The Asia Foundation, July 2019), p.29.

[40] Kim Jolliffe, *Ethnic Armed Conflict and Territorial Administration in Myanmar* (Yangon: The Asia Foundation, 2015), pp.46-81.

[41] See Section 2 for further details.

[42] See Section 3, below. See also, Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up,* p.22.

[43] Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up: Planning and Budgeting in Myanmar,* pp.15, 26.

[44] http://www.mmcwa-myanmar.org/about-mmcwa [Accessed 18th August 2020];
http://www.mwaf.org.mm/en/ [Accessed 18th August 2020].

had close links to the military-linked Union Solidarity and Development Party, and its predecessor the Union Solidarity and Development Association.[45] The MMCWA and MWAF have both become less prominent over the last decade, although still have an active presence in some locations. The most common types of women's groups at local level are independent community groups that are focused on social or religious activities.[46]

Women's and men's representation in local leadership positions

Despite an increase since the first W/VTA elections in 2012, women are still less than 1% of W/VTAs across Myanmar.[47] This is considerably lower than the proportion of MPs that are women – i.e. around 10% in both the union and the state/region parliaments.[48] No data has been published on the proportion of women and men in the position of 100 HH and 10 HH. Impressionistic evidence from our fieldwork indicates that a large majority of 100 HHs are men. Men also appear to be the majority of 10 HHs, although women are more frequently found in this position than in W/VTA or 100 HH. Committees at local level also tend to be male dominated,[49] although an exception to this are the committees created for NCDDP, which have a quota mandating 50:50 representation.

Moving Forward

Moving forward in this report, we will focus on a number of issues relating to women's and men's abilities to participate in local level decision making as leaders and as active participants in public life. As this introduction has emphasized, such participation has important implications for individual agency and well-being; what decisions are made and whose interests these reflect; the effectiveness of rulemaking and implementation; and the style of local governance and decision making. This paper explores the extent to which residents in Myanmar are able to participate in the decision making that affects their political, social, cultural and economic lives. Our analysis particularly explores the extent to which the opportunity to participate differs between women and men, while also looking at differences by age, education level, socio-economic status and geographical location. One limitation of our study is that there is little analysis of how religious and ethnic differences may affect participation within local communities. Following a section on our methodology, this report will present the results from interviews and focus group discussions about how decisions are made in local politics in Myanmar, what leaders' backgrounds and motivations are, local leaders' roles and leadership styles, experiences from local leadership, and leaders' future ambitions. The report ends with concluding remarks followed by recommendations.

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[45] Paul Minoletti, *Gender (in)Equality in the Governance of Myanmar: Past, Present, and Potential Strategies for Change* (Yangon: The Asia Foundation, April 2016), pp.13-14.

[46] See Section 3, below.

[47] Batcheler, S*tate and Region Governments in Myanmar, 2nd Ed.,* p.44; Paul Minoletti, *Gender (in)Equality in the Governance of Myanmar: Past, Present, and Potential Strategies for Change* (Yangon: The Asia Foundation, April 2016), p.8.

[48] Tan and others, *Party Building and Candidate Selection*, p.8.

[49] Paul Minoletti, *Gender Budgeting in Myanmar* (Yangon: ActionAid, CARE, Oxfam and WON, Unpublished 2015), pp.16-17.

2. Methodology

This study is primarily based on data collected from 99 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 98 semi-structured interviews conducted in wards and villages in Ayeyarwady Region, Mandalay Region, Mon State, and southern Shan State, from September to November 2019. The location of these states and regions is shown below in Figure 2. In each state and region we visited three townships, and in each township one ward and one village. The three townships in Ayeyarwady Region were Kyaunggone, Ngaputaw and Nyaungdone; the three townships in Mandalay Region were Ta-Da-U, Thabeikkyin and Singu; the three townships in Mon State were Bilin, Kyaikmaraw, and Kyaikto; and the three townships in southern Shan State were Hsi Hseng, Nyaungshwe and Taunggyi.

Figure 2: Map of Myanmar's States and Regions

Source: CartoGIS Services, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University <https://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/mapsonline/base-maps/myanmar-statesregions> [Accessed 1st September 2020]

The states and regions chosen for our study were intended to reflect a variety of geographical, economic and cultural features. The choice of our four states/regions was also informed by where we would be able to get access to conduct this qualitative research, and the accompanying survey.[50] Due to ongoing conflict, and the difficulty this poses for obtaining access to safely conduct research across multiple randomly selected townships, Kachin State, Rakhine State, and northern Shan State were not considered as study areas. After we had chosen our study states/regions, the choice of townships, ward/village tracts and villages was done via random selection.

All of the areas covered in our study are under the administration of GoM, and have the standard structure of W/VTA, 100 HH and 10 HH described in Section 1. However, in some rural areas of Mon State ethnic armed organisations also have a governance presence, and for example the New Mon State Party was present in the village we studied in Kyaikmaraw Township. Hsi Hseng Township is part of the Pa-O SAZ, and although the W/VTA, 100 HH and 10 HH structure of local governance is found here, the same as other GoM areas, the PNA has a parallel governance system covering all villages and plays a significant role in local governance.[51]

The research design was to conduct a total of 96 FGDs, with four FGDs in each ward and village –each one with: i) 'old' females; ii) 'old' males; iii) 'young' females; iv) 'young' males. 'Young' refers to age 18-34, and 'old' means age 35 upwards. In practice we completed all 96 FGDs as per the research design plus three additional FGDs, for a total of 99 FGDs.[52]

There were between five and seven participants – our target number – in 75% of our FGDs. In 9% of our FGDs there were less than five participants, and in 16% there were more than seven participants. The minimum number of participants in any of our FGDs was 3, and the maximum number was 15. The FGD discussion guides covered: how decisions are made at local levels; what local leaders do for their communities; what opportunities residents have to participate in decision making; residents' views on women leaders; and residents' views on desired qualities in leaders more broadly. In most of the wards and villages in our study, the W/VTA, 100 HHs and/or community elders helped us to find FGD participants. However, there were also some instances in which the field researchers walked through the ward/village to find potential participants on the street or in their homes. The FGDs were conducted in W/VTA's offices, W/VTA's houses, monasteries, and community halls.

In each ward/village in our study, in addition to the FGDs, we also planned to conduct semi-structured interviews with four interviewees: one W/VTA; one VA or 100 HH; one 10 HH or elder; and one leader of a community group (OTH). In practice, we were not always able to interview exactly 1 of each of these categories in each ward/village, and our final sample consisted of 23 W/VTAs, 37 100 HHs, 14 10 HHs, 9 elders and 15 OTHs. Further, the category of OTH includes not only leaders of community groups (such as women's groups, local development organisations, loans groups, religious and social groups) but also two members of the local election/voting commission, and one village clerk.

We would ideally have liked approximately equal numbers of men and women interviewees for each position. However, because very few women are found in the positions of W/VTA, 100 HH or elder, and

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[50] Further details on the survey, including the random selection of townships, wards, village tracts, and villages, will be provided in Working Paper 3, (forthcoming, late 2020).

[51] Kim Jolliffe, *Ethnic Armed Conflict and Territorial Administration in Myanmar* (Yangon: The Asia Foundation, 2015), p.64.

[52] N.b. The three additional FGDs were: i) with young females in a ward in Singu Township, Mandalay Region; ii) with old males in a village in Kyaikto Township, Mon State; and iii) with young males from a ward in Kyaikto Township, Mon State. They were basically conducted as extra as there were too large number of participants came to join an FGD.

to a lesser extent as 10 HH or OTH leaders, it was not possible to achieve this. Women are only 28% of the total number of interviewees, and distributed unevenly between different categories, e.g. 9% of W/VTA interviewees, 16% of 100 HH interviewees, 57% of 10 HH interviewees, 22% of elders interviewees, and 60% of OTH interviewees are women. Of these categories, the only one that we have comprehensive national data on the actual gender composition is for W/VTAs, where women are less than 1% of the national total.[53] Therefore, although women are only a small minority of our sample of W/VTAs, women are highly overrepresented in our sample relative to the national average.

We do not have comparison data for the other categories of local leaders, but given that the field researchers made a deliberate effort to try and interview around 50:50 women and men interviewees as far as possible, it is likely that women are also overrepresented in these positions relative to the national average. The field researchers reported having a particular difficulty finding women W/VTAs, 100 HHs and elders. The imbalance between men and women and women in our sample means that we must be careful as to how we interpret simple gender differences in our interview data, e.g. apparent differences between women and men may be explained by the women and men in our sample being disproportionately likely to hold different positions. For responses where this confounding effect was large, we have explained this in our analysis below.

When the field research teams arrived in the ward/village their first step was to contact the W/VTA or village leader. The researchers briefed this individual on our research plans, asked for their permission in conducting the research, and assistance in identifying interviewees and FGD participants. Most of the W/VTAs and village leaders were very supportive and provided assistance to the researchers. In most cases, the ward and village administrators, 100 HH leaders and including elders in the community helped the researchers in recruiting interviewees and FGD participants. Local CSO members and members of women's affairs groups in the community level sometimes also helped the researchers in recruiting.

Among 98 interviewees across two states and regions, 63% are ethnic Bamar, 34% are non-Bamar, and 3% are mixed Bamar and non-Bamar. 58% of our FGD were conducted with Bamar participants only; 27% with participants that were all members of a single non-Bamar ethnic group (e.g. Mon, Pa-O, Shan etc); and the rest were conducted with participants from more than one ethnicity. No accurate data is available on the ethnic composition of Myanmar's population, but it is commonly suggested that Bamar are around 60-65% of the population, and so the composition of the interviewees and FGDs is broadly representative of the national population in terms of ethnicity.

All of the FGDs and interviews followed guides were first written in English and then translated into Myanmar. These guides were piloted in Myanmar, and then revised. The FGD and interview guides can be found in the appendices of this report. In Ayeyarwady Region and Mandalay Region all of the interviews and FGDs were conducted solely in Myanmar language. In Mon State all of the interviews and all but one of the FGDs were conducted solely in Myanmar language. However, in one rural FGD in Mon State it was necessary to do some translation into Mon language – this had not been anticipated by the field team, and so this translation was done by the local W/VTA, which may have affected how some participants answered certain questions. Translation into different languages was more commonly performed in Shan State: i) in all of the interviews and FGDs conducted with Pa-O participants in rural areas, oral translation between Myanmar and Pa-O was performed; ii) in one FGD with Pa-O participants in an urban area, oral translation between Myanmar and Pa-O was performed; iii) for two FGDs with Inn Thar participants, oral translation between Myanmar and Inn Thar was performed. All of the translation in

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[53] See Section 1.

southern Shan State was performed by translators that had been hired specifically for that purpose. The southern Shan State translators were given a half-day workshop prior to the fieldwork, that explained our research goals, key concepts of the study, research ethics, their role as translators, and going through the interview and FGD guides.

The FGDs were organized as group interviews guided by a facilitator and a pre-prepared FGD guide. The FGDs were thus fairly structured and functioned more as sources of information about local decision making than as sites of discussion, agreement and contestation. The questions in the FGD guide encouraged discussion as a group, and focused on collection information about de facto decision-making as well as on identifying opportunities and hurdles for participation in local politics.[54] The training given to focus group facilitators emphasised that their role as facilitators is not the same as an interviewer – as focus group facilitators their role is to encourage, feed and observe discussion, and as far as possible to encourage discussion between participants rather than with the facilitator. At the beginning of the focus group all participants were told that the purpose of the focus group was to discuss political issues in Myanmar.

Two of the questions on our FGD guide tended to produce fairly binary yes/no responses, e.g. question 9b – "Please discuss if the current number of women in leadership positions in your 10 households/100 households/ward/village tract leadership positions is satisfactory?"; and question 11 – "Do you think women and men have the same ability to be THE village/ward leader?" Our analysis of these questions explicitly compares whether or not participants within an individual FGD all agreed with one another, or whether there was some disagreement. However, due to time constraints, the differences within individual FGDs in participants' responses to the other questions have not been fully explored. We did not distinguish between whether a point was made by one participant, multiple participants, or agreed on by all participants, except in cases where there was explicit disagreement between participants. Some limited attempts have been made to compare different responses to the same question from different FGDs from the same ward/village, and to compare FGD responses to interview responses from the same wards/villages. However, this was only done for a few questions, and has not been done systematically or comprehensively. There is considerable scope for more detailed study of these datasets in future research.

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[54] The FGD guide can be found in the appendix.

3. How do decisions get made at local levels? Who participates in this?

Communities' influence on government planning and budgeting

Although GoM now claims to have a bottom-up planning and budgeting system in place, in most cases this means integrating inputs from township level departments into the union and state/region budgeting processes, without paying close attention to how township departments produce these suggestions. Township authorities are unelected, and with the exception of Development Affairs Organisations (DAOs), do not have control over their own revenues, or autonomy over their spending. Township departments are accountable upwards, primarily to union level, and typically do little to solicit input from community level.[55] Previous and current research on Myanmar has found that some W/VTAs feel that they have little or no influence on township planning and budgeting, and that in many wards and villages local residents feel that government planning and budgeting is top-down, with little or no opportunity for inputs from the community.[56] Qualitative research suggest that public meetings are more commonly held if communities are providing a service themselves or if an outside NGO is involved in providing the service, than for GoM budgeting and service delivery.[57]

In contrast to the general trend for township departments to do little to consult with communities on planning and budgeting, several large-scale projects under the DRD establish committees at village level to engage in meaningful local development planning, e.g. the Enhancing Rural Livelihoods and Incomes Project, NCDDP, and the Village Development Planning project.[58] The DRD's mya sein yaung program allows village level committees to decide how to allocate low-cost loans within their communities, in line with certain guidelines.[59] A possible vehicle for facilitating bottom-up planning and budgeting in urban areas is the Township Development Affairs Committees (TDACs) – these are elected bodies that work with DAOs on the annual planning and budgeting of resources for municipal service provision. However, how TDAC members are elected/selected and how much influence they have on DAOs is quite variable, and there are no established mechanisms for how, when or in which circumstances they should consult with communities, or indeed whether they should consult with communities at all.[60]

In many townships W/VTAs are now able to submit a list of community needs to township level authorities to include in the township annual budgeting process. W/VTAs are also able to submit proposals for how the township Constituency Development Fund and Poverty Reduction Fund should be allocated. However, the opportunity for W/VTAs to do this is not present in all townships, and where it is present there is no general policy specifying how or if W/VTAs should consult with their communities in formulating their suggestions.[61] Another major barrier to effective 'bottom-up' planning and budgeting is that township authorities are not given clear budget ceilings, and as a result tend to send long 'wish lists' of proposed projects to state/region and union levels, with the prioritisation of which projects should receive funding being carried out at these higher levels of the state.[62]

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[55] Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up: Planning and Budgeting in Myanmar,* p.37.

[56] Minoletti, *Gender Budgeting in Myanmar,* pp.13-18; Myanmar Institute of Gender Studies, *Gender and Participation in Budgeting in Myanmar.*

[57] Myanmar Institute of Gender Studies, *Gender and Participation in Budgeting in Myanmar.* N.b. NGO service provision is often done in conjunction with GoM, however the presence of an NGO is often accompanied by more participatory approaches to planning and budgeting.

[58] Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up: Planning and Budgeting in Myanmar,* pp.23, 29, 37.

[59] Michael P Griffiths and others, *Poverty Reduction through Rural Development: The Evergreen Village Project* (Yangon: Social Policy and Poverty Research Group & Ecodev Myanmar, June 2016), p.8.

[60] Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up: Planning and Budgeting in Myanmar,* p.15.

[61] Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up: Planning and Budgeting in Myanmar,* pp.55-56.

[62] Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up: Planning and Budgeting in Myanmar,* p.60.

How are decisions made at local level and who participates? [63]

In all of the villages and wards covered in this study, at least some of the FGDs described public meetings of some kind occurring. However, when we asked interviewees, "How do you make decisions for your community?" only around 40% of W/VTAs and 55% of 100 HHs mentioned holding public meetings.[64] This suggests that although public meetings of some sort are held in all communities in our study, many local leaders do not see these meetings as being key bodies for decision making. Further, as discussed later in this section, in some wards and villages public meetings are only held for religious and/or social activities, and W/VTAs and 100 HHs may not necessarily play a prominent role in these meetings. Similar to the findings from our interviews, a 2019 study reported that most of the W/VTAs they interviewed identify local wants and needs to submit to the government planning and budgeting process through meetings with other local leaders (e.g. village leaders, 100 HHs, 10 HHs, ward/village elders, and/or religious leaders), with only a minority of W/VTAs consulting more widely via meetings with local CBOs and/or public meetings.[65]

Both of the female W/VTAs in our study mentioned holding public meetings as a way in which they make decisions for the community, compared to only 35% of male W/VTAs. However, the numbers are too small to draw firm conclusions on whether women W/VTAs are more likely than men W/VTAs to hold public meetings, and among our 100 HH interviewees women were no more likely than men to describe holding public meetings.

Our interview data suggests that public participation tends to be more frequent and meaningful in rural than urban areas. It is logistically more complicated to hold public meetings in village tracts than wards, because wards are geographically concentrated, whereas village tracts typically cover multiple villages and so require greater effort and possible expense for residents to attend meetings. Despite this logistical barrier for rural areas, village tract and ward administrators were approximately equally likely to say that they held public meetings as a way of making decisions for their community (45%). Rural 100 HHs only cover a single village, so there is not much of a difference between urban and rural areas in the expense and effort to attend meetings organised by 100 HHs. Among the 100 HHs in our sample, those from rural areas (67%) were more likely than those from urban areas (45%) to mention holding public meetings as a way in which they make decisions for their community. Similarly, nationwide surveys conducted in 2014 and 2016 found that rural residents were more likely than urban residents to report having attended ward/village-tract/community level meetings.[66]

Most of the W/VTAs that did not describe holding public meetings when they were asked how they make decisions for their community, described making decisions in discussions that included 100 HHs and/or elders.[67]   One of these also mentioned 10 HHs as being involved in these discussions.[68] Another said that, "...those who can speak well and give useful suggestions about our ward's development are also included."[69]   Somewhat surprisingly, none of the W/VTAs and only one 100 HH mentioned local religious

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[63] This analysis mainly builds on FGD Q3 – "Please describe how communal decisions are made in this ward/village"; FGD Q4 – "Can you, as a group, think of any ways to give more people opportunities to participate in village decision making?"; interview Q14 – "How do you make decisions for your community?"; interview Q15 – "What opportunities do your community have to participate in decision-making?"; interview Q16 – "Are community meetings held in your ward/village? If so, how regular are they? Who attends the meetings?"

[64] Any interviewee that mentioned holding public meetings or consulting or residents for any reason or any frequency was allocated to this category, even if it appears from their responses that most important decisions are not made in this manner.

[65] Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up: Planning and Budgeting in Myanmar.*

[66] PACE, *Public Opinion on Elections and the Expectations of the New Government,* pp.30; UNDP, *The State of Local Governance: Trends in Myanmar* (Yangon, 2015), p.51.

[67] Interviews HM01, HM17, HM29, LR20, LR24, LR25, SS13, SS22, SS24, SS34.

[68]   Interviews HM17.

[69] Interview SS34.

leaders as being involved in them making decisions for their community.[70] A W/VTA from Mon State said that officials from the relevant government department will be included in certain cases, e.g.

> "…in the difficult cases such as land grabbing by an armed group [an EAO active in that area], I discuss it with the 100 household leaders and township land committee and solve this problem." (Male, W/VTA, Mon State) [71]

A W/VTA from Ayeyarwady Region gave a worrying admission of only making decisions with a small circle of like-minded individuals, despite this approach being unpopular with local residents:

> "Most of the time, I discuss with four or five people that have the same opinion as me. I admit that the villagers complain about that. I told them I will invite you next time, but do not be too busy [to attend]." (Male, W/VTA, Ayeyarwady Region)[72]

The problem in some communities of a small group of local elites dominating local decision making has also been noted in previous research on Myanmar.[73] Further, an FGD participant in our study described how this occurring even in communities that hold public meetings:

> "Rich people have dominated in our community meetings from long ago till now. If we complain about something at the meeting, they think we are troublemakers. We are trying to change this situation." (FGD with old rural women, Ayeyarwady Region)[74]

There is no policy in Myanmar requiring W/VTAs, 100 HHs or 10 HHs to hold public meetings at a particular frequency (such as once a month), or when certain types of decisions are being made. Not surprisingly, previous research has found that this results in considerable variation between different wards/village tracts/villages as to how often they have meetings and for what purposes meetings are held.[75] The interview data presented above also indicates considerable variation in the importance that local leaders give to public meetings, and how frequently they hold them. Some interviewees described community meetings only being held for religious and social occasions (e.g. celebrations for specific religious days, novitation ceremonies, and/or funerals);[76] whereas in other villages and wards community meetings are also held to discuss local development and service delivery issues.[77]

FGDs from some wards/villages consistently describe meetings being held quite frequently,[78] but FGD in some other wards/villages consistently describe meetings being held only very infrequently.[79] Whereas, in some wards/villages different FGDs gave differing accounts of how often meetings are held and why.[80]

Many societies do not clearly draw the line between social/political meetings and religious/ceremonial meetings, and this lack of distinction is also reflected in our data. Our FGD respondents may have been

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[70] Interview HM19.

[71] Interview HM29. Having to solve land grabbing cases was also mentioned by the 100 HH from this village – interview HM30.

[72] Interview SS19.

[73] Minoletti, *Gender Budgeting in Myanmar,* p.17.

[74] FGD HM23.

[75] Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up,* pp.26-28; Minoletti, *Gender Budgeting in Myanmar,* pp.16-17.

[76] For example, see interviews HM12, HM19, HM25, HM26.

[77] For example, see interviews HM13, HM18, HM27, LR23, LR26, SS02.

[78] For example, see FGDs from village/ward codes 2, 13 and 24. Although note that for village 2, FGD HM07 (old women) is not in full agreement.

[79] For example, see FGDs from village/ward codes 1, 6, 15.

[80] For example, see FGDs from ward code 5.

primed to talk more about social and religious activities than would otherwise have been the case, by one of the 'ice-breaking' discussion topics in the FGDs being, "Please describe the festivals that you celebrate in your ward/village every year." [81] However, interviewees were not primed at all on social or religious activities, and still frequently mentioned these in the context of local decision making and public meetings. The exploration of the distinction and interrelationship between social/political meetings and religious/ceremonial meetings, and what this entails for the gender dimension of local politics should be further explored in future studies.

Some interviewees described public meetings being more common now than in the past, and the introduction of elections for W/VTAs having made them more accountable to the local population:

> "...The reality is that, nowadays the ward administrators cannot make decision by their own because the public/community voted for them, so they have to listen to the communities' voices." (Female OTH, Mandalay Region) [82]

> "Yes, of course, the villagers can involve in decision making. For instance, if we get funding to build a well, we call all the villagers to a meeting and explain. We make decisions based on the agreement of villagers and we can't use power [i.e. we can't dictate to them] because of democracy era. All villagers can participate and discuss in the meetings." (Male 100 HH, Shan State) [83]

A woman interviewee from Mon State said that the NCDDP had significantly raised opportunities for community participation in decision making:

> "People can participate and talk freely about their opinion and suggestions during meetings. Lately we usually hold meetings to discuss about Community Driven Committee's projects [i.e. NCDDP]. In previous times, we rarely held meetings, only occasionally for training/ information sharing sessions concerned with health and farming issues. [These days] during meetings, decisions are made all inclusively." (Female 10 HH, Mon State)[84]

The NCDDP is designed to give village tract and village level committees that are set up especially for the project influence over spending decisions that affect their communities, and this opportunity is clearly appreciated by the female 10 HH cited above. However, as noted earlier in this section (and in section 1) the top-down nature of much of Myanmar's planning and budgeting, means the wards/village tracts/ villages often have little or no say on government planning and budgeting. A previous study has found that this can be a barrier to W/VTAs holding more public meetings, as some W/VTAs do not want to raise unrealistic hopes among community members by holding a meeting, if they are unable to actually influence decision making at higher levels.[85]

Several 100 HH and 10 HH interviewees described public meetings as leaders simply telling attendees what decisions have been made, with no opportunity for feedback.[86] A small number of FGDs also

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[81] IN.b. The other ice-breaking discussion topic was " Please describe the changes you have seen in your ward/village over the last five years." The ice-breaking discussion topics were primarily intended to warm up the participants and get them talking, and the responses to these questions have not been analysed for this paper.
[82] Interview LR10.
[83] Interview SS07.
[84] Interview HM32.
[85] Batcheler, Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up: Planning and Budgeting in Myanmar, p.27.
[86] For example, see interviews HM03, HM05, HM11, HM12, HM18.

described meetings as having little or no active participation from attendees, for example:

> "They [all of the leaders] show their decision and ask for our agreement. If there is a person who disagrees with the decision so they do not implement the proposal. Activities have to be done of the matters by all of the villager's agreement … There is no a person who is disagrees with the decision because our headman and other leaders are always doing the right things and suitable things for our village." (FGD with young rural women, Shan State)[87]

> "The ward administrator holds community meetings and invites us. He makes the decision at the meeting. We can say whether we agree with him or not. However, it's rare [for anyone] to complain to the leader. We all mostly accept their ideas." (FGD with old urban women, Mon State) [88]

> "The leaders give the chance to discuss at the meeting. However the villagers don't discuss. We all agree with what they say in the meeting." [89] (FGD with old rural men, Ayeyarwady Region)

Nevertheless, this meeting style appears not to be the norm, and most FGDs described there being some opportunity for meeting attendees to object to proposals and/or to make their own suggestions.

A total of 14 FGDs across 6 wards and 3 villages mentioned that for certain types of meetings called by the W/VTA or 100 HH it is compulsory for one member of each household to attend.[90] We did not specifically ask about this in our FGDs or interviews, so we cannot be sure of how widespread this practice is, or where it is particularly common. However, 55% of the villages/wards that this was reported in our FGDs were in Mandalay Region,[91] whereas this mentioned in FGDs in only two wards and one village in Ayeyarwady Region,[92] one ward in southern Shan State,[93] and not at all in Mon State. Two interviewees from the same village in Mandalay Region said that their VTA takes the draconian step of fining any households that fail to attend meetings.[94] These rules are initiated by W/VTAs, village leaders and/or communities themselves – they are not a requirement imposed by higher levels of GoM.

When FGD participants were asked if they could think of any ways to give more people opportunities to participate in village decision making, the most common responses were: do a better job of informing residents of when meetings are to be held (17% of FGDs); for leaders to listen more to community members opinions before making final decisions (12% of FGDs); to provide residents with material incentives for attending, such as free mosquito nets or access to low interest loans (9% of FGDs). A material incentive being necessary to improve attendance suggests that most meetings are currently not deciding on issues that matter to local residents, and/or are not providing opportunities for active participation in decision making. Men's FGDs were twice as likely as women's FGDs to say that leaders should listen more to community members' opinions before making final decisions, but there was no significant gender difference for suggesting doing a better job of informing residents or providing material incentives.

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[87] FGD HM05.

[88] FGD HM19.

[89] FGD HM21.

[90] FGDs HM09, HM12, HM15, HM20, LR10, LR11, LR12, LR14, LR16, LR19, LR21, LR22, SS04, SS13.

[91] FGDs HM09, HM12, HM15, HM20, LR10, LR11, LR12, LR14, LR16, SS13.

[92] FGDs HM20, LR19, LR21, LR22.

[93] FGD SS04.

[94] Interviews HM14, HM15.

Gender Differences in Participation in Meetings[95]

A number of our interviewees and FGDs said that women tend to speak less than men in public meetings. [96] None of our interviewees or FGDs said that women consistently talk more than men in meetings, although two interviewees said that women might speak more than men for certain topics, e.g. microfinance and informal moneylenders,[97] and some social and religious ceremonies.[98] Similarly, one FGD participant and one interviewee noted that whether more women or men attend meetings depends on what is being discussed, e.g. for example if security or land issues are being discussed, then the attendees will mainly be male, while health issues attract more women participants.[99] The status and/or family connections of women can also make a difference – one participant in an FGD with old men in southern Shan State described how most meeting participants stay silent, but the most active participants are the wives of 100 HHs.[100]

Women's FGDs were more likely than men's FGDs to describe having a lack of agency in meetings,[101] for example:

> "In all meetings, most of the attendants just simply sit and listen and then they go back home." (FGD with old urban women, southern Shan State)[102]

> "There is no one that disagrees with the decisions made by our headman and other leaders, because they are are always doing the right and suitable things for our village." (FGD with young rural women, southern Shan State)[103]

> "The villagers mostly accept the leaders' decisions because we have no education and don't understand everything easily. Therefore, we trust them and accept their decisions and ideas." (FGD with old rural women, southern Shan State)[104]

> "The local leaders tell their [proposed] decision and ask for our agreement, and they should [in theory] make the decision with all of the villager's agreement … However, [in practice] there is nobody that disagrees with their decisions because our headman and other leaders are always doing the right and suitable things for our village." (FGD with young rural women, Mandalay Region)[105]

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[95] This analysis mainly builds on FGD Q3 – "Please describe how communal decisions are made in this ward/village"; FGD Q9a – "Are there any women Ward/Village Tract Administrator/Village Head/100 Household Head/10 Household Head in your community?"; FGD Q10 – "Please work together as a group to describe the most active women's group in your village/ward? What do they do? What do you think of their role in your village/ward?"; interview Q14 – "How do you make decisions for your community?"; interview Q15 – "What opportunities do your community have to participate in decision-making?"; interview Q16 – "Are community meetings held in your ward/village? If so, how regular are they? Who attends the meetings?".

[96] For example, see FGDs HM03, HM12, HM15, HM16, HM25, HM27, HM29, LR12, SS13, SS23, q.3; interviews LR01, q.15; interviews HM01, HM02, HM03, HM04, HM06, HM22, LR02, LR03, LR15, SS30, q.16.

[97] Interview SS11.

[98] Interview HM15.

[99] FGD SS30, interview HM32.

[100] FGD HM04.

[101] N.b. Although note that this was mentioned by a small number of men's FGDs as well. For example, an FGD with old urban men in southern Shan State said that, "Since we are weak in education there are only few people who dare to speak out in meetings." (FGD HM04).

[102] FGD HM03.

[103] FGD HM05.

[104] FGD HM07.

[105] FGD HM14.

However, a smaller number of men's FGDs also made similar comments, for example:

> "Most of us are weak in education, so there are only a few people who dare to speak out in meetings." (FGD with old urban men, southern Shan State)[106]

> "Many of us are uneducated so it is better that only the community leaders decide." (FGD with old urban men, Mon State)[107]

Survey evidence shows that young people are less likely to attend community meetings than old people. [108] Our evidence suggests that young women are particularly likely to be excluded from decision making, for example in one ward in Ayeyarwady Region the FGD participants in the FGDs with old men, old women, and young men all described attending community meetings,[109] but participants in the FGD with young women said that they had never been invited.[110] In a village in the same township, the young and old men FGDs describe being able to actively participate in the meetings,[111] and participants in the old women's FGD said 'We discuss together in the meetings … we give suggestions in the meetings',[112] whereas participants in the young women's FGD said that they only attend meetings if other family members are too busy, and that, "Most of the members of the village administration committee are male, and the meeting participants are just listeners."[113]

Although we see a general tendency for women, and especially young women, to have less active participation than men, it is important to remember that these are general tendencies, and are not prescriptive for everyone. One male W/VTA from a ward in Mandalay Region described how:

> "There are women who participate in discussion, even including street vendors [i.e. women of low socio-economic status] – previously they did not contribute in discussions, but now they speak and are listened to."[114] (Male, W/VTA, Mandalay Region)

26 of our FGDs clearly indicated whether more women or men tend to attend public meetings in their ward/village – 85% of these said that more women than men attend,[115] with only 15% saying that more men than women attend.[116] Similarly, of the 46 interviewees that specified the approximate gender balance of meeting attendees in their ward/village, 63% said that more women than men attend; 20% said more men than women attend; and 17% said either that equal numbers of men and women attend, or that sometimes more men attend and sometimes more women attend. Among our interviewees, women (80%) were more likely than men (58%) to say that more women than men to attend meetings. And, among our FGDs the only FGDs to say that more men than women attend public meetings were men's FGDs.

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[106] FGD HM04.

[107] FGD HM25.

[108] PACE, *Public Opinion on Elections and the Expectations of the New Government,* p.30. N.b. this survey used the same definition as young and old as is used throughout our paper, e.g. young = age 18-34; old = age 35 and over.

[109] FGDs SS22, SS23, SS25.

[110] FGD SS24.

[111] FGDs SS18, SS21.

[112] FGD SS19.

[113] FGD SS20.

[114] Interview HM09.

[115] FGDs HM04, HM08, HM16, HM20, HM25, HM27, HM29, HM30, HM32, LR12, LR22, LR24, LR30, SS11, SS12, SS20, SS23, SS25, SS26, SS27, SS31, SS33.

[116] FGDs HM10, HM12, LR08, SS14.

Overall, our findings suggest that women are more likely to attend meetings than men. This is in contrast to existing survey evidence. A survey from 2014 suggests that in some states/regions men are more likely than women to attend meetings at ward/village tract level,[117] and in others men and women are approximately equally likely to attend.[118] Across Myanmar as a whole, the survey found that 54% of men said that they sometimes attend village tract/ward meetings compared to only 39% of women.[119] A 2016 survey found that across Myanmar as a whole, 69% of men but only 51% of women said that they had attended a community meeting in the last 12 months; and 27% of men but only 16% of women said that they had often attended community meetings during this period.[120] The difference the figures obtained from our interviews and FGDs, and those obtained from the surveys, could be partly due to some possible change in participation in local meetings between 2014-16 and 2019. However, it could also or alternatively be due to different methodological approaches producing different results.

Among the FGDs that said that more women than men attend meetings in their ward/village, and gave a specific reason for this, the reason given was always related to men's work, e.g. men are too busy with their work, earning income, family survival, or have migrated abroad for work.[121] This phenomenon was also described by a large number of interviewees.[122] However, in one ward in Mandalay Region two FGDs reported the opposite phenomenon – i.e. more men than women attended meetings, because women were too busy with their work (which in this ward was reported as primarily working as petty traders in the local market and streets).[123] A participant in an FGD with old women in Ayeyarwady Region suggested that work is not the sole reason that men do not have time to attend meetings:

> "In the meetings more women than men attend. It is effective. If the men attend the meeting, they do not fully understand what the leaders say. The women are more interested in the meetings. The men are too busy with farming. They are also drunk and not interested in the meetings."[124] (FGD with old rural women, Ayeyarwady Region)

Similarly, a participant in an FGD with young men in a ward in the same township in Ayeyarwady Region said that: "There is no youth in meetings; they are almost always at the pub." [125] Alcohol was mentioned by a number of interviewees from southern Shan State as affecting why meetings are held, who attends, or how talkative meeting participants are, for example:

> "We hold regular monthly meetings for community unity, to tell villagers show deep respect for religion and have good morals, and to tell people to reduce or stop drinking." (Male 10 HH, village, southern Shan State) [126]

> "Women attend meetings more than men because if their husband is drunk, the wife attends the meeting on their husband behalf." (Male 100 HH, village, southern Shan State)[127]

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[117] UNDP, The State of Local *Governance: Trends in Ayeyarwady,* p.53; UNDP, *The State of Local Governance: Trends in Bago* (Yangon, 2014), p.39.

[118] UNDP, *The State of Local Governance: Trends in Magway,* p.47.

[119] UNDP, *The State of Local Governance: Trends in Myanmar,* p.51.

[120] People's Alliance for Credible Elections, *Public Opinion on Elections and the Expectations of the New Government* (Yangon: People's Alliance for Credible Elections, July 2016), p.31.

[121] FGDs HM04, HM08, HM16, HM25, HM27, HM30, LR22, LR30, SS11, SS25, SS26, SS27. See also the response of FGDs HM05, HM28, LR19, and LR20 to Q4.

[122] Interviews LR32, q.14; HM20, LR21, SS11, q.15; HM10, HM13, HM20, HM22, HM25, HM27, HM28, HM29, HM30, LR03, LR17, LR28, LR30, SS20, SS29; q.16.

[123] FGDs HM10 and HM12. N.b. FGD HM09, from the same ward, suggested that women and men attend their meetings in approximately equal numbers.

[124] FGD HM23.

[126] FGD HM18.

[127] Interview HM05. See also, interview HM08, from the same village.

[127] Interview HM06.

"... [in meetings] drunk men talk more than sober men." (Male 100 HH, ward, southern Shan State)[128]

Alcohol abuse comes up frequently in different focus groups and interviews, and is often referred to as a major cause of various social problems. The connection between alcohol and drug abuse and gender based violence in Myanmar has been identified and discussed in many previous reports.[129] The evidence presented in this report sheds light on the impact that widespread alcohol and drug abuse has on local life and politics in general, and on gender relations in particular. Alcohol abuse seems to impact on the extent and manner in which men participate, and on the opportunities of women to participate. Previous research has suggested that in communities that have widespread drug abuse, this situation can create openings for women to take leadership positions, due to fewer men being available to fill these positions. However, women from households that have drug addict(s) as their members may be further constrained in their participation, due to increased time constraints and possible social stigma.[130]

Of the minority of interviewees that said more men than women attend meetings in their community, reasons given were that the head of the household is invited (who is typically a man),[131] or that women are busy with housework and/or childcare.[132]

Whether residents choose to attend meetings or not, and how actively they participate in the meeting, can also be influenced by how relevant or interesting the meeting is for them. For example:

"The villagers are allowed to discuss in the meetings but more of them come and more of them speak if the issue is something they are interested in. For example, whenever we call a meeting to discuss about electricity, they come to the meeting and actively speak." (Female, W/VTA, Mon State)[133]

Gender differences in time for availability constraints were given as a reason for both: i) more women than men attending meetings (due to men being busier with work outside the home or being more likely to have migrated for work); and ii) more men than women attending meetings (due to women being busy with housework and/or childcare). Available data on women's and men's labour force participation, tendency to migrate, and unpaid domestic work, support these claims regarding the demands on women's and men's time. The most recent available data for Myanmar shows that 77.1% of men of working age men but only 54.3% of women are active in the labour force.[134] An estimated 4.25 million

[128] Interview HM02. See also, interview HM01, from the same ward.

[129] For example, see, Gender Equality Network, *Behind the Silence: Violence against Women and Their Resilience, Myanmar - Research Report* (Yangon, February 2015), pp.60-61; Nilar Kyu and Atsuko Kanai, 'Prevalence, Antecedent Causes and Consequences of Domestic Violence in Myanmar', Asian Journal of Social Psychology, 8.3 (2005), pp.245, 253, 261-65; Palaung Women's Organisation, *Voices for Change: Domestic Violence and Gender Discrimination in the Palaung Area* (Mae Sot: Palaung Women's Organisation, 2011), pp.25-26; Mihoko Tanabe and others, 'An Exploration of Gender-Based Violence in Eastern Myanmar in the Context of Political Transition: Findings from a Qualitative Sexual and Reproductive Health Assessment', *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters,* 27.2 (2019), pp.116-17.

[130] Minoletti, *Women's Participation in the Subnational Governance of Myanmar,* pp.27-28. N.b. the time constraints are due to drug-addicted household member(s) often being unable to contribute to family income, and in many cases stealing from family members to pay for drugs. As described later in this section, most drug users in Myanmar are male.

[131] Interviews HM15, LR06, LR07.

[132] Interviews HM03 and HM23. N.b. interviewee HM03 is ethnic Pa-O and HM23 is muslim – these communities can be broadly categorised as being more patriarchal than average for Myanmar.

[133] Interview LR29.

[134] Central Statistical Organisation, UNDP, and WB, *Myanmar Living Conditions Survey 2017: Socio-Economic Report* (Nay Pyi Taw & Yangon: Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry, UNDP and WB, 2020), p.72. Note that the gender gap in labour force participation appears to be narrowing - the 2015 Labour Force Survey found that men = 80.2% and women = 51.6%, and the 2014 census that men = 85.2% and women = 50.5%. However, there may also be some methodological differences between the surveys, that may account for some of this variation. See, Government of Myanmar - Department of Population, *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on the Labour Force* (Nay Pyi Taw, June 2017), p.73; MOLES, CSO, and ILO, *Myanmar Labour Force, Child Labour and School-To-Work Transition Survey, 2015: Executive Summary Report* (Nay Pyi Taw: MOLES, CSO & ILO, 2017), p.11.

people from Myanmar are working abroad, which is equivalent to around 20% of Myanmar's domestic labour force, and men are more likely than women to migrate abroad.[135] And, although women are overall slightly more likely than men to migrate within Myanmar, men are more likely than women to migrate within Myanmar for work purposes.[136]

Overall, the available statistical data shows that men are more likely than women to be engaged in labour outside of the home and to have migrated for work, and therefore on average labour outside of the home is likely to be a greater constraint on men's ability to participate in meetings. Whereas, women in Myanmar spend more time than men on unpaid domestic labour,[137] and on average domestic labour will be a greater constraint on women's ability to participate in meetings. Comprehensive time use data is not yet available for Myanmar, and so it is not possible to be conclusive as to which time constraint is larger. Nevertheless, it can be noted that domestic labour is performed close to where ward/village meetings are held, and may have some flexibility what time it is performed. Therefore, it is likely to be easier for those with domestic labour responsibilities than those working outside of the home two attend meetings, especially meetings that are held during regular working hours.

69% of our FGDs described there being at least one women's group in their ward/village. Female FGDs (73%) were slightly more likely than male FGDs (65%) to mention the presence of such a group, but this difference was not dramatic and was exactly the same as the difference between old and young FGDs. There was no urban-rural difference in the likelihood to mention there being a women's group in their ward/village. The most common types of women's group were those dedicated to organising social events (mentioned in 41% of FGDs) and religious affairs (36%). 17% of FGD's mentioned having women's groups dedicated to health or social welfare – most of the time these were MWAF and/or MMCWA, and in some cases these groups were explicitly described as being quite inactive. Only 2% of FGD's mentioned having women's groups that were dedicated to community development.

Large numbers of women attend community meetings, and frequently make up a majority of attendees. However, women attendees are less likely than men attendees to participate actively in discussions in the meeting. Leadership positions also dominated by men. Although some women are able to participate actively in decision making, women are disproportionately likely to experience the 'downsides' of participation (e.g. sacrificing their time to attend meetings), without experiencing the 'upsides' (e.g. being able to influence decision making and feeling empowered). This dynamic was summarised by one of our FGD participants:

> "During meetings, more women than men attend, but women rarely participate in discussion, only men do. Men have more status and respect than women." (FGD with old men, Mandalay Region) [138]

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[135] Paul Minoletti and Aung Hein, *Coronavirus Policy Response Needs and Options for Myanmar* (Yangon: International Growth Centre, April 2020); Government of Myanmar - Department of Population, *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Migration and Urbanization* (Nay Pyi Taw, December 2016), p.89.

[136] Government of Myanmar - Department of Population, *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Migration and Urbanization,* p.49.

[137] The Gender and Development Initiative, *Gender-Based Constraints in Rural Areas and Women's Empowerment in HDI of UNDP Myanmar* (Yangon, 2011), p.21; Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, Ministry of Health, and UNICEF, *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2009-2010* (Nay Pyi Taw, October 2011), pp.34, 90; Minoletti, Paul, *Scoping Report on Women in Business and Management in Myanmar* (Yangon: International Labour Organization, Unpublished 2017), pp.14-15; Caitlin Williscroft, *Not Enough Time: Insight into Myanmar Women's Urban Experiences* (Yangon: The Asia Foundation, January 2020), especially p.12.

[138] FGD HM16.

4. Leaders' Backgrounds and Motivations

Interviewees' Age, Education and Occupational Backgrounds[139]

The mean age of the VTAs, 100 HHs and 10 HHs interviewed for this study were all around 50 years old.[140] As would be expected, elders tended to be older than our other categories of interviewees, averaging 65.4 years. OTHs were the youngest, averaging 42.9 years.

In addition to performing their local leadership role, 88% of the local leaders interviewed for this study were active in the labour force, with the other 12% being inactive. As might be expected, elders (33%) were particularly likely to be inactive in the labour force. Of those that were active in the labour force, 54% were employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing; 16% were employed in wholesale or retail trade; and 10% in accommodation and food service activities. Other occupations mentioned by interviewees were: manufacturing (7%), casual labourer (2%); construction (2%); transportation (1%). Although our sample is somewhat small and non-random and is unlikely to be perfectly representative of local leaders throughout Myanmar, it can be noted that the sectors that the local leader interviewees are employed closely correspond to that of the population in general[141] – other studies have indicated that this is not the case for higher level political leaders such as MPs and political party 'gatekeepers'.[142]

In our sample of interviewees that were active in the labour force, men (60%) were more likely than women (33%) to work in agriculture, forestry and fishing; whereas women (29%) were more likely than men (12%) to work in wholesale and retail trade. These gender differences in labour force participation by sector are also found in Myanmar's population as a whole, although the gender gap is not so big as it is in our sample.[143] The local leaders in our sample are noticeably less likely to be inactive in the labour force than the general population (12% of our sample vs 35% of the adult population). As with the general population, the women in our sample (around 20%) were more likely than the men (around 10%) to not be active members of the labour force.[144]

W/VTAs were typically more highly educated than any other categories of our interviewees, e.g. i) around 40% of W/VTAs had completed tertiary education, compared to around 15% of OTHs, around 10% of elders, 5% of 100 HHs, and 0% of 10 HHs. Conversely, only around 10% of W/VTAs' highest level of education was primary or monastic only, compared to around 35% of OTHs and elders, 50% of 10 HHs, and 55% of 100 HHs. Although we see a big difference in average education level between W/VTAs and 100 HHs, there is very little difference between 100 HHs and 10 HHs.

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[139] This analysis mainly builds on interview Q2 – "What is your current main occupation?"; and interview Q3 – "What is the highest level of education you have obtained?".

[140] W/VTAs = 50.8 years, 100 HHs = 50.3 years, 10 HHs = 52.1 years.

[141] Three major nationwide surveys have been conducted since 2014 that provide detailed information of Myanmar's labour force, including the percentage of the labour force employed in each sector – the 2014 census, the 2015 Labour Force Survey (LFS), and the 2017 Living Conditions Survey (LCS). These surveys do not give totally consistent figures, due to change over time, and possibly also due to slight differences in survey methodology or implementation. However, these surveys indicate that just over 50% of the population are employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing; around 14% in wholesale and retail trade; around 9% in manufacturing, around 6% in construction, and around 5% in accommodation and food services. See, Government of Myanmar - Department of Population, *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census, The Union Report: Occupation and Industry* (Nay Pyi Taw: Ministry of Immigration and Population - Department of Population, March 2016), p.11; MOLES, CSO, and ILO, *Myanmar Labour Force,* p.7; Central Statistical Organisation, UNDP, and WB, *Myanmar Living Conditions Survey* 2017, p.77.

[142] Shwe Shwe Sein Latt and others, *Women's Political Participation in Myanmar,* p.7; Netina Tan and others, *Party Building and Candidate Selection,* p.17.

[143] For example, see, Government of Myanmar - Department of Population, *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census,* p.11.

[144] Central Statistical Organisation, UNDP, and WB, *Myanmar Living Conditions Survey 2017,* p.73.

As of 2014, only 9.1% of adults aged 25 and above in Myanmar had obtained an educational qualification above high school level, and 61.4% had obtained a level of education no higher than primary level.[145] Therefore, in our sample, W/VTAs are considerably more educated than the general population, whereas 100 HHs and 10 HHs are fairly similar to the average. OTHs and elders tend to be more educated than the average, albeit that they are not as highly educated as W/VTAs. One noticeable difference between all of the leaders in our sample and the general population, is that those with very low levels of education are not found as leaders – as of 2014, 16.2% of the general population aged 25 and above had not received any schooling at all,[146] whereas the minimum level of education among any of our interviewees was 2 years (these were both 100 HHs).

Among our interviewees, women local leaders tend to be more highly educated than men local leaders – around 30% of men interviewees but only around 20% of women interviewees had only primary level of education, while women (nearly 20%) were more likely than men (less than 15%) to hold a tertiary degree. These gender differences become much stronger when we consider the composition of our interviewees – women are strongly underrepresented in our sample as W/VTAs, i.e. the category that tends to be higher educated than any of the other categories of interviewees. As would be expected, the level of education among our local interviewees tends to be lower than higher-level political leaders such as MPs and political party 'gatekeepers'.[147] However, one pattern that is consistent between local leaders higher-level political leaders, is that there is stronger requirement for women than men to be highly educated if they are to become leaders.[148] In a similar vein, previous research has suggested that low educated men are more confident than low educated women to speak in village meetings.[149]

Motivations for Becoming Leaders[150]

When asked what their main motivations were for becoming a community leader, by far the two most common responses were: wanting to improve the community, help local residents and/or promote local development (52% of interviewees); and having been encouraged or pressured by local residents and/or local influential figures – such as a monk or the W/VTA – to become a leader, or having been directly appointed to the role (45% of interviewees).

The position of 10 HH may perhaps be seen as quite undesirable by some of the people filling the position – nearly 30% of 10 HH interviewees said that they had been pressured by community members and/or other local leaders to take this position, whereas this was the case for only around 15% of 100 HHs and OTH leaders, less than 10% of W/VTAs and 0% of elders. Further, 10 HHs were less likely than any of other interviewees to say that their motivation for becoming leader was to improve the community, help local residents and/or promote local development – i.e. they were less likely to give an answer that suggests a high level of enthusiasm for their role. One 10 HH from a village in southern Shan State said that:

> "I want to hand over to the youth but there no men who are trustful and not alcoholic, and there are too many women who have been divorced. And then, the people that could be trusted have moved to Thailand for work." (Male, 10 HH, southern Shan State)[151]

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[145] Extracted from, Government of Myanmar - Department of Population, *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Education* (Nay Pyi Taw, June 2017), p.54.

[146] Extracted from, Government of Myanmar - Department of Population, *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Education* (Nay Pyi Taw, June 2017), p.54.

[147] Shwe Sein Latt and others, *Women's Political Participation in Myanmar,* p.7; Netina Tan and others, *Party Building and Candidate Selection,* p.17.

[148] Netina Tan and others, *Party Building and Candidate Selection,* p.17.

[149] Minoletti, *Women's Participation in the Subnational Governance of Myanmar*, p.29.

[150] This analysis mainly builds on interview Q4 – "What were your main motivations for becoming a community leader?"

[151] Interview HM05.

The 14 interviewees that said that they had been pressured into taking their position came from a total of 12 different wards and villages – therefore, it is not the case that this attitude is limited to leaders from a small number of 'bad' wards/villages in our sample. At least two interviewees gave this type of response in all of the states/regions in our study, but this attitude was most frequently reported in southern Shan State (five interviewees). However, it should be noted that although nearly 30% of 10 HH interviewees said that they had only taken their position because they were pressured to do so, a number of male and female 10 HHs spoke very positively of their role, taking satisfaction in how they were able to contribute to the community.[152]

Women (around 65%) were more likely than men (around 45%) to say that they wanted to improve the community, help local residents and/or promote local development. This is despite in our sample women being disproportionately unlikely to be found in the two positions most likely to give this answer, e.g. W/VTA and elder. Whereas, there was no clear difference between women and men interviewees for their likelihood to say they were pressured to take their position, despite women being disproportionately likely to be found in the positions most likely to give this answer, e.g. 10 HHs and OTHs. Overall, once we account for position and gender, we see a strong tendency for women to be more likely than men to have become a leader out of a desire to improve the community, help local residents and/or product development. Whereas, men are more likely to have taken their position reluctantly, because they were pressured to do so.

The third most common answer for motivations for becoming a leader was to say that they wanted to do better than the previous/earlier occupant of their role – this was mentioned by four W/VTAs (three men and one woman) and one 100 HH (man). For example:

> "…the former ward administrator did not work practically for development of ward, and I was working really hard on community matters at this time. Therefore, I tried to write 200 complaint reports to the responsible persons [in GoM at township and national level] in order to ban our former ward administrator. Fortunately, we could ban him and I then became ward administrator." (Female W/VTA, Mon State)[153]

> "In the past, if we wanted to build a house we had to pay 30,000 kyats as fees [to the ward administrator]. Further, we must pay 5000 kyats if we are getting married. I want to cancel this culture because these are the rights of the public." (Male W/VTA, Ayeyarwady Region)[154]

Other motivations for becoming leader included: having relevant experience (4% of interviewees); change who participates in local decision making (3%); work for our country (2%); control drug problems (1%). All three of the interviewees that said they wanted to change who participates in local decision making were female.

Role Models[155]

When interviewees were asked what role models had inspired them to engage in community affairs, the most common responses were: i) a leader in local governance (around 35% of respondents); ii) none/no specific individual (around 30% of respondents); Aung San Suu Kyi (around 15% of respondents). Around 10% of interviewees mentioned family members as their role model, and less than 10% of interviewees

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[152] For example, see interviews HM30, LR19, SS14.

[153] Interview SS29

[154] Interview SS22.

[155] This analysis mainly builds on interview Q5 – "Were there any role model that inspired you to engage in community affairs?"

mentioned other famous male political leaders/historical figures/political writers. One male interviewee said that the local senior monk was his role model,[156] and one female interviewee mentioned a woman who works as a clerk in the parliament.[157]

Male interviewees (around 40%) were more likely than female interviewees (around 25%) to mention a leader in local governance as their role model, and all of the leaders in local governance that were mentioned as role models were male. Whereas, female interviewees (30%) were much more likely than male interviewees (1%) to cite family members as their role models. This difference likely indicates the greater access that men have to the public sphere and public figures,[158] whereas women spend more time with and are more reliant on family.

Family members mentioned as role models were typically male, with husbands and fathers playing prominent roles in women's aspirations to engage in public life, for example:

> "My husband is my role model because he showed me his performance in front of me. He deeply participated in village matters." (Female, 100 HH, Ayeyarwady Region)[159]

> "I just follow in my father's footsteps. My father did whatever he thought was right. He was a powerful former soldier [in the Tatmadaw]. And in the community level, he served as an elderly respected person before as well. He led in the project of building pagodas and monasteries." (Female, 100 HH, Ayeyarwady Region)[160]

Only one interviewee mentioned a female relative as their only role model – this was a woman interviewee who mentioned her mother, a headmistress at the local school.[161] However, one female interviewee said that her parents were their role models, and another female interviewee mentioned her parents-in-law. [162]

There was no clear difference between men and women in their likelihood to say Aung San Suu Kyi was their role model. However, ethnic Bamar interviewees were more than twice as likely as non-Bamar interviewees to mention her as a role model. Three ethnic Pa-O interviewees mentioned military leaders from PNO/PNA as their role model – in one case this was U Aung Kham Hti, but the other two cases (who were from the same village) mentioned a current PNO major who has an active role in the local governance of their area.

Leaders' Skills and Abilities[163]

When interviewees were asked what skills and abilities have helped them to become leaders, the three most common responses were: leadership skills (around 45% of interviewees); leadership experience/ background in community affairs (around 25%); and personal integrity (around 25%).[164] Women (30%)

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[156] Interview SS30.

[157] Interview SS32. N.b. this interviewee also mentioned Aung San Suu Kyi as a role model.

[158] See also, Tan and others, *Party Building and Candidate Selection,* pp.18-29.

[159] Interview SS26.

[160] Interview LR18.

[161] Interview SS29.

[162] Interviews LR11, LR12.

[163] This analysis mainly builds on interview Q9 – "What skills and abilities help you to become a 10 household leader/village head/100 household head/ward/village tract administrator/community leader?"; interview Q13 – "In your opinion, what kind of leader does your community prefer?"; and FGD Q.8 Please discuss the characteristics of a good Ward/Village Tract Administrator.

[164] N.b. 'leadership skills' includes one or more of the following self-reported qualities: mediation skills, being an energetic leader, decision-making skills, speaking skills, confidence, being unbiased, being transparent/non-corrupt, financial management skills, being helpful, being compassionate, kind, or being patient. 'Leadership experience/ background in community affairs' includes prior experience in community leadership, being interested in community affairs, previously had participated in community affairs. 'Personal integrity' includes the following self-reported qualities: honesty, not hurting/running anyone, not fighting with others, being trustworthy. Note that not drinking, gambling and/or using drugs was coded separately from 'personal integrity', but has considerable overlap with this category.

were slightly more likely than men (25%) to mention leadership experience/background in community affairs. Gender differences were larger for leadership skills (around 55% of women but only around 40% of men) and personal integrity (around 30% of men but only around 10% of women). Women's greater likelihood than men to mention leadership skills becomes even more apparent when we break down responses by gender and position – elders and W/VTAs are the positions most likely to mention leadership skills for helping them become leaders, and women are disproportionately unlikely to be found in these positions in our sample. Further, female 100 HHs and 10 HHs were more than twice as likely than their male counterparts to say that leadership skills had helped them gain their position.

When leaders were asked what kind of leaders they think their community prefers, answers were overwhelmingly focused on leadership skills and performance – with about 80% interviewees giving this response. Only one interviewee mentioned experience in response to being asked what kind of leader they think their community prefers. Whereas, approximately 25% of interviewees said that experience was a skill or ability that has helped them to become a community leader. Also, there are no major gender differences in interviewees' description of what kind of leader they think their community prefers, whereas, as noted above, there what quite large gender differences in interviewees' description of what skills and abilities had helped them become a leader.

When asked what skills and abilities had helped them become a leader, six male interviewees but no female interviewees mentioned that they do not drink alcohol, with at least one male respondent from each state/region giving this answer.[165] Some of these interviewees also mentioned that they do not gamble. A further male interviewee mentioned that he does not use drugs – he is from southern Shan State, an area of Myanmar with high rates of illegal drug use.[166] Altogether, around 10% of male interviewees thought their sobriety was one of the main factors in them becoming a community leader. Whereas, no female interviewees mentioned this. Similarly, when asked what kind of leader they think their community prefers, one male interviewee said that the community prefers a leader who does not drink, and two male interviewees from southern Shan State said that they prefer a leader who does not use drugs. Whereas, no female interviewees mentioned not drinking alcohol or using drugs. Men in Myanmar are considerably more likely than women to drink alcohol and use drugs.[167]

Alcohol and drug use was also raised in another context by a male interviewee describing what type of leader he thinks his community prefers – a 100 HH from a ward in Shan State saying that he needs someone who is capable of arresting drug users and alcoholics.[168]

Only 5% of interviewees mentioned their education as a skill or ability to help them to become a local leader. And, only around 15% of interviewees mentioned education when describing what kind of leader they think their community prefers. This is in contrast to the importance that education has for parliamentary political participation – Working Paper 1 in this series found that education was the most common response when interviewees were asked what characteristics their party prefers parliamentary candidates to have.[169] This fits with the imperfect evidence we have on the importance of education for

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[165] N.b. see also the response of HM07 to interview Q4.

[166] Tom Blickman, 'The ATS Boom in Southeast Asia', in *Withdrawal Symptoms in the Golden Triangle - A Drugs Market in Disarray* (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, 2009), p.62.

[167] World Indicators data on male and female alcohol consumption, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ SH.ALC.PCAP.FE.LI?locations=MM [Accessed 17th July 2020]; Paul Minoletti, *Women's Participation in the Subnational Governance of Myanmar* (MDRI-CESD and The Asia Foundation, June 2014), p.27.

[168] Interview HM02.

[169] Netina Tan and others, *Party Building and Candidate Selection: Intraparty Politics and Promoting Gender Equality in Myanmar* (Yangon: Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation, April 2020), p.30.

these different positions – a large majority of MPs hold a university degree,[170] whereas less than 15% of the local leaders interviewed for our study have attained this level of education – i.e. being highly educated is less of a requirement for local leaders than for MPs.

A gender gap in education levels is apparent among Myanmar's parliamentarians, with women parliamentarians typically being more educated than their male counterparts,[171] and we see a similar gender gap in educational attainment among the local leaders in our study.[172] There was a clear gender difference in local leaders' likelihood to mention education as an important skill or ability in their becoming a local leader – around 15% of women but less than 2% of men. However, when interviewees were asked what kind of leader they think their community prefers, men were around twice as likely as women to mention education.

Around 10% of women interviewees but less than 5% of men interviewees mentioned gender in response to what kind of leader they think their community prefers – all of the interviewees that mentioned this said that the community preferred male to female leaders.

When FGD participants were asked to describe the characteristics of a good W/VTA, the most common type of response was related to personal integrity or personality (72% of FGDs),[173] followed by skills (64%),[174] and being service minded (53%)[175]. Other desired characteristics mentioned by FGDs were education (22%), wealth (14%), and having time (5%). The clearest difference between men's and women's FGDs was for education – women's FGDs were more than twice as likely as men is FGDs to suggest that it is important for a W/VTA to be educated. Urban FGDs were also more than twice as likely as rural FGDs to mention education as being important.

Although the way this question was phrased for interviewees was not exactly the same as for FGDs, these questions were quite similar, and it is striking that FGD participants place far greater emphasis on personal integrity, whereas interviewees place far greater emphasis on skills. This gap is particularly pronounced if we look at the interview responses from W/VTAs – around 90% of them mentioned performance/skills but only around 10% mentioned personal integrity. Women interviewees (around 10%) were more likely than men interviewees (less than 5%) to suggest that their community prefers their leaders to be men.

There are quite large gender differences in leaders' perceptions of what skills and abilities helped them to get their leadership position. It can be suggested that these differences frequently arise out of men and women needing to prove they do not belong to a certain stereotype that is associated with a gender and is seen as bad for leadership. For example, men in Myanmar are considerably more likely than

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[170] Shwe Shwe Sein Latt and others, *Women's Political Participation in Myanmar: Experiences of Women Parliamentarians* (Yangon, Myanmar: The Asia Foundation, April 2017), p.37.

[171] Shwe Shwe Sein Latt and others, *Women's Political Participation in Myanmar: Experiences of Women Parliamentarians* (Yangon, Myanmar: The Asia Foundation, April 2017), p.37.

[172] See section 4 above

[173] E.g. a leader that is trustful, patient, being transparent and accountable, honest, passionate, caring, has a good reputation from their past work experiences, does not drink, and/or is non-discriminatory.

[174] E.g. a leader that is wise or intelligent, decisive, reliable, good in negotiation (between both parties in solving disputes or problem), good public speaking, good listener for the public, able to maintain a good relationship with the villagers, knowledgeable, good in management, being thoughtful, ability to discuss on different issues, being unbiased in making decisions, able to make changes.

[175] E.g. contributing their own money for the community affairs activities and events, being passionate to help the communities at the time of in need, and actively leading and participating in the voluntary sectors.

women to drink alcohol and use drugs,[176] and to be perceived as corrupt.[177] And, our men interviewees were much more likely than the women interviewees to mention their sobriety or personal integrity as relevant skills or abilities. Meanwhile, leadership is quite widely associated with maleness in Myanmar,[178] and women were more likely than men to mention to mention their leadership skills in response to this question. The greater necessity for women than men to demonstrate that they have the required attributes to be a leader contributes to continued male dominance of leadership positions.

Opportunities and Challenges to Become Leaders[179]

Previous research on Myanmar has found that women can face greater challenges than men for becoming political leaders, and participating in public life. Survey evidence shows that around 70% of both women and men think that men make better political leaders than women (there is almost no gender difference in this opinion); and that only around 60% of people think that women should participate in politics equally with men.[180] Qualitative research on Myanmar has also shown how cultural norms assign greater status to men than women, and can act as a barrier to women's participation in public life, including women's and men's likelihood to become leaders, and how they are received by others if they become leaders.[181] Potential women leaders can face scepticism from potential colleagues and the wider public, making it harder for them to get chosen as leaders.[182] Cultural norms shape the confidence that men and women can have to participate in public life, and women's lack of confidence has been identified by a number of researchers as a significant barrier to them having a greater level of participation in Myanmar politics.[183] Women in Myanmar are also less likely than men to report being interested in politics.[184] Concerns over women travelling, especially at night, have previously been noted as a barrier to women's political participation.[185] The focus group discussions conducted for this report also suggest that men may be less likely to be aware of or recognise women's contributions as leaders. Men's FGDs were less likely than women's FGDs to be aware that there were any women 10 HH, 100HH, kye ywa taa wan kan W/VTA in their ward/village.[186]

Gender differences in education do not explain the large gender gap we see in parliamentary representation – the vast majority of parliamentarians hold university degrees, and women are considerably more likely than men to have achieved this high level of education.[187] However, the gender

[176] World Indicators data on male and female alcohol consumption, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ SH.ALC.PCAP.FE.LI?locations=MM [Accessed 17th July 2020]; Paul Minoletti, *Women's Participation in the Subnational Governance of Myanmar* (MDRI-CESD and The Asia Foundation, June 2014), p.27.

[177] Paul Minoletti, *Women's Participation in the Subnational Governance of Myanmar* (MDRI-CESD and The Asia Foundation, June 2014), pp.21-22.

[178] Paul Minoletti, *Gender (in)Equality in the Governance of Myanmar: Past, Present, and Potential Strategies for Change* (Yangon: The Asia Foundation, April 2016), p.16. See also, the following subsection below on 'opportunities and challenges to become leaders'.

[179] This analysis mainly builds on interview Q20 – "Do you think women and men have the same opportunities and face the same challenges to become a 10 household leader/village head/100 household head/ward/village tract administrator/community leader?"; and FGD Q11 – "Do you think women and men have the same ability to be the village/ward leader? Why is that?"

[180] The Asia Foundation, *Myanmar 2014,* p.79; Bridget Welsh and Kai-Ping Huang, *Myanmar's Political Aspirations & Perceptions 2015: Asian Barometer Survey Report* (Selangor: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, March 2016), p.25. N.b. the Asian Barometer Survey report does not state whether there was a gender difference in the opinion that women should participate in politics equally with men.

[181] Annami Löfving, *Women's Participation in Public Life in Myanmar* (Yangon: ActionAid, CARE and Oxfam, 2011), especially pp.18, 31; Gender Equality Network, *Gender and Politics in Myanmar: Women and Men Candidates in the 2015 Elections,* pp.23-34.

[182] Gender Equality Network, *Gender and Politics in Myanmar: Women and Men Candidates in the 2015 Elections,* pp.36-37, 41-42.

[183] Gender Equality Network, *Gender and Politics in Myanmar,* p.30-31; Minoletti, *Women's Participation in the Subnational Governance of Myanmar,* pp.29-30; Phan Tee Eain, *Report on Observing Women's Participation in Myanmar's November 2015 General Election;* Shwe Shwe Sein Latt and others, *Women's Political Participation in Myanmar,* pp.4, 18, 19.

[184] PACE, *Public Opinion on Elections and the Expectations of the New Government,* p.26.

[185] Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy, *Women's Participation in 2015 Election in Myanmar: An Assessment* (Yangon: Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy, 2016); Minoletti, *Gender (in)Equality in the Governance of Myanmar,* p.18; Röell, *Women and Local Leadership,* p.34.

[186] Around 20% of men's FGDs vs around 30% of women's FGDs said that there were any womTen 10 HH, 100HH, *kye ywa taa wan kan* W/VTA in their ward/village, when asked for FGD Q9a.

[187] Gender Equality Network, *Gender and Politics in Myanmar,* p.25.

gap in educational attainment is reversed when we look at less educated segments of the population – women are slightly less likely than men to have ever attended school, and are more likely than men to be illiterate.[188] This gap particularly affects older segments of the population – data from the 2014 census showed that the gender gap in literacy was only 0.5 percentage points for ages 15-19, but this rises to 11.9 percentage points among those aged 60-64, and 22.3 percentage points for those aged 75-79.[189] Older women being disproportionately likely to have little or no education is likely to be a barrier to them becoming leaders and local level, and participating actively in public meetings – as discussed in Section 3, community members with lower education are less likely to speak in meetings, and as discussed above in Section 4, having little or no formal education seems to be a strong barrier to becoming a local leader.

The effects of gender differences in time use patterns on women's and men's ability to attend meetings is ambiguous given the imperfect evidence that is currently available (see Section 3). However, the impact of time constraints on women's and men's opportunities to become leaders more clearly favours men. Only a small minority of local leaders are not active members of the labour force, and the available evidence we have indicates that women in Myanmar that engage in paid work typically continue to have much larger responsibilities than men for performing unpaid domestic work and childcare[190] Therefore, women are less likely than men to have additional time to be local leaders. A previous study of women W/VTAs in Myanmar, suggested that women that take this role are disproportionately likely to be unmarried, and that this status – which meant they would not be burdened with domestic responsibilities – was viewed favourably by their communities.[191]

Around 25% of our interviewees thought that men and women had the same opportunities and face the same challenges to become local leaders. Around 45% of interviewees thought that women and men face the same opportunities, but have different challenges. And, around 25% thought that women and men have different opportunities and face different challenges.[192] Men (around 25%) were more likely than women (around 15%) to think that women and men had the same opportunities and faced the same challenges. Most of the respondents that thought that men and women face different challenges thought that women faced greater challenges than men, however, two interviewees (one female and one male) thought that men faced more challenges than women.[193] Interviewees from Mon State (around 40%) were the most likely to think that men and women faced the same opportunities and challenges, whereas interviewees from Mandalay Region (around 10%) were the least likely to think this.

Among interviewees that said that women and men face different challenges, there was a strong emphasis on their perceived ability to deal with security issues: nearly 20% of these interviewees said that women will find it difficult to deal with crime and/or fighting; and more than 30% of these interviewees said that it was not possible for women to go out at night, especially late at night – local leaders' activities at night can be security related.[194] However, concerns about women being out after dark are not solely

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[188] Gender Equality Network, *Gender and Politics in Myanmar,* p.25.

[189] Government of Myanmar - Department of Population, *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Gender Dimensions* (Nay Pyi Taw, August 2017), p.55.

[190] Minoletti, *Women's Participation in the Subnational Governance of Myanmar,* pp.26-28; Williscroft, Not Enough Time: *Insight into Myanmar Women's Urban Experiences,* pp.11-12

[191] Röell, *Women and Local Leadership,* p.28.

[192] N.b. around 10% of interviewees gave an unclear answer to this question.

[193] Interviews HM08, HM12.

[194] For example, interviewee LR26 described going on security patrols at night in response to question 18. See also, https://www.mm.undp.org/content/myanmar/en/home/presscenter/articles/2017/06/_23/meet-village-tract-administrator-daw-htu-san.html [Accessed 20th August 2020]. However, note that night-time activities are not always security related – one interviewee described their village administration office as being open from 6pm to 10pm as standard (interview LR31, Q11); and others described having to attend meetings at night (interview SS31, Q11).

due to security considerations – although social norms around women being outside of the home after dark have begun to ease in Myanmar,[195] many women and men still consider it to be inappropriate for women to be out at night, as summarised by the saying *mein ma kaun do ein pyan chein* – 'the time at which good women return home' (which is often understood to be around 6 or 7pm).

Maintaining security, law and order and peace are mandated roles of W/VTAs and is one of their main activities. However, the idea that women cannot go out at night or deal with security issues was strongly refuted by some of the female interviewees, for example:

> "Some men do not like women to be level with them. However, I can compete with men, am not afraid of anything, and I can go everywhere at any time, even at midnight." (Female, 10 HH, Mandalay Region)[196]

Dealing with security issues can pose a physical risk to the leader involved, whether this is challenging thieves, dealing with intoxicated people, or interacting with soldiers. Traditional social norms in Myanmar prescribe that men should be strong and able to protect.[197] Five decades of male military rule of the country further masculinised and militarised public space.[198] However, as Myanmar tries to democratise it should be possible to move away from such a masculinised approach to security. Some recognition of the desirability of such a shift is indicated in efforts since 2012 to recruit more women to the Myanmar Police Force.[199] Many women were appointed as village heads in many Karen communities in the context of intense armed conflict from the 1980s until 2012, and it has been suggested that one of their strength as leaders was being able to interact with hostile soldiers in a nonconfrontational manner, preventing disputes and conflict from escalating.[200]

One female ethnic Inn Thar 10 HH interviewee from a ward in southern Shan State described how in her community senior leaders are sometimes required to walk in front of monks as part of certain religious activities, and because it is seen as inappropriate for women to walk in front of the monks this is a significant barrier to women taking on roles such as W/VTA.

The perception that the roles of W/VTA or 100 HH are not appropriate for women is not restricted to men. For example, a female 10 HH from Ayeyarwady said that:

> "...one 100 household leader position is vacant. They asked me to take that position. I said no, giving the reason that it is not appropriate for the village to have a female 100 household leader. They haven't replied to me yet. If they assign the position to me, I have to do it." (Female, 10 HH, Ayeyarwady Region) [201]

Only 22% of FGDs agreed that women had the same 'ability' as men to become the village/ward leader, although women's FGDs were twice as likely as men's FGDs to think this. Just under 60% of both men's

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[195] Gender Equality Network, *Raising the Curtain: Cultural Norms, Social Practices and Gender Equality in Myanma*r (Yangon, 2015), pp.65, 75.

[196] Interview HM12.

[197] Gender Equality Network, *Raising the Curtain: Cultural Norms, Social Practices and Gender Equality in Myanmar* (Yangon, 2015), p.41.

[198] Jessica Harriden, *The Authority of Influence: Women and Power in Burmese History* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2012), pp.175-79; Zin Mar Aung, 'From Military Patriarchy to Gender Equity: Including Women in the Democratic Transition in Burma', *Social Research,* 82.2 (2015), pp.543-45.

[199] Kyaw Myo, 'Female Officers Now Make Up 20 Percent of Police Force', *The Irrawaddy* (Nay Pyi Taw, 2 October 2018) <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/female-officers-now-make-20-percent-police-force.html> [accessed 20 August 2020].

[200] Karen Women's Organisation, *Kill Me Instead of Them: A Report on the Resilience of Karen Women Village Chiefs* (Mae Sot: Karen Women's Organisation, March 2020), p.20.

[201] Interview LR21, Q12.

and women's FGDs agreed that women did not have the same ability as men to become village/ward leader. In the remainder of FGDs the participants disagreed on this issue. FGD participants that felt women had less ability than men to become leaders pointed to perceived issues such as: men being better at public speaking;[202] women being too talkative;[203] women being less educated than men;[204] women being insufficiently decisive;[205] men being more active;[206] it not being suitable for women to go out at night;[207] women should stay at home and attend to family matters;[208] men being more able to travel;[209] men being physically stronger;[210] women not being able to deal with fighting in the community;[211] women facing gossip/criticism (e.g. for spending time outside of the home with men that are not family members).[212] A number of FGDs spoke broadly of there being a cultural tradition of male leadership that largely excluded women and/or of preferring to have men as their leaders.[213] Some men FGD participants expressed this in the form of strong opposition to women's leadership, for example:

> "I do not want to give women the same opportunity as men. I am saying this according to the way we live, and the culture that we practice in our community." (FGD with old urban men, Ayeyarwady Region)[214]

> "To speak honestly, I do not recognise women in leadership positions … I do not want to agree if a woman leader says something." (FGD with young rural men, Mandalay Region)[215]

A small minority of FGD participants suggested that women have greater ability than men to be ward/ village leader, and for example one male FGD participant suggested that women are better at decision making because they are responsible for managing the household budget and caring for children.[216]

The fact that W/VTA and 100 HH are single positions likely contributes to women's exclusion. It can be compared to different forms of election systems, such as majoritarian single member systems vs. proportional systems multi-member systems. Men tend to fare better in majoritarian systems, which are typically "the winner takes it all" systems, where the party needs to select the one candidate that they think stands the best chance of winning the majority of votes in a particular district. This often turns out to be the incumbent leader, and it often turns out to be a man. Women tend to fare better in proportional election systems, where votes are translated into a corresponding proportion of seats. In such systems, parties seek to balance their lists, to include a variety of characteristics, personalities and experiences.[217] It is likely that a group leadership at the local level would be more inclusive in terms of gender, but also in terms of other leadership characteristics.

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[202] For example, see, FGDs HM05, SS05, SS09.
[203] For example, see, FGDs HM12, HM20.
[204] For example, see, FGD LR17.
[205] For example, see, FGDs HM12, HM20, LR25.
[206] For example, see, FGDs HM05, HM19.
[207] For example, see, FGDs HM05, HM15, LR15, LR22, LR27, LR28.
[208] For example, see, FGDs HM07, HM19
[209] For example, see, FGDs LR18, LR21.
[210] For example, see, FGDs LR03, LR08, SS20, SS28, SS31.
[211] For example, see, FGDs HM13, LR25, SS28.
[212] For example, see, FGDs LR15, SS35
[213] For example, see FGDs LR15, LR17, SS09, SS18
[214] FGD LR17.
[215] FGD SS09.
[216] FGD LR02.
[217] See e.g. Matland, Richard. 'Enhancing Women's Political Participation: Legislative Recruitment and Eletoral Systems. In Julie Ballington & Azza Karam (eds) *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers.* Stockholm: international IDEA (2005); Mc Allister, Ian and Studlar, Donley T. 'Electoral Systems and Women's Representation: A Long-Term Perspective. *Representation* 39(1): 3-14 (2002), Paxton, Pamela. 'Women in National Legislatures: A Cross-National Analysis. *Social Science Research* 26: 442-462 (1997); Rule, Wilma. *Electoral Systems, Contextual Factors and Women's Opportunity for Election to Parliament in Twenty-Three Democracies. *The Western Political Quarterly* 40(3): 477-498 (1987).

5. Local leaders' role and leadership styles

What do local leaders do for the communities? [218]

When FGD participants were asked what their W/VTA does for their community, the most frequently mentioned answer was carrying out basic administration (55% of FGDs). Other roles that were commonly mentioned were providing general leadership of the community (29%), solving problems and disputes within the community (21%), providing security (17%), and promoting local development and improving service delivery (17%). 6% of FGDs mentioned that their W/VTA contributes their own financial resources to meet community needs.

For most of the categories mentioned above we do not see clear differences in the likelihood of men's and women's FGDs to mention these roles of the W/VTA. However, the exception to this is security, with men's FGDs (25%) being much more likely than women's FGDs (8%) to mention this. W/VTAs role as security providers was also much more likely to be mentioned by urban FGDs (28%) than by rural FGDs (6%). Whereas, rural FGDs (24%) were more likely than urban FGDs (10%) to say that their W/VTA promotes local development and improves service delivery.

When we asked W/VTAs, 100 HHs, 10 HHs and elders what they think their most important role is,[219] the most common response (35% of interviewees) was to promote local development and improve local service provision. Other common answers were: organising/participating in religious and social events (around 25%); promoting local unity and harmony (around 15%); doing what higher level leaders tell them to do (around 15%); and ensuring order/enforcing rules/maintaining local security/drug issues. Only 5% of interviewees, and only around 15% of W/VTA interviewees mentioned their administrative role, despite the large amount of time that local officials spend in these activities, and basic administration being the most common response among FGD participants for what W/VTAs do for their community.

Women interviewees (around 35%) were more likely than men interviewees (around 20%) to mention their role in religious and social events. Women were nearly twice as likely as men to say that their role was to promote local unity and harmony. Whereas, all of the interviewees that mention their role as being ensuring order/enforcing rules/maintaining local security/drug issues were men.

W/VTAs (around 50%) were the most likely to say that their role was to promote local development and improve service provision, followed by 100 HHs (around 40%). Whereas, only around 15% of 10 HHs and around 10% of elders gave this response. Interviewees from Mandalay Region (around 60%) were much more likely to give this type of answer than those from Ayeyarwady Region, Mon State and southern Shan State (all around 25-30%).

Around 15% of 100 HHs and 10 HHs said that their role was to represent their community to higher levels, e.g. for 100 HHs to represent their community to ward/village tract level, and for 10 HHs to represent their community to 100 household level and/or ward/village tract level. Whereas, none of the W/VTAs or elders interviewed mentioned representing their community to higher levels (e.g. township level).

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[218] This analysis mainly bases on FGD Q6 – "Please, work together as a group to describe what your ward/village tract administrator/village head/100 Household Head/10 Household Head do for your community?"; and interview Q18 – "As a community leader/village leader/10 household leader/100 household leader/village tract/ward administrator, what do you think is your most important role?". N.b. for Q18 multiple answers were permitted, despite this question being written in English in the singular.

[219] N.b. OTH interviewees were left out of the quantitative analysis of this question, due to their type of leadership positions being highly diverse.

What issues do residents prioritise and what would they like their leaders to do more of?[220]

When FGD participants were asked what other things they would like their W/VTA to do for them, by far the most common answer was to do more to promote local development and improve service delivery (58% of FGDs), e.g. roads, bridges, education, healthcare, electricity, water, community halls, street lighting, traffic lights and vegetable market. The next most common answers were to provide better leadership of the community (10%),[221] create more livelihood opportunities (8%) and improve security (5%). There was not much difference in the likelihood of men's and women's FGDs to say that they wanted the local leader to promote local development and improve service delivery, or to improve security. Whereas, men's FGDs were more likely than women FGDs to desire that leaders provide better leadership of the community (14% vs 6%) and to promote livelihood opportunities (12% vs 4%).

Rural FGDs (67%) were more likely than urban FGDs (48%) to want their W/VTA to do more to promote local development and service delivery. Whereas, urban FGDs (16%) were more likely than rural FGDs (4%) to want their W/VTA to provide better leadership of the community.

It is interesting that although security is a large part of W/VTAs mandated role (see Section 1), and is frequently invoked as a reason for why men are deemed to be more suitable for this role than women (see Section 4), relatively few FGDs mentioned security as something they would like W/VTAs to provide more of. Instead, promoting local development is by far a more common priority.

Female leaders and their roles[222]

Of the 18 female 100 HHs, 10 HHs and elders in our study, only five (i.e. less than 30%) thought that they had a specific role to play as a woman in this position. However, both of the female W/VTAs interviewees saw themselves as having this specific role.[223] Three interviewees said that they did not have a specific role as a female leader, but then went on to mention doing activities that are stereotyped as female in Myanmar, e.g. helping women give birth,[224] helping in the social and health sectors,[225] giving vaccines to women and children.[226]

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[220] This analysis mainly build on FGD Q7 – "Please discuss if there are other things that you think that it would be good if your Ward/Village Tract Administrator/Village Head/100 Household Head/10 Household Head did for your community?"

[221] E.g. demonstrate good management, be able to maintain good relationship with everyone in the communities, being transparent and accountable, not be corrupt, and listen to resident's concerns in meetings rather than just telling them what to do.

[222] This analysis builds on interview Q19 – "As a female village leader/ten household leader/tract administrator, do you think you have a particular role to play?"

[223] Interviews HM27, HM32, LR29, SS03, SS29. N.b. One further 10 HH interviewee described themselves as having a specific role, but this seemed to be through their position in MWAF and MMCWA, rather than as a 10 HH itself – interview LR19.

[224] Interview LR17.

[225] Interview LR18.

[226] Interview LR01.

6. Experiences of being chosen to be a leader and being a leader at local level

Experiences of being chosen as local leaders[227]

All of the 10 HH, elder and OTH interviewees said that they had not had to use any of their own financial resources to get their position. Whereas, around 25% of W/VTA interviewees and 5% of 100 HH interviewees said that they had spent their own money as part of their election process. It is notable that the only positions that gave affirmative answers to this question are the most powerful positions in this study (W/VTA and 100 HH), and these positions carry the most prestige and responsibility for the community, as well as the greatest opportunity for corruption/self-enrichment. However, it is also important to note that only one in four W/VTAs and only one in twenty 100 HHs answered in the affirmative to this question.

W/VTAs' and 100 HHs' spending on getting elected was typically quite small. For example, a male 100 HH said that he had had to spend around 10,000 kyats buying tea and other drinks for the persons in charge of the polling station,[228] and another male W/VTA described printing pamphlets and distributing them to each household in the community.[229] A female 100 HH described having to give small gifts to some of those that were opposed to her to keep them quiet:

> "There are some people that did not like me, especially some of my brother's friends, so I had to treat them to some tea, coffee and cigarettes just to make them shut their mouths." (Female, 100 HH, Mandalay Region)[230]

The other four interviewees that described using their own financial resources as part of the election process said that although they had not have to spend any money prior to the election itself, after they won the election they treated their supporters and friends to a meal.[231] These interviewees were all male W/VTAs.

Less than 10% of 10 HHs and less than 20% of 100 HHs said that they had faced some kind of harassment, intimidation of strong competition during their election process. Whereas, the equivalent figure for W/VTAs was over 50%. This difference is likely to be partially due to greater prestige and opportunity for corruption/self-enrichment that being a W/VTA offers leading to more intense competition for this position relative to being 100 HH, and in turn that being a 100 HH offers relative to being a 10 HH. However, it is also likely to be partially due to the more prosaic reason that W/VTAs cover a larger number of residents than 100 HHs, and 100 HHs cover a large number of residents than 10 HHs, and this means there is a larger pool of people that may object to them and decide to harass or intimidate them.

Around 30% of the women interviewees said that they had faced harassment, intimidation or strong competition as part of their election, compared to only around 20% of the male interviewees. This is despite our sample of interviewees having women underrepresented in the positions most likely to say yes to this question (W/VTA and 100 HH) and being over-represented in the position least likely to say yes

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[227] This analysis mainly builds on interview Q8a – "Did you need to use your own financial resources to become a 10 household leader/village head/100 household head/ward/village tract administrator/community leader?"; and interview Q12 – "Did you face any harassment or intimidation or strong competition during the election?". N.b. Although Q12 was asked to some elders and OTH interviewees, they were not typically and therefore the question was irrelevant for them. Therefore, these types our interviewees are not included in the analysis above

[228] Interview HM04.

[229] Interview HM09.

[230] Interview LR09.

[231] Interviews LR24, LR25, SS19, SS22. N.b. given how Q8a was phrased it is possible that there are some other interviewees that also treated their friends and supporters to a meal after their election, but did not think it necessary to mention this.

to this question (10 HH). Further, the harassment experienced by the two women W/VTAs was clearly gendered, e.g.

> "I did not really face any harassment except from some gossip making fun of me, such as, 'a little woman is going to be our village tract administrator, why not men?'" (Female, W/VTA, Mon State)[232]

> "I was insulted by some people because they prefer to have a male ward administrator. Therefore, there were big problems during the competition." (Female, W/VTA, Mon State)[233]

In a somewhat similar vein, in response to another question, another female interviewee said that she had no intention of trying to become a parliamentarian, because if, "If I become an MP, I would be insulted as 'fucking woman' by the community."[234]

Financial Demands on Local Leaders[235]

Although less than 10% of our interviewees described having to use their own financial resources to get selected for their position, almost half of them said that they had to use their financial resources in their role of being leaders. W/VTAs (more than 60%), followed by 100 HHs (more than 50%) were the types of leader most likely to describe having to use their own financial resources in their role as local leader. Whereas, only around one third of 10 HHs, elders and OTHs said this. There was no clear gender difference in the likelihood to say yes or no to this question. Around 50% of interviewees from Ayeyarwady Region, Mandalay Region and Mon State said yes to this question, compared to only around 30% of interviewees from southern Shan State. Previous research has indicated that W/VTAs receive insufficient financial support from GAD to cover their travel costs,[236] or to cover the costs of documenting and reporting meetings.[237]

Of the interviewees that specified costs they faced in their role, by far the most common were costs associated with travelling for meeting or other duties, e.g. paying for fuel, and in some cases having to purchase food while they are travelling.[238] The next most common answer was the cost of hosting meetings and visitors, e.g. providing food and drinks for meeting attendees/visitors.[239] W/VTAs are entitled to 50,000 MMK per month to cover office expenses,[240] but it seems that this is sometimes insufficient or perhaps they do not receive their entitlement. Some W/VTAs also mentioned facing various other additional costs, such as: giving and/or lending money for residents' healthcare costs;[241] donating for religious ceremonies;[242] hiring loudspeakers to make public announcements;[243] making pamphlets to share information to residents;[244] paying for repairs to local infrastructure;[245] providing food and drink for the 100 HHs and local militia members that provide night time security;[246] providing food to elderly community members;[247] contributing to residents' funeral

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[232] Interview LR29.

[233] Interview SS29.

[234] Interview HM14. N.b. 'fucking' here is used a general expletive, rather than implying any particular sexual promiscuity/behaviour.

[235] This analysis mainly builds on interview Q8b – "Do you have to spend financial resources in your role as 10 household leader/village head/100 household head/ward/village tract administrator/community leader?"

[236] Batcheler, *Where Top-Down Meets Bottom-Up: Planning and Budgeting in Myanmar,* p.28.

[237] Minoletti, *Gender Budgeting in Myanmar,* p.20.

[238] Interviews HM29, LR08, LR10, LR12, LR23, LR27, LR28, LR30, SS07, SS08, SS11, SS12, SS13, SS20, SS26, SS28, SS33.

[239] Interviews LR09, LR15, LR20, LR24, SS20.

[240] Röell, *Women and Local Leadership,* p.24.

[241] Interviews LR17, LR19, LR20.

[242] Interviews HM30, LR16, SS23.

[243] Interviews HM04, SS22.

[244] Interviews LR05, LR13.

[245] Interviews HM30, SS25.

[246] Interview LR25.

[247] Interview LR04.

costs;[248] buying eggs and other food for blood donors;[249] allowing residents' to use their car for funerals.[250]

One 100 HH interviewee mentioned that not only does he have to pay for his own travel costs, but he is also expected to pay for the travel costs of the Township Education Officer when (s)he comes to their village.[251] One female interviewee, who is the chairperson of her village's *Mya Sein Yaung* fund, said that although she is entitled to be reimbursed for all of her travel costs, she sometimes does not submit her expenses, because she feels *ah nah deh*[252] to do so.[253]

It is common for local leaders, especially W/VTAs and 100 HHs, to face financial burdens in their role. However, these positions can also offer the opportunity for unscrupulous leaders to enrich themselves. Section 4 gave the example of one W/VTA interviewee describing the corruption of their previous incumbent of their role – as indicated in that quote, the authority that W/VTAs have over issuing basic paper work such as marriage permits, provides opportunity to extract illegal fees. Opportunities for larger scale corruption are provided by the role that W/VTAs have over land administration and ownership records.[254]

Family Life[255]

Female interviewees (around 50%) were more likely than male interviewees (35%) to say that their participation in community life has resulted in difficulties or challenges in their home life. This gender difference is apparent despite women being highly under represented as W/VTAs, which was the position most likely to say that their participation in community life have resulted in difficulties or challenges in their home life (almost 50% of W/VTAs said this). We also see gender differences in the types of difficulties or challenges mentioned by those that said yes to this question – around 85% of males but only around 45% of females mentioned financial issues/impact on their business or income; whereas 50% of females but less than 30% of males described having less time for family life, social life or having to work unsociable hours.

Most of the interviewees that mentioned that participation in community life has resulted in them having less time for family life or social life, having to work unsociable hours, and/or a negative impact on their livelihood, spoke of their own feeling of concern or regret over this.[256] However, some interviewees specifically described facing opposition from, or arguing with family members over this issue. The nature of opposition by family members can be shaped by the gendered roles that males and females are expected to perform with family: four male interviewees specifically described their wife criticising them or arguing with them due them spending too long on community leadership activities at the expense of their business/income-generating activities;[257] but one female interviewee mentioned her family being opposed to her becoming a 10 HH as they thought it would leave her with no time for housework,[258] and

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[248] Interview LR09.

[249] Interview HM04.

[250] Interview LR05.

[251] Interview SS08.

[252] The English language does not have a direct equivalent of *ah nah deh* and this feeling is less commonly experiences in western societies. *ah nah deh* encompasses feelings of embarrassment and awkwardness around certain social situations, perhaps especially if it involves asking someone to do something for you.

[253] Interview LR12.

[254] Maxime Boutry and others, *Land Tenure in Rural Lowland Myanmar: From Historical Perspectives to Contemporary Realities in the Dry Zone and the Delta* (Yangon: GRET, 2017), pp.136, 142.

[255] This analysis mainly builds on interview Q11 – "Has your participation in community life resulted in any difficulties or challenges in your home life?"

[256] For example, see interviews HM14, HM22, HM25, HM26, HM29, HM31, HM32, LR12, LR13, LR14, LR15, LR18, LR19, LR30, SS10, SS24, SS25, SS26, SS28, SS31.

[257] Interviews HM04, HM10, LR03, SS12.

[258] Interview SS32.

(in response to another question) a female OTH said that she had been criticised for neglecting her children so she can participate in her voluntary work.[259] Whereas, no female interviewees mentioned family members objecting to them neglecting business/income-generating activities, and no male interviewees mentioned being criticised by family members for neglecting housework or childcare. In this case, a gendered analysis of what is not mentioned as opposition to political activity is as revealing as what is mentioned.

When replying to this question, five females but only one male clearly stated the importance of receiving support from family members for being able to take on their role.[260] This finding is similar to that in Working Paper 1's study of parliamentary candidates in the 2015 elections, that found that women are more dependent than men on the support of their families and partners.[261]

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[259] Interview SS31, q.12.

[260] Interviews HM02, HM12, LR09, LR10, LR21, LR29.

[261] Tan and others, Party Building and Candidate Selection, p.35; See also, Gender Equality Network, Gender and Politics in Myanmar: Women and Men Candidates in the 2015 Elections (Yangon: Gender Equality Network, August 2017), p.32.

7. Local Leaders' Future Ambitions[262]

Around 80% of our interviewees clearly said that they would not be interested in joining a political party in the future, indicating an overall low level of interest among community leaders in becoming involved in party politics. There was no gender difference in respondents' likelihood to say no to this question. Among those that did not say no: eight interviewees said that they would be interested to join in the future; three interviewees said that they were already a member; three interviewees said that they were previously a member, are not currently, but would be interested in joining again in the future; two interviewees said they would maybe be interested; and two interviewees gave vague/unclear answers.

Among the interviewees that said they would not be interested in joining a political party and gave specific reason(s) for this, the three most common reasons were: being too old (8 males and 1 female);[263] wanting to focus on community development/social work (4 males and 3 females);[264] not being educated enough (3 males and 1 female).[265] Other specific reasons given for saying not being interested in joining a political party included: bad health;[266] wanting to live peacefully;[267] being the son of a soldier;[268] being a former soldier;[269] wanting to focus on religious activities;[270] previous political activities having landed them in jail (i.e. his participation in the 1988 protests);[271] liking the principles of certain parties but not liking the people that are in those parties;[272] not trusting myself/not having confidence;[273] being from a poor background.[274]

Only 6% of our interviewees said that they could imagine themselves ever becoming a member of parliament, or wanting to run for national elections. There was no clear gender difference in interviewees' likelihood to say yes to this question. One of the male W/VTAs that answered in the affirmative, had also been an unsuccessful parliamentary candidate in the 2015 elections, but after unsuccessfully competing in that election, decided to try and get elected as a WTA.[275]

Among the interviewees that said they could not imagine themselves ever becoming a member of parliament, or wanting to run for national elections, two did however say that they would be interested in ascending to a higher position than the one they currently occupy. A male W/VTA said that he would like to become head of his township's elected municipal body;[276] and a female 10 HH said that she would

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[262] This analysis mainly builds on interview Q21 – "Do you have to spend financial resources in your role as 10 household leader/village head/100 household head/ward/village tract administrator/community leader?"; and interview Q22 – "Can you imagine yourself ever becoming a member of parliament? Will you want to run for the elections at the national level?".

[263] Interviews HM02, HM05, HM18, LR02, LR06, LR16, LR22 LR31, LR32.

[264] Interviews HM11, HM19, LR10, LR19, LR25, SS05, SS06.

[265] Interviews HM02, HM05, HM08, LR09.

[266] Interviews HM02, HM22.

[267] Interviews HM23, LR18.

[268] Interview HM19.

[269] Interview LR27.

[270] Interview LR32.

[271] Interview SS18.

[272] Interview LR19.

[273] Interview HM15.

[274] Interview HM14.

[275] Interview HM09.

[276] Interview HM01.

like to work as W/VTA or 100 HH – the training she has received from international development organisations seems to have been significant here:

> "I don't have any plan to become an MP. If I take a higher position, I can work as a 100 household leader or village tract administrator. I'm not an educated person so I don't have much confidence. However, I think I can do more than the current village tract administrator. If elected, I will take the position of 100 household leader. I have received training from Oxfam and UNDP, that I think will help me to get chosen as 100 household leader in 2020." (Female, 10 HH, Mon State)[277]

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[277] Interview SS32.

8. Conclusion and recommendations

Legal, policy-making and formal budgetary powers in Myanmar continue to be highly centralised at the Union level. Despite the high degree of centralisation of formal authority, ward, village tract and village level leadership and decision making has a large impact on the lives of people in Myanmar, including for local development; basic administration; security and dispute resolution; and social and religious activities. Local decision making includes activities that come under: i) the system under the GAD led by W/VTAs, 100 HHs and 10 HHs; ii) village committees organised by other GoM departments; iii) local community groups; iv) activities with non-GoM groups such as EAOs, NGOs, the UN, and the World Bank. There can be considerable overlap between these categories.

Public meetings of some sort are held in communities throughout Myanmar. However, in some wards and villages public meetings are only held for organising social and religious activities; with community development, service provision and security issues being decided on by small groups of local elites. Further, in some wards and villages the public meetings that do take place provide little or no opportunity for active participation. Rural communities typically have greater levels than urban communities of active participation in decision making by local residents.

Women attend ward and village public meetings in large numbers, and frequently make up the majority of attendees, although the gender balance can vary from place to place and according to what issues will be discussed in the meeting. However, women are typically less likely than men to actively participate in discussion. Young women are particularly likely to be excluded from active decision making. The leadership positions of W/VTA, 100 HH and elders are extremely male dominated, and women are less than 1% of all the W/VTAs in Myanmar. Local level committees are also often strongly male dominated. Overall, women are disproportionately likely to experience the 'downsides' of participation (e.g. sacrificing their time to attend meetings), without experiencing the 'upsides' (e.g. being able to influence decision making and feeling empowered).

Women's lesser opportunity to take on key leadership positions and to actively participate in meetings is likely to reduce their well-being. The gender inequality of representation in key leadership positions and in active participation is likely to result in decisions being made that reflect male priorities more than female priorities. The gender inequality of participation is also likely to negatively affect the efficiency and effectiveness of local governance.

In Myanmar, as in many other countries, leadership is quite strongly associated with 'maleness' – this results in women having to do more than men convince others that they are qualified to be leaders. One indication of this is women leaders tending to be more highly educated than men, and being more likely than men to say that their leadership skills have been important for helping them to attain their leadership position. More direct evidence can be seen in many local residents expressing a preference for male leaders, and some of these (especially some men) being actively hostile to having women in leadership positions. Similarly, some women leaders describe having to face criticism that they are not able to be leaders, or that leadership is inappropriate for them. Even some leaders themselves expressed concerns over whether certain leadership roles are appropriate for women to perform. Men may also need to challenge gendered stereotypes around their behaviour to become leaders – for example, some of the men leaders but none of the women leaders interviewed for this study mentioned their sobriety or incorrupt nature as being important factors for them becoming leaders. However, the negative effect that this may have on men becoming leaders is considerably smaller than the effect on women of the

widespread association of leadership with maleness.

Aside from the general association of leadership with men but not women, specific reasons given by interviewees and FGD participants for why men make more suitable leaders often focused on the role that W/VTAs and 100 HHs have for security, the need for them to go out at night time. This view is shared not just by some men but also by some women. However, as some of the women leaders we spoke to described, there is no inherent reason why women cannot go out at night or deal with security issues. Changing cultural norms around what behaviours are not appropriate for women and what women are capable of will be important for increasing the number of women leaders at local levels, especially in the roles of W/VTAs and 100 HHs.

Participating in public life requires a considerable sacrifice of time by leaders. Particularly for W/VTAs and 100 HHs, it can also be financially demanding – the stipend that W/VTAs receive is quite low and often less than they could earn in their previous employment/business, travel and administrative costs are not always fully funded, and some W/VTAs and 100 HHs provide financial assistance to local residents and/or to community projects. A minority of leaders describe facing criticism from family members for the time or financial sacrifices that they make as a result of their involvement in community affairs, and this criticism has a clearly gendered aspect – among our interviewees, only men described being criticised by family members for neglecting their business/income, and only women describe being criticised by family members for neglecting their housework or childcare.

The expectation that leaders be male can also affect how people respond to potential and actual women leaders, including hostility from men towards a woman having a position of authority. It is notable that among our interviewees women were more likely than men to describe facing harassment as part of the process of being chosen for their position, and in some cases this harassment was clearly gendered. Women leaders were also more likely than men leaders to say that being a leader had resulted in difficulties or challenges in their home life.

Most of the local leaders interviewed for this study are not currently members of political parties, and nor do they anticipate joining a party in the future. Very few of the local leaders interviewed for this study imagine themselves wanting to run for parliamentary office in the future.

Although it was not intended to be a focus of our research, it was striking how frequently in our interviews and FGDs alcohol was mentioned as impacting on community life and decision making, including through disputes and violence occurring as a result of drinking, and alcoholism limiting the pool of men that can become leaders. Illegal drug use was also raised as a serious problem affecting community life, particularly by our interviewees and FGD participants from southern Shan State.

Recommendations for local leaders:
- Clearly inform local residents of when meetings will be held, and what will be discussed in the meetings.

- Ensure that meeting attendees have a chance to speak and to respond to the information that you give them. Particular attention should be given to encouraging women, and especially young women, to speak.

- Ensure that the ideas and feedback from public meetings are properly incorporated into decision making by local leaders. One practical way to promote this could be to add a compulsory

agenda for leaders' meetings to include ideas and feedback from public meetings.

Recommendations for the Government of Myanmar:

- Introduce direct elections for the position of ward/village tract administrator, with universal suffrage for all local residents aged 18 and above. Consider also introducing universal suffrage for the election of the positions of 100 household head and 10 household head.

- Work to change cultural norms, so that women's leadership is no longer seen as abnormal.

- Work to change cultural norms that largely exclude women from roles as security actors, including continuing to work to increase the number of women police officers.

- Provide clear annual budget ceilings to township authorities, so that township authorities rather than higher levels of government make decisions on which projects to prioritise. Similarly, township authorities must provide a clear indication to W/VTAs of what approximate budget is available for their ward/village tract when soliciting project proposals.

- Once clear annual budget ceilings are in place, introduce rules that require consistent consultation between W/VTAs/village leaders and their communities, e.g. a requirement that public meetings are held at certain regular intervals (such as monthly or bi-monthly), or when certain types of decisions are being made.

- Require that leaders clearly communicate in advance to all community members, the time, date and topics to be discussed in local public meetings.

- Seek to promote women's active participation in these meetings, e.g. by arranging pre-meetings for women's groups and calling on them to share their views during meetings. Success can be assessed by counting the numbers of women and men that attend, and by measuring how much time women and men spend speaking in the meetings. There are easy-to-use and freely downloadable apps that facilitate this.[278]

- Ensure that local leaders have adequate funding to cover necessary travel and administrative costs.

- Introduce elected governments at township level, and assign significant decision-making and revenue collection authority to this level of government.

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[278] Two examples include GenderTimer and Time To Talk.

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Appendix 1 – FGD Guide Used for Field Data Collection

1. Ice-breaking question: Please describe the changes you have seen in your ward/village over the last five years (ရွာမှာ လွန်ခဲ့တဲ့ငါးနှစ်အတွင်း ဘယ်လိုပြောင်းလဲမှုတွေရှိခဲ့လဲ။)

2. Ice-breaking question: Please describe the festivals that you celebrate in your ward/village every year (နှစ်စဉ် ရွာ/ရပ်ကွက်မှာ ဘယ်လိုမျိုး ဘာသာရေးပွဲတွေလုပ်လေ့ရှိလဲ)

3. Please describe how communal decisions are made in this ward/village *(Note for facilitator – probe on which people have more and which people have less opportunity to participate in and influence decision-making)* (ရပ်ထဲရွာထဲမှာ ရပ်ရွာနဲ့ဆိုင်တဲ့ ဆုံးဖြတ်ချက်တွေကို ဘယ်လိုပုံစံ ချမှတ်ကြသလဲ) (ပုံ့ပိုးကူညီသူ မှတ်သားရန်- ဆုံးဖြတ်ချက်ချတဲ့အခါ ဘယ်သူတွေက ပိုပြီးပါဝင်နိုင်၊ ကြွဇာလွှမ်းမိုးနိုင်ပြီး၊ ဘယ်သူတွေကတော့ ပါဝင်မှုနည်း၊ ကြွဇာ လွှမ်းမိုးမှုနည်းသလဲဆိုတာ နောက်ဆက်တွဲ မေးမြန်းရန်)

4. Can you, as a group, think of any ways to give more people opportunities to participate in village decision making? (အခု အုပ်စုအနေနဲ့ ရပ်ရွာနဲ့ဆိုင်တဲ့ ဆုံးဖြတ်ချက်ချတဲ့ကိစ္စတွေမှာ လူအများ ပိုပြီးပါဝင်လာနိုင်ဖို့ ဘယ်လို နည်းလမ်းတွေ သုံးသင့်တယ်လို့ တွေးမိသလဲ)

5. Please discuss what issues are most important for your ward/village? *(Note for facilitator – probe on whether they think everyone in the village agrees on what issues are most important, if not what differences are there e.g. between different wealth/income, age, occupation, religion etc.* (ကိုယ့်ရပ်ရွာမှာ ဘယ်ကိစ္စတွေဟာ အဓိကအရေးအကြီးဆုံးအကြောင်းအရာလဲဆိုတာ ဆွေးနွေးစေလိုပါတယ်။ ပုံ့ပိုးကူညီသူ မှတ်သားရန်- ရပ်ရွာ မှာ ဘယ်ကိစ္စက အရေးအကြီးဆုံးလဲဆိုတာကို အားလုံးက တညီတညွတ်တည်း သဘောတူ၊ မတူ လေ့လာပါ၊ မတူလျှင် ဘာတွေ ကွာခြားသလဲဆိုတာကြည့်ပါ။ ဥပမာ - ဆင်းရဲ/ချမ်းသာ ဝင်ငွေကွာဟမှု၊ အသက်၊ အလုပ်အကိုင်၊ ဘာသာရေးစသဖြင့် ကွာဟ ချက်များ)

6. Please, work together as a group to describe what your Ward/Village Tract Administrator/Village Head/100 Household Head/10 Household Head do for your community? ၁၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ၁၀၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ရွာ/ရပ်ကွက်/ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူး/ရပ်ရွာခေါင်းဆောင်ဟာ ကိုယ့်ရပ်ရွာအတွက် ဘယ်လိုကိစ္စတွေကို ဆောင်ရွက်နေ လဲဆိုတာ အဖွဲ့လိုက် ဆွေးနွေးသုံးသပ်ပေးပါ။ (ရာထူးတစ်ခု စီတိုင်းအတွက် သီးခြားစွာမေးရန်)

7. Please discuss if there are other things that you think that it would be good if your Ward/Village Tract Administrator/Village Head/100 Household Head/10 Household Head did for your community? (၁၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ရွာ/ရပ်ကွက်/ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူး/ ရပ်ရွာခေါင်းဆောင်က ရပ်ရွာအတွက် ဘာတွေထပ် လုပ်ပေးရင်ပိုကောင်းမယ်လို့ ထင်တာတွေ့ရှိလား)

8. Please discuss the characteristics of a good Ward/Village Tract Administrator (ရပ်ရွာခေါင်းဆောင်ကောင်း တစ်ယောက်ရဲ့ သွင်ပြင်လက္ခဏာတွေက ဘယ်လိုမျိုးလဲဆိုတာ ဖော်ပြပါ) (မေးခွန်းပါ ရပ်ရွာခေါင်းဆောင်ဆိုတာ ရပ်ကွက်/ကျေးရွာ အုပ်စု အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူးတို့ကို ဆိုလိုသည်)

9. a) Are there any women Ward/Village Tract Administrator/Village Head/100 Household Head/10 Household Head in your community? ရွာမှာအမျိုးသမီး ၁၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ၁၀၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ရွာ/ရပ်ကွက်/ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူးရှိလား။ ဘယ်နှစ်ယောက်လောက်ရှိလဲ။

   b) Please discuss if the current number of women in leadership positions in your 10 households/100 households/ward/village tract leadership positions is satisfactory? Why do you think it is/is not

satisfactory? (လက်ရှိ ၁၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ရာအိမ်မှူး၊ ရွာ/ရပ်ကွက်/ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူး/ ရပ်ရွာခေါင်းဆောင်နေရာမှာ ရှိနေတဲ့ အမျိုးသမီးအရေအတွက်က အားရကျေနပ်ဖွယ်ကောင်းသလား၊ ဘာကြောင့် အားရကျေနပ်/ အားရမကျေနပ်တာပါလဲ)

10. Please work together as a group to describe the most active women's group in your village/ward? What do they do? What do you think of their role in your village/ward? (ကိုယ့်ရပ်ရွာထဲမှာ အတက်ကြွဆုံး အမျိုးသမီးအဖွဲ့ရှိ၊ မရှိခြင်းအပေါ် အစုအဖွဲ့အနေနဲ့ စဉ်းစားပြီးပြောပြပေးပါ။ ရပ်ရွာမှာ သူတို့ရဲ့အခန်းကဏ္ဍက ဘာတွေလဲ)

11. Do you think women and men have the same ability to be THE village/ward leader? Why is that? Please discuss. [*(Note for facilitator – probe on: do women and men have the same opportunities / face the same challenges to become a leader? Please highlight leadership abilities mention by participants in your notes*]. (ရပ်ရွာခေါင်းဆောင်ဖြစ်ဖို့ အမျိုးသားနဲ့အမျိုးသမီး စွမ်းရည်အတူတူရှိတယ်လို့ ထင်ပါသလား။ ဘာကြောင့်လဲ ထင်/ မထင်ဆိုတာ ဆွေးနွေးပေးပါ။ ပံ့ပိုးကူညီသူမှတ်သားရန် - ခေါင်းဆောင်တစ်ယောက်ဖြစ်ဖို့ အမျိုးသားနဲ့အမျိုးသမီးတို့ အခွင့်အရေး အတူတူရကြသလား၊ ကြုံရတဲ့စိန်ခေါ်မှုတွေ တူသလားဆိုတာ နောက်ဆက်တွဲမေးမြန်းပါ။ ခေါင်းဆောင်မှုအရည်အချင်းနဲ့ ပတ်သက်ပြီး ပါဝင်ဆွေးနွေးသူတို့ အဓိကထားပြောကြားချက်တွေကို မှတ်သားပေးပါ)

Appendix 2 – Interview Guide Used for Field Data Collection

1. How many years have you held your current position? (အခုလက်ရှိနေရာမှာ တာဝန်ထမ်းဆောင်နေတာ ဘယ်နှစ်ရှိပြီလဲ)

   a. Did you hold any community leadership positions before that? If yes, please give dates and positions. (အရင်တုန်းကရော ရပ်ရွာဒေသရဲ့ ခေါင်းဆောင်မှုနေရာတစ်နေရာရာ တာဝန်ယူခဲ့ရတာမျိုး ရှိသလား၊ ရှိခဲ့ရင် �‌ဘယ်တုန်းကလဲ၊ ဘယ်နေရာလဲဆိုတာ ကျေးဇူးပြုပြီးပြောပြပေးပါ)

2. What is your current main occupation? လက်ရှိ အဓိကအလုပ်အကိုင်က ဘာလဲ။ (တကယ်လို့ အလုပ်အကိုင်တစ်ခု ထက်ပိုရှိနေလျှင် အချိန်လည်းပိုပေးရပြီး၊ ဝင်ငွေလည်းပိုရတဲ့အလုပ်ကိုင် အဓိကထားမေးရန်။)

3. What is the highest level of education you have obtained? (အမြင့်ဆုံးတက်ရောက်အောင်မြင်ခဲ့တဲ့ ပညာ အရည်အချင်းကို ပြောပြပါ)

4. What were your main motivations for becoming a community leader? (ရပ်ရွာဒေသရဲ့ ခေါင်းဆောင်ဖြစ်ဖို့ လူကြီးမင်းကို အဓိကစေ့ဆော်တိုက်တွန်းခဲ့တဲ့အချက်တွေက ဘာတွေလဲ)

5. Were there any role models that inspired you to engage in community affairs? (ရပ်ရွာဒေသကိစ္စတွေကို ဆောင်ရွက်တဲ့အခါ ကိုယ်လေးစားအားကျ အတုယူခဲ့ရတဲ့ စံပြပုဂ္ဂိုလ်တွေက ဘယ်သူတွေလဲ)

6. Has anyone else in your family or relatives been involved in community affairs? If so, please give details. *(Note to interviewer – this includes all relatives e.g. cousins, uncles, grandparents etc, not just their immediate family)* (ကိုယ့်မိသားစုထဲ့ ဒါမှမဟုတ် ဆွေမျိုးတွေထဲမှာရော ရပ်ရေးရွာရေးကိစ္စတွေမှာ ဝင်လုပ်နေတဲ့သူတွေ ရှိလား၊ ရှိရင် အသေးစိတ်ပြောပြပါ။ အကယ်၍ သေဆုံးသွားရင်လည်းထည့်မေးရန်။ မေးမြန်းသူမှတ်သားရန် - ဆွေမျိုးသားချင်းထဲ တွင် ၉ပမာ - ဝမ်းကွဲများ၊ ဦးလေးများ၊ အဖိုးအဖွားများအစရှိသူတို့ ပါဝင်သည်၊ သွေးသားအရင်းအချာတစ်ခု တည်းမဟုတ်ပါ)

7. When did you first stand for election as a 10 Household leader/Village head/100 Household Head/ Ward/Village Tract Administrator? (၁၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ၁၀၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ရွာ/ရပ်ကွက်/ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူးအဖြစ် ဘယ်တုန်းက ပထမဆုံးအကြိမ် ရွေးကောက်ပွဲဝင်ခဲ့တာလဲ)

8. a) Did you need to use your own financial resources to become a 10 Household leader/Village head/100 Household Head/Ward/Village Tract Administrator/community leader? (၁၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ၁၀၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ရွာ/ရပ်ကွက်/ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူး/ ရပ်ရွာခေါင်းဆောင်ဖြစ်ဖို့ ကိုယ့်ရဲ့ငွေကြေးတွေသုံးစွဲရခဲ့တာ ရှိသလား)

   b. Do you have to spend your own financial resources in your role as 10 Household leader/ Village head/100 Household Head/Ward/Village Tract Administrator/community leader? ယခုလက်ရှိ တာဝန်ထမ်းဆောင်နေတဲ့နေရာကို ထိန်းသိမ်းထားဖို့ ငွေကြေးသုံးစွဲနေရတာရှိပါသလား။

9. What skills and abilities helped you to become a 10 Household leader/Village head/100 Household Head/Ward/Village Tract Administrator/community leader? (၁၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ၁၀၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ရွာ/ရပ်ကွက်/ကျေးရွာ အုပ်စု အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူး/ရပ်ရွာခေါင်းဆောင်ဖြစ်ဖို့ ဘယ်လိုအရည်အချင်းတွေက အထောက်အကူပြုသလဲ)

10. When you were running as a candidate for the village/ ten household leader /tract administrator position, what kind of response did you get from your community? (၁၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ရွာ/ရပ်ကွက်/ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူး/ ရပ်ရွာခေါင်းဆောင်အဖြစ် ဝင်ရောက်အရွေးချယ်ခံတုန်းက ရပ်ရွာဒေသကလူတွေက ဘယ်လိုတုန့်ပြန်ကြသလဲ)

(၁ ကြိမ်အထက် ဝင်ရောက်အရွေးချယ်ခဲ့လျှင်လည်း အကြိမ်တိုင်းအတွက်မေးရန်)

11. Has your participation in community life resulted in any difficulties or challenges in your home life? (ရပ်ရွာဒေသကိစ္စတွေမှာ ပါဝင်တဲ့အတွက် ကိုယ့်မိသားစုဘဝမှာ အခက်အခဲဖြစ်တာတွေ၊ စိန်ခေါ်မှုတွေ ရှိလာတာတွေ ရှိသလား) (၁ ကြိမ်အထက် ဝင်ရောက်အရွေးချယ်ခဲ့လျှင်လည်း အကြိမ်တိုင်းအတွက်မေးရန်)

12. Did you face any harassment or intimidation or strong competition during your election? If so, please elaborate. (ရပ်ကျေးရွေးကောက်ပွဲဝင်တုန်းက ကိုယ့်ကို စော်ကားနှိပ်ချတာတွေ၊ သိက္ခာချ နှောင့်ယှက်တာတွေ ကြုံခဲ့ ဖူးသလား။ ကြုံခဲ့ဖူးရင် အကျယ်ချဲ့ပြောပြပါ)

Community Leadership and Governance (ရပ်ရွာဒေသခေါင်းဆောင်မှုနှင့် အုပ်ချုပ်မှု)
13. In your opinion, what kind of leader does your community prefer? (သင့်အမြင်အရ၊ သင့်ရဲ့ရပ်ရွာဒေသက လူတွေက ဘယ်လိုခေါင်းဆောင်မျိုးကို ပိုသဘောကျတယ်လို့ ထင်သလဲ) *(သူတို့ဆီက အဖြေပဲလိုချင်တာ၊ ဥပမာအရင်ပေးလို့မရ)*

14. How do you make decisions for your community? ရပ်ရွာဒေသအတွက် ဆုံးဖြတ်ချက်တွေကို ဘယ်လိုချမှတ်လေ့ ရှိသလဲ (၁၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ၁၀၀ အိမ်မှူး တွေဆိုရင် မိမိအပိုင်တွေကိုရည်ညွှန်းပြီးမေးသာရန်)

15. What opportunities do your community have to participate in decision-making? (ရပ်ရွာဒေသက လူထု ကိုယ်တိုင်ဆုံးဖြတ်ချက်ချတဲ့အပိုင်းတွေမှာ ဝင်ပါနိုင်တဲ့ ဘယ်လိုအခွင့်အရေးမျိုးတွေရှိသလဲ)

16. Are community meetings held in your ward/village? If so, how regular are they? Who attends the meetings? (ကိုယ့်ရပ်ကွက်/ကျေးရွာမှာ လူထုအစည်းအဝေးပွဲတွေ ကျင်းပသလား၊ ကျင်းပရင် ဘယ်လိုပုံမှန်ကျင်းပသလဲ။ ဘယ်သူတွေ တက်ရောက်သလဲ၊ ဘယ်သူတွေက ပိုပြီးဆွေးနွေးကြလေ့ရှိလဲ)

17. Do you do anything to promote a close relationship between village/household leaders and community? ကျေးရွာခေါင်းဆောင်/အိမ်ထောင်စုခေါင်းဆောင်တွေနဲ့ ရပ်ရွာလူထုအကြား ရင်းနှီးတဲ့ဆက်ဆံရေးဖြစ်အောင် ကြိုးစားတည်ဆောက်ပေးတာမျိုးရှိလား (ဥပမာပေးလို့ရ သို့သော် အရင်မပေးရ။ ဥပမာပေးခဲ့ရင် ရေးမှတ်ထားရန်)

Political Ambition of Community Leaders (ရပ်ရွာလူထုခေါင်းဆောင်များ၏ နိုင်ငံရေးရည်မှန်းချက်)
18. As a community leader/ village leader/10 household leader/ 100 household leader/ tract / ward/ administrator, what do you think is your most important role? (၁၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ၁၀၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ရွာ/ရပ်ကွက်/ ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူး/ ရပ်ရွာခေါင်းဆောင်အနေနဲ့ ကိုယ့်ရဲ့ အဓိကအရေးအကြီးဆုံးအခန်းကဏ္ဍက ဘာလို့ထင်သလဲ)

19. As a female village leader/ten household leader/tract administrator, do you think you have a particular role to play? အမျိုးသမီး ၁၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ရွာ/ရပ်ကွက်/ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူး/ ရပ်ရွာခေါင်းဆောင်အနေနဲ့ သီးခြားလုပ်ဆောင်ရတဲ့ အခန်းကဏ္ဍရှိပါသလား (ဖြေဆိုသူက အမျိုးသမီးဖြစ်နေမှသာမေးရန်၊ အမျိုးသမီးထုအတွက် သီးသန့် လုပ်ဆောင်ပေးရတာ ရှိမရှိကို အသားပေးမေးရန်)

20. Do you think that women and men have the same opportunities and face the same challenges to become a community leader/ village leader/ten household leader/tract administrator? (အမျိုးသမီးနဲ့ အမျိုးသားဟာ ၁၀ အိမ်မှူး၊ ရွာ/ရပ်ကွက်/ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူး/ ရပ်ရွာခေါင်းဆောင်ဖြစ်ဖို့ အခွင့်အရေးအတူတူရှိတယ် လို့ ထင်ပါသလား၊ ပြီးတော့ သူတို့ရင်ဆိုင်ရတဲ့ စိန်ခေါ်မှုတွေကရော အတူတူလို့ထင်ပါသလား)

21. In the future, would you be interested in joining a political party? What kind of position would you be interested in the party? (အနာဂတ်မှာ နိုင်ငံရေးပါတီတခုခုမှာ ပါတီဝင်ဖို့ စိတ်ဝင်စားပါသလား၊ ပါတီမှာဝင်လုပ်မယ် ဆိုရင် ဘယ်လိုနေရာ/ ရာထူးတွေမှာလုပ်ဖို့ စိတ်ဝင်စားပါသလဲ)

22. Can you imagine yourself ever becoming a member of parliament? Will you want to run for elections at the national level? (ကိုယ့်ကိုယ်ကိုယ် လွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်တစ်ဦး ဖြစ်လာဖို့ စိတ်ကူးဖူးပါသလား။ နိုင်ငံ အဆင့် ရွေးကောက်ပွဲတွေမှာ ပါဝင်ယှဉ်ပြိုင်မလား)

23. On hindsight, what do you think is the best experience or accomplishment in your community leadership career? (နောက်ဆုံးအနေနဲ့ ကိုယ့်ရပ်ရွာဒေသအတွက် ခေါင်းဆောင်မှုပေးခဲ့တဲ့နေရာမှာ အကောင်းဆုံး လုပ်ဆောင်နိုင်ခဲ့တဲ့ အတွေ့အကြုံနဲ့ ပြီးမြောက်ခဲ့တဲ့အလုပ်တွေက ဘာတွေဖြစ်မလဲ)