

BROADENING PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN OF ETHNIC POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE PEACE PROCESS

NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



March 2019

*A project implemented by
The Carter Center and the Women's League of Burma,
with the support of UKAID*



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Broadening Participation of Women of Ethnic Political Parties in the Peace Process

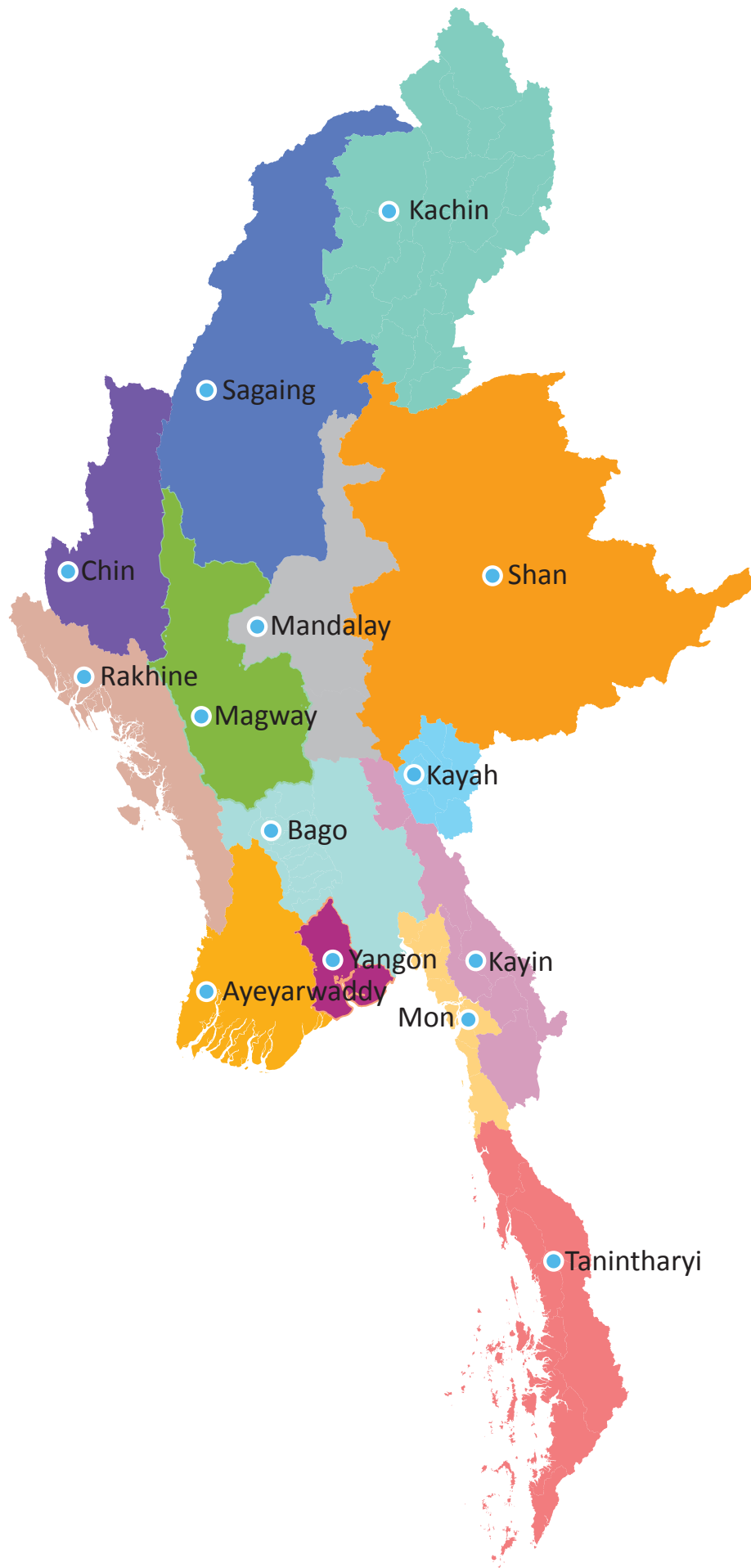
Needs and Recommendations

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All pictures by Shwe Paw Mya Tin & Sai Zaw Thaike

Preface by The Carter Center

In Myanmar, as in many other conflict areas of the world, women are largely excluded from peace talks. Although women from Myanmar's ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by the consequences of subnational conflicts, including sexual violence, women involved in the peace process number far less than the 30 percent encouraged by the United Nations and agreed to by the participants in the Myanmar peace process. Women are also less represented in governments and parliaments of states, where there is a higher proportion of ethnic minorities, than in the regions.

Exclusion of women hinders the chances of success of the peace process. Empirical evidence indicates that a broader involvement of women in peace talks – both as negotiators and as external advocates – correlates with higher chances of reaching a peace agreement. Greater involvement of women also correlates with more comprehensive and sustainable peace agreements.

To ensure a larger role for women in the Myanmar peace process, the emergence and strengthening of stakeholders able to convey citizen voices to institutional actors must be supported. Political parties and civil society organizations are generally well positioned to gather and convey citizens' views, but their roles in the peace process have been considerably marginalized, in part by restrictions in the functioning of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC). Only 10 of 52 EPPs can participate in the UPDJC (less than 20 percent).

Exclusion of women and marginalization of ethnic political parties (EPPs) intersect and limit the involvement of civilian voices in Myanmar's peace talks. This contributes to a dynamic in which the peace process focuses on military issues and has largely become a dialogue between "men with guns."

The limited involvement of EPPs in the official peace process is unlikely to change in the short term. However, political parties can explore other ways to assert their role in the peace process, including promoting peace issues in society and on the political scene, coordinating to maximize the benefit of the presence of some ethnic parties in the UPDJC and in other mechanisms of the peace process ecosystem, and conveying their constituents' views on the peace process in the national and regional parliaments.

Since August 2018, The Carter Center and the Women's League of Burma, with the support of UK Aid, have jointly implemented a program called Broadening Participation of Women of Ethnic Political Parties in the Peace Process. The objectives of the project have been to promote women's voices in the peace process, strengthen women's involvement in EPPs, build dialogue among EPPs, and enable EPPs to better represent civilian voices in the peace process.

From August to November 2018, The Carter Center and WLB conducted a needs assessment survey to ensure that the project best served these objectives and to increase stakeholder awareness of the main constraints and opportunities for women's inclusion and EPP involvement in the peace process, as perceived by women members and the leadership of Myanmar EPPs. The two organizations interviewed 90 representatives from 49 EPPs.

Based on the findings of the Ethnic Political Parties Needs Assessment Survey Report, the Women's League of Burma and The Carter Center organized a national dialogue conference in November 2018. The conference, entitled "Broadening our Participation in Politics and the Peace Process,"

was attended by women representatives and party leadership of 47 EPPs.

That national conference gave women of EPPs the rare opportunity to engage in dialogue about the challenges faced by ethnic women and their political parties when they try to participate in the peace process and to identify key objectives for future coordination to promote inclusion of civilian voices, and women's voices in particular, in the peace process.

Based on the findings of the needs assessment survey and the conclusions of the national dialogue conference, the Women's League of Burma and The Carter Center conducted a training in Taunggyi, Shan State, in February 2019. The training focused on peacebuilding, mediation and negotiation, which had been identified as a high priority topic by the women participants.

As the first phase of the program reaches its conclusion, we are pleased to share this report with the peacebuilding community and the Myanmar public to provide an overview of the main findings and recommendations gathered during its implementation of the program.

The report identifies a large array of needs that still require to be addressed to ensure greater inclusion of women's and civilian voices in the Myanmar peace process. It also adds to the limited public information on the ethnic political parties, their structures, strategies, visions of the peace process, and the role they play or could play in peace talks. The findings and conclusions provide a unique platform for future programming in support of women's participation in the peace process, as well as a better understanding of the ethnic political parties of Myanmar.

We hope this report will constitute a useful contribution toward an inclusive and sustainable peace in Myanmar. We would like to thank warmly all the women and ethnic political parties that participated in the program. The commitment they have demonstrated to the success of the program is evidence of the important benefit their voices would bring to the peace process. We also thank UK Aid for its generous support and assistance during the implementation of the program.

Greg Kehailia

Country Director

The Carter Center - Myanmar

Preface by Women's League of Burma

Burma/Myanmar is at a critical point in its history. Three years after the Union Peace Conference convened at the end of 2015, the inclusion of all ethnic armed groups in the conference has not been fully implemented. At the same time, the inclusion of political parties and civil society has not been accomplished according to the framework of political dialogue adopted by the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee.

Moreover, there are ongoing armed clashes between the Tatmadaw and the ethnic armed organizations, both the NCA signatories and non-signatories. Furthermore, the representation of women, who make up more than half of the population, has been lacking throughout the political dialogue and the whole negotiation process for a nationwide cease-fire agreement. The participation of women in decision-making roles in the peace process is crucial both to the development of adequate gender equality principles and to the success of the process as a whole.

At this critical point, Women's League of Burma and The Carter Center present this joint assessment examining the voice of the ethnic political parties, particularly women with ethnic backgrounds, in the peace process. The objectives are to learn the needs of women in ethnic political parties to inform the league's work to strengthen women's involvement in EPPs; to promote women's participation in the peace process; to enable EPPs to better represent the ethnic voice in the peace process; and to guide national and international assistance providers when designing programs related to inclusion of ethnic civilian voices in the peace process.

We, Women's League of Burma, hope to promote gender equality through more women's participation in decision-making roles in the peace process of Myanmar. The establishment of a genuine federal union that guarantees self-determination and ethnic equality, including women's and ethnic minority representation, is a prerequisite to ending our civil war and building a sustainable peace.

Lway Poe Ngeal

General Secretary

Women's League of Burma

Ethnic Political Parties Needs Assessment Survey Report

December 2018





Ethnic Political Parties Needs Assessment Survey Report

Broadening Participation of Women from Ethnic Minorities
and Ethnic Political Parties in the Peace Process

December 2018

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Acronyms

EPPs	– Ethnic political parties
EAOs	– Ethnic armed organizations
UPDJC	– Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee
NCA	– Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
PPCO	– Political Parties Coordination Office
UEC	– Union Election Commission
NEMO	– Next Generation Evaluation and Monitoring
CEC	– Central Executive Committee
EC	– Executive Committee
UNA	– United Nationalities Alliance
NBF	– Nationalities Brotherhood Federation
CSOs	– Civil Society organizations
NGOs	– Non-governmental organizations
UNFC	– United Nationalities Federal Council
IDPs	– Internally displaced persons
Tatmadaw	– Myanmar Army

Executive Summary

From August to November 2018, The Carter Center and the Women's League of Burma conducted a needs assessment survey of what women of ethnic political parties (EPPs) and EPPs themselves would need to reach a broader involvement in the peace process.¹ The needs assessment survey was conducted with the generous support of UKAid as part of the program Broadening Participation of Ethnic Women in the Peace Process.² The assessment was conducted to strengthen women's involvement in EPPs, promote women's voices in the peace process, support dialogue among EPPs, and enable EPPs to fill the vacuum of civilian voices in the peace process.³

The Carter Center and the Women's League of Burma engaged with 52 EPPs and conducted 90 interviews with representatives of 49 EPPs. Of these, 47 interviews were done with representatives of EPP leadership and 43 were done with women representatives of the party. The assessment involved desk research, questionnaires, phone and in-person interviews, observation, and software-based data processing and analysis. This assessment will inform the strategy of the program and support strategy development by women of EPPs and by EPP leaders. Its findings may also be useful to national and international assistance providers when designing programs related to inclusion of civilian voices in the peace process.

Key Findings

Following are the key summaries of women and EPP leaders' responses in each of three areas: participation of ethnic women in political parties; participation of women and EPPs in the peace process; and EPP engagement of citizens on peace.

1. Women hold different positions within parties, from chairwoman to party supporter, and shoulder responsibilities ranging from reviewing and drafting core policies to simple administrative work, helping the smooth functioning of the party. However, women hold relatively few leadership positions in EPPs.
2. Female members face many difficulties within parties, including discrimination by means of gesture/behavior, language, actions, and policies, while outside the party there is a lack of public support and a dearth of incentives to engage in party politics.
3. Ethnic political parties are those with a party name referencing an ethnic minority, where members are from the same ethnic group, and/or where parties compete only in areas where members of the same ethnic identity reside. Four parties which met these criteria identified themselves as state-based rather than ethnic parties.
4. The peace process under 21st Century Panglong is unsatisfactory and mostly seen as symbolic by respondents, who perceive it as not inclusive, not reflecting the realities on the ground, as replacing the Panglong commitments with merely the "spirit of Panglong," and

1 In accordance with the confidentiality principle agreed upon with survey respondents, political party names are not included in connection with specific responses.

2 Views expressed in this report are principally those of respondents consulted during the needs assessment, women participants in the program and other representatives of ethnic political parties. These views do not necessarily reflect the views of The Carter Center, the Women's League of Burma, or the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

3 The research and interviews for this survey were jointly conducted by The Carter Center (Su Mon Thant, Program Officer) and the Women's League of Burma (Mu Caroline, Project Officer).

as having weaknesses in technical aspects.

5. Formal and informal interparty coordination for peace dialogues exists to an extent. Political parties with no representation in the formal peace process find ways through their alliances to give input, influence negotiations, and make recommendations.
6. The majority of ethnic political parties have at least a general clause regarding peace in their party platforms or manifestos. However, most parties still lack concrete details in their platforms on approaches and actions to achieve peace.
7. A key challenge for ethnic political parties is the limitation of their participation in various levels of the peace process, given that there are no alternative channels to engage in the process or access other decision-making venues.
8. Limitations on the participation of political parties without elected representation in the peace process reinforce the exclusion of women of ethnic political parties in a context where women already face discrimination.
9. There is only limited engagement between ethnic political parties and citizens of their respective constituencies in the peace process, mainly due to complexities of the process itself, parties' lack of peace updates, parties' limited resources to organize public meetings, restrictions on party activities, and the presence of more pressing regional issues.
10. Citizens' desire for peace is deemed strong by EPPs. However, citizens do not know how to participate in the peace process, nor how peace can be achieved. There are different levels of understanding of peace among citizens. To some, peace means the lack of fighting or absence of military troops in the area, while to others peace means regional safety and development. Many do not fully comprehend how the 21st Century Panglong process works.

Participant Recommendations

EPP leaders and women representatives of EPPs made several recommendations during the needs assessment survey to overcome challenges and structural barriers. The following is a summary of recommendations, taken from their responses:

- *A strategy for a collective voice:* Gender inclusion in the peace process has slightly improved as organizations such as Women's League of Burma advocate for more women in ethnic armed organizations. However, it is still weak in terms of unifying a collective voice. Women of ethnic minority political parties should develop a network, maintain regular coordination, and cooperate to fill this gap.
- *A strategy for effective peace negotiations:* To provide fact-based and informed negotiations in peace roundtables, women of ethnic political parties should develop a strategy to keep each other informed, connected, and prepared in all five sectors of the peace process, to assist their mother parties in developing concrete policies and in negotiations.
- *A strategy for effective inclusion of women representatives:* To overcome external and structural barriers, women of ethnic political parties should draft a gender policy that includes special mechanisms or affirmative actions and advocate accordingly for adoption by political parties, peace institutions, and electoral bodies.

- *A strategy for access to information:* To inform citizens with peace updates, women of ethnic political parties should create alternatives for access and disseminate peace-related information. This includes making peace information available in local languages and disseminating through local media.
- *A strategy for mobilizing citizens:* To mobilize citizens around matters regarding peace, women of ethnic political parties should develop mechanisms including interparty coordination to maximize the coverage of party supporters and increase citizens' participation.
- *A strategy for inclusion:* To include concerns and recommendations of those who are excluded from the formal peace process and those who do not have opportunities to engage in informal dialogues, women of ethnic political parties should develop an inclusive channel or medium to bring those voices to negotiation tables and ensure their inclusion.

Introduction

In their pursuit of self-determination and a federal system, most ethnic groups in conflict with the army have chosen a two-track process, setting up both EPPs and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). The peace process foresees a significant role for political parties under the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC). However, EPPs have been marginalized, both in practice and by a set of restrictions unforeseen in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). In total, 83 percent of EPPs are not represented in the UPDJC.

In order to meet the objectives of broadening women's involvement in ethnic political parties, promoting women's voices in the peace process, and enabling EPPs to fill the vacuum of civilian ethnic political representation in the political dialogue, the Women's League of Burma and The Carter Center jointly conducted a preliminary assessment that identifies the needs of ethnic women of EPPs, including the challenges they face to access leadership positions in their own parties and obstacles to their participation in peace talks.

The needs assessment is intended to shape the program design of the Women's League of Burma and The Carter Center's further support for dialogues between women and party representatives regarding challenges, critical objectives for a roadmap, and advocacy strategy to increase ethnic women's participation in politics and the peace process. This document intends to serve as a basic guide for donors and implementers when designing their programs and strategies to bring civilian voices into the peace process.

Methodology

Research methods, tools, and data analysis

The study used qualitative methods to assess the needs of 49 EPPs and to identify opportunities for the greater inclusion of ethnic women in the peace process and in politics. The study involved desk research and reviewing of secondary literature, consultations, questionnaires, pilot studies, phone and in-person interviews, general observation, and the use of data processing and analysis software.

Two sets of questionnaires were developed; one for parties and one for women representatives. Questionnaires were created through consultation with different stakeholders – particularly ethnic alliances and the Political Parties Coordination Office (PPCO). The questionnaires used tools and methods such as open-ended questions, structural questions, order rankings and checkbox multiple-answer questions. Questionnaires were improved after review and pilot studies. In total, there were 38 questions in the party leadership questionnaire and 26 questions in the women representatives' questionnaire. Phone and in-person interviews were the main data collection methods. The average interview length was 45 minutes.

The scope of this needs assessment is to provide a brief analysis of challenges faced by ethnic women of EPPs and the support required for their effective engagement in the peace process and in politics. Ninety interviews were completed, 77 by telephone and 13 in person. NEMO software, developed by The Carter Center, was used for data processing and analysis.

Given the complex nature of party politics and the legal framework for the formation of political

parties in Myanmar, which sets no classification or definition to distinguish ethnic identity-based or ideology-based parties, The Carter Center had pre-identified fifty-five parties meeting its criteria. These criteria include: 1) the presence of a particular ethnic group's name in the party's name and a logo associated with this identity; 2) the founding members and party members are from the same ethnic group; 3) the party platform includes points to maintain ethnic identity and the development of ethnic literature and culture; and 4) the party is registered as a state-based party and competed only in selected areas where their ethnic member resides.

As four Karen parties merged and became one – the Karen National Democratic Party – during the course of the study, the total number of EPPs surveyed fell to 52. Of those, 49 (94.2%) agreed to participate in the interview process, and three EPPs (one each related to the Wa, Mon, and Kokang ethnic groups) declined to participate. Two EPPs (both related to the Inn ethnic group) agreed to interviews of a woman member but not a leadership member. Six EPPs (one each related to the Rakhine, Kha Me, Chin, Danu, Zo, and Daingnet ethnic groups) were able to propose a leadership member to be interviewed but did not identify a woman member who could participate in the survey.

Of the 90 interviews, 47 were conducted with a representative from party leadership (i.e., from the Central Executive Committee), and 43 were with women representatives who had been active for a least one year in the party and had reached a mid- to senior-level position. Only seven of the 47 party leadership interviews were with women. Thus it is fair to note that party leaderships' views essentially reflect male perspectives.

Limitations

The reliance on phone interviews as the assessment method involved challenges such as difficulty in trust-building, clarification of questions, and poor phone connections. There could also be some misunderstandings and loss of information due to language barriers and bad communication. As the contact information of EPPs is taken from the Union Election Commission (UEC) database, where the party office's addresses and contact numbers did not seem to have been recently updated, there were delays when reaching out to parties for interviews.

As the interviews coincided with some parties' campaigns for the 2018 by-elections and other parties' merger negotiations, some respondents were unavailable, which caused delays in the completion of the interviews.

Section I:

Ethnic Women's Participation in Political Parties

Needs assessment interviews were conducted with women representatives from 43 ethnic political parties; six other EPPs had no women representatives and therefore did not participate. Responses provided information on the difficulties faced as a female party member, the challenges in general for ethnic women to engage in party politics, and whether or not they see challenges in recruiting female party members as a problem and how they are addressing these issues. This session also discussed the roles and responsibilities of women members in their party to more fully understand the actual quality of work they undertake, beyond their job title and official position in the party. At the end of the session, this report summarized the activities identified by women representatives to broaden the inclusion of women in ethnic political parties.

Wide-ranging roles and responsibilities of women in parties

Women hold different positions within their parties, from chairwoman to party supporter, and shoulder responsibilities that range from reviewing and drafting core policies to simple administrative work, helping the smooth functioning of the party. However, women hold relatively few leadership positions in EPPs.

Women have diverse responsibilities in their parties, ranging from reviewing parties' core policies to supporting roles for the secretariat team in their campaigning trips and missions. In general, the three types of party activities women are involved in are central, women-related, and administrative. Among 49 political parties interviewed, only two parties have a woman as chair. On average, women's representation in central or leadership committees of EPPs is approximately 15 percent (109 women and 636 men, of EPPs responding).

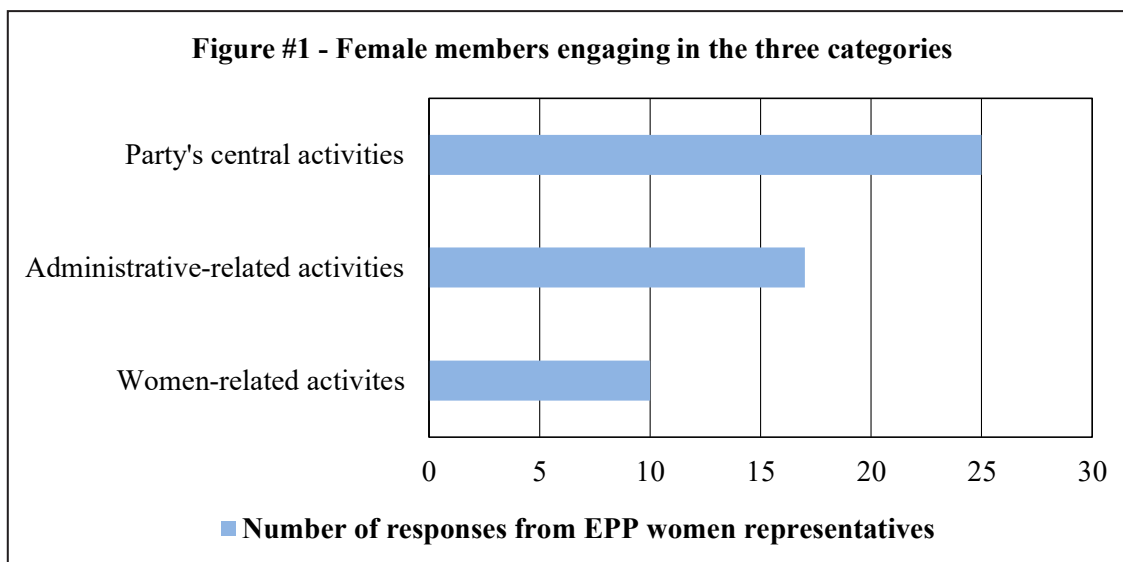
In party central activities, women hold different types of responsibilities, according to the respondents. Some are given tasks to review and/or draft their party's constitution and policies, while others are engaged in speech writing; forming committees for land, women, and youth at the various level of the party; planning campaign strategies and election campaigns; community mobilization; and coordination among different party branches. In addition, women attend trainings, workshops and network meetings as party representatives. This is particularly true for women of member parties with ethnic alliances such as the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA) and the Nationalities Brotherhood Federation (NBF). Several women of ethnic alliance member parties have the role of external relations to liaison with diplomatic and international communities. In at least two exceptional cases, women from parties engaging in the merger talks assumed the role of merger coordinator. They were tasked to review conflicting policies and draft new ones that would work for all parties involved in the merger. Women of EPPs with a representation in the formal peace process often participate in the UPDJC's sectoral meetings held under the Working Committees⁴. As a few EPPs have capacity development programs for their members, women of those parties can either select trainees or attend workshops and seminars themselves to pass on what they have learned to junior members.

⁴ Committees founded for systematic implementation of the tasks based on the subjects to be discussed at the dialogues. There are five working committees on five subjects: political affairs, economic affairs, social affairs, security affairs, and policies on land and natural environmental affairs.

Women are recruited to coordinate or lead women-related matters in a party. Five EPPs mentioned that they have a separate committee for women's affairs, capacity building or advocacy for women quotas. These committees can take on tasks such as women-to-women outreach and network development, forming subcommittees at the village tract level, and organizing informal talks with female constituents. Generally, women party members are tasked to attract women voters and to mobilize female constituents.

Another responsibility for women in parties is performing administrative-related tasks. These include organizing regular party meetings and VIPs' campaign trips, doing party finance work, performing and implementing requests from party leaders, and providing necessary assistance to the party leadership.

Figure #1 shows the number of women engaging in the three mentioned categories. However, these are not mutually exclusive, and work may fall into multiple categories.⁵



Challenges facing ethnic women when engaging in party politics

Women representatives' views

The study confirms that it is difficult for women to overcome multiple challenges and get involved in the public sphere. Women face at least three types of obstacles when trying to engage in party politics: social norms and expectations of a woman's role; lack of network and connections; and prejudice and discrimination in political parties.

The first obstacle relates to the core responsibilities of women defined by the society. Women perform the majority of domestic work at home, while also working outside the home for their livelihood, and therefore rarely have time to pursue interests such as engaging in politics. Difficulty in financing these interests is a further difficulty. A different view is that women are apolitical due to long-term political suppression. Associated beliefs exist, such as "Women are followers," and "Affairs related to conflicts and politics are men's business." Lack of proper educational opportunities for ethnic women, especially in conflict areas, also leads to their not attaining their full potential in both skills and knowledge, posing further obstacles for ethnic women to build

⁵ In two instances, a woman held the position of Chair and was involved in all of the party's activities.

confidence to engage in party politics, according to respondents.

When they manage to overcome social norms, women face a lack of information and personal connections, so the channels for women to get involved in the political process or to become a party member are limited. According to one respondent, women have more confidence to join a party when they have personal relations with the chair or a member of that party. Respondents lamented the lack of party efforts to reach out to women constituents and introduce their work, mobilize, or attract members.

Female respondents claimed that once they manage to join a political party, they often encounter prejudice from male counterparts and face discrimination. Women are seen by their male counterparts as not qualified to be given a position or incompetent to perform a task and are usually limited to administrative roles. This hinders women's progression in party hierarchies and leads to other issues such as the lack of incentives for women to participate in the political process. Women also encounter societal pressure and discrimination. For instance, women receive less public support and are often dismissed or taken less seriously than men.

According to a few respondents, ethnic women also face deeper language barriers in overcoming all these challenges than men.

Party leadership views

Of the party leadership respondents interviewed, seven of 47 were women, and their views corresponded with what women representatives said when interviewed. These include women's lack of time to undertake responsibilities in the party due to family and livelihood matters, lack of capacity or political knowledge, lack of political background and competence, less interest in party politics, and less support from the public. In addition, these respondents suggested women consider politics to be related to conflict and thus men's business. According to party representatives, women face more pressure from society due to traditions and cultural norms. They attributed women's lack of interest to lack of proper education, language barriers, and a lack of incentives— i.e., prospects for advancement within the party.

Party leadership respondents claimed that women face logistical challenges when they travel for party affairs, such as while campaigning. This is due to security concerns, such as passing through conflict zones where clashes often occur and military troops are present. Party leaders also pointed out lack of support to female members, weaknesses in campaign strategizing and poor recruitment of women. They claimed that women lack patriotism or the dedication to working for ethnic minorities, ethnic states or the country that would serve as a driving force to overcome challenges.

Figure #2.1 shows challenges for women’s participation in politics identified by women representatives and party leaders.

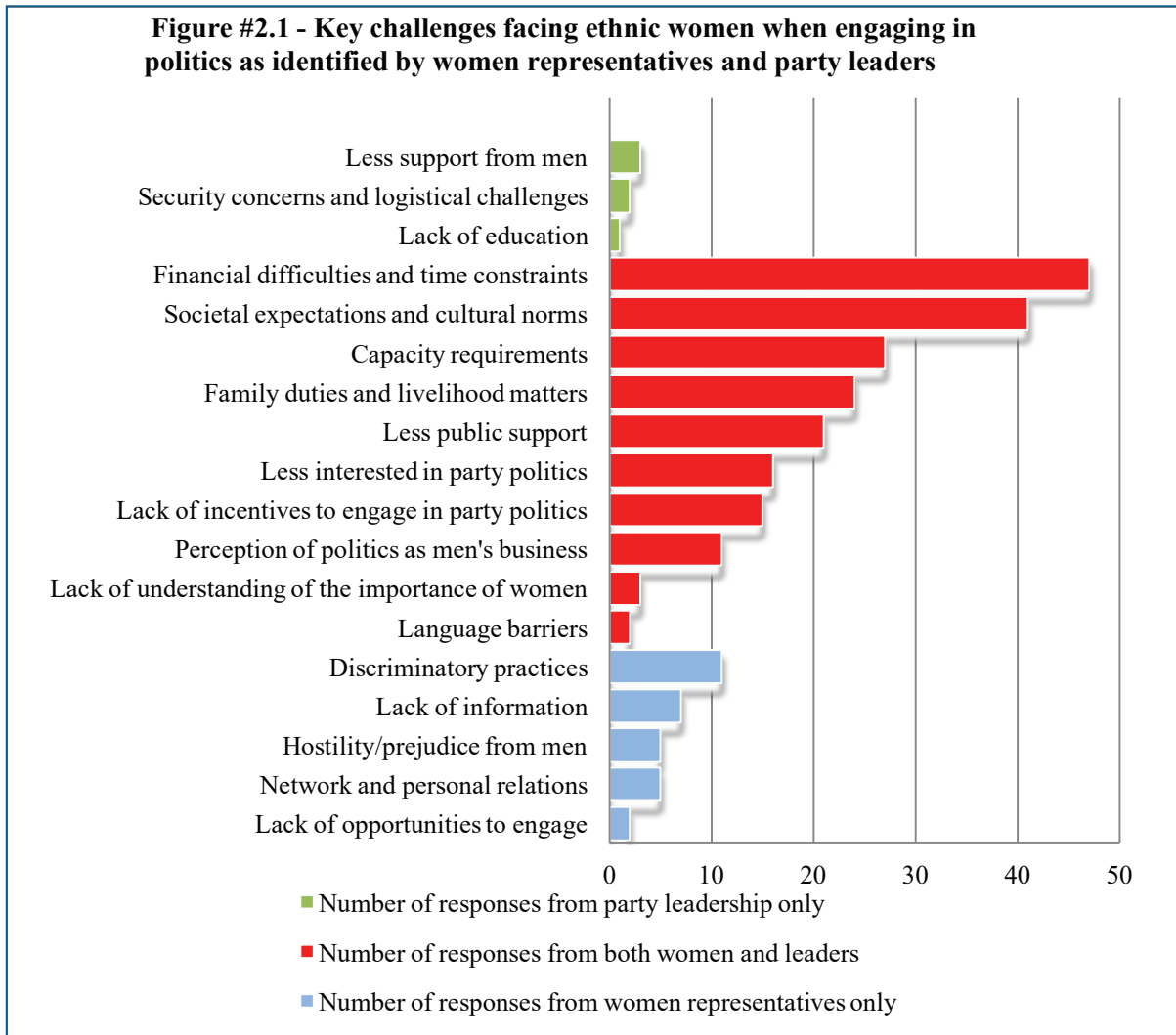
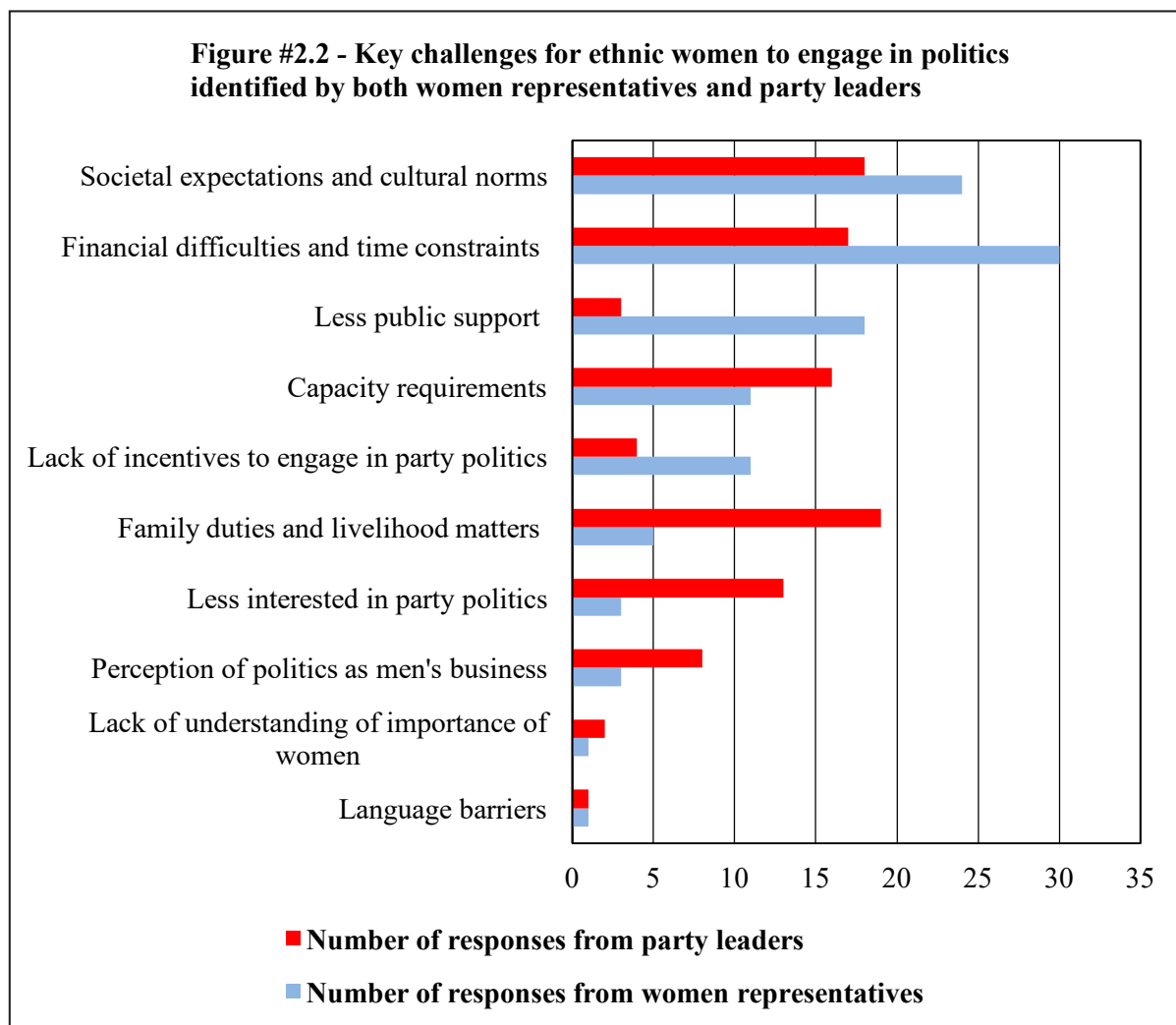


Figure #2.2 shows the disaggregation of data between women representatives and party leaders for challenges identified by both categories in figure #2.1.



Difficulties for female party members

Female party members face many difficulties within the party, including discrimination by means of gesture/behavior, language, actions, and policies, while outside the party there is a lack of public support and a dearth of incentives to engage in party politics.

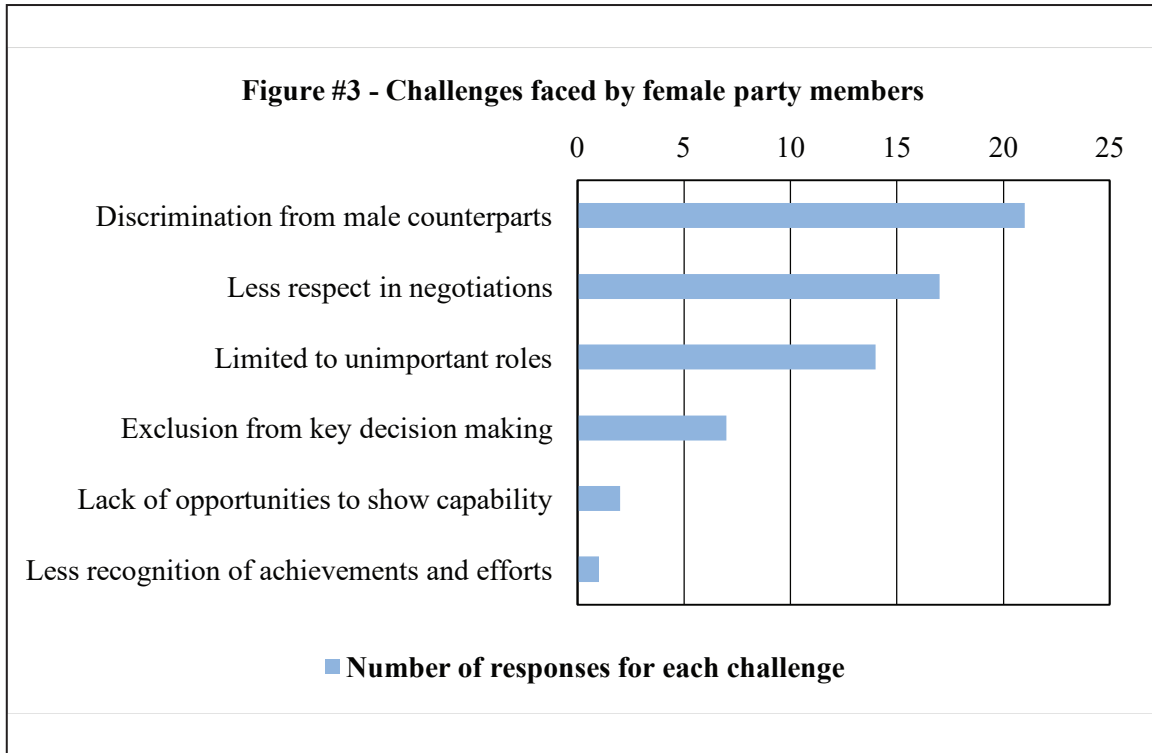
Generally, female party members face many challenges. There are vast ranges of opinions among women representatives; this report focuses on the most frequent responses.

In addition to the three obstacles mentioned above, women face other difficulties being a party member. This includes discrimination from male counterparts, exclusion from key party activities and decision-making, being limited to administrative duties, and receiving less recognition/appreciation of their efforts and achievements. Respondents said parties prioritize male members' attendance at peace and political conferences; proposals from women members are not taken seriously and are received with sarcasm and jokes. (For instance, after proactively advocating for a 30 percent female quota, women were teased with nicknames of "30 percent quota.") The parties' seating plans place men in the front rows, leaving women to sit at the back. And, male members

take prestigious roles and tasks at female members’ expense.

Two respondents also pointed out that while women are often seen by men as incapable, parties do not support or provide space for women to show their capability. As males dominate senior leadership in most parties, when there are different values and perspectives, junior members — including women — have to compromise or enforce policies they do not support, according to respondents of two EPPs. One respondent commented that patriarchy in their party is very strong; senior male leaders do not delegate jobs and responsibilities to male junior members and female members.

Figure #3 shows additional challenges women face to participate in politics.



Challenges for ethnic political parties in recruiting female members

While there are a lot of limitations for women to engage in party politics, ethnic political parties also experience challenges recruiting female members. Among a total of 47 interviews, 32 party leaders stated that their parties try to recruit women and 15 parties said they do not.

Parties that do not target women cited different reasons. A few respondents mentioned that they understand the importance of women but parties faced a shortage of human resources or declining membership of both men and women. Four said they target all members of society without giving priorities to any group. One EPP said it has a policy to increase youth and women membership in forming township executive committees and higher bodies; hence, targeting women members would diminish its co-emphasis on youth. Another EPP said women in its regions are more active than men and easier to organize, so no additional targeting effort was needed. Another EPP stated it has plans to recruit but has not started yet – although they rarely provided explanations. Yet, a few parties do not prioritize women because it would make “little difference for party movements”. Some claim that because women consider themselves “not relevant to politics”, organizing them would be a waste of resources.

According to respondents, parties trying to recruit women face both objections (i.e., husbands opposing their wives' joining the party) and challenges. Challenges include a lack of women with political knowledge, lack of human resources, and geographical challenges for party movements and organizing activities in ethnic areas.

Advantages of women's inclusion in ethnic political parties

Women representatives' views

One hundred percent of women respondents stated that women's participation is important. Women members believed that increased inclusion would help improve parties' efficiency and image. More representation of women in EPPs would also provide a voice for women and children. As women bring different perspectives, it would help parties adopt inclusive approaches to policy, including on gendered issues. According to women respondents, women have better understanding of conflicts and peace, and their involvement would therefore help achieve peace more quickly and sustain it. In addition, women believe that women ensure the linkage between individual level and community level more than men, and their involvement would therefore help make parties more accountable to their constituencies. Women's involvement would also attract women to exercise their right to vote in elections. As there are widespread traditional practices and societal norms pressuring women in politics, some respondents believe that more inclusion of women in party activity would help break the glass ceiling and set an example for women in society to challenge the norms and get more involved in politics. There are also views that women in ethnic political parties would contribute to maintain ethnic identity, although respondents did not clarify what they meant by that statement.

Party leadership views

To understand whether party leaders share similar views to women representatives, they were asked whether less female participation in ethnic political parties is problematic or not.

Thirty-nine parties answered that they see it as a problem. They asserted that underrepresentation of women in EPPs hinders parties' capacity to address women and youth issues, reduces accountability to constituencies, makes parties' functioning less effective, and reduces their ability to represent more than 50 percent of the population and attract women voters. Some party leaders agreed with women representatives' statement that women have different perspectives to offer about peace and would help improve their party's image.

Eight parties answered by minimizing the importance of women's participation, citing constraints such as limited funding to reach out to women or to organize movements, limited human resources, and leadership's perceptions of women's "quiet and apolitical nature."

Possible measures for more inclusion of women in ethnic political parties

Party activities to improve women's participation in EPPs

In response to questions about mechanisms or plans parties might have to increase their number of women members, 23 said they have none, while 18 said they do have such plans or mechanisms. Described plans include adopting gender policies and setting a minimum percentage for female

membership in party leadership and committees. One party said it intends to introduce a 30 percent women quota. Another party said it plans to start with a 15 percent quota. Seven said although they do not have specific mechanisms or plans yet, they are reviewing policies to plan as necessary. For instance, one party created through a merger of several EPPs is currently in the stage of reviewing policies to draft a new platform that covers most aspects, including gender policies.

Parties that do not have plans or mechanisms invoke reasons associated with internal party issues, in addition to the general challenges regarding women's inclusion mentioned above.

Required support to improve the participation of women in party politics

The female representatives interviewed identified the following actions as likely to improve the inclusion of women in party politics:

Capacity building and trainings: Female members believe that women of EPPs would require capacity building and training around the topics of women's rights, empowerment, gender equality, and legal issues, and training focused on skills such as political analysis, research, negotiation, empowerment and confidence building.

Political talks and dialogues: A majority of respondents suggested that there should be regular political talks and dialogues organized by parties with the aim to encourage women to join political causes. Respondents said that this should be led by party leaders and that women could be mobilized by convincing them that they can contribute to the country beyond representing only group or individual interests. Alternatively, party leaders should reach out to women and explain the party's standpoint, action plan and policies.

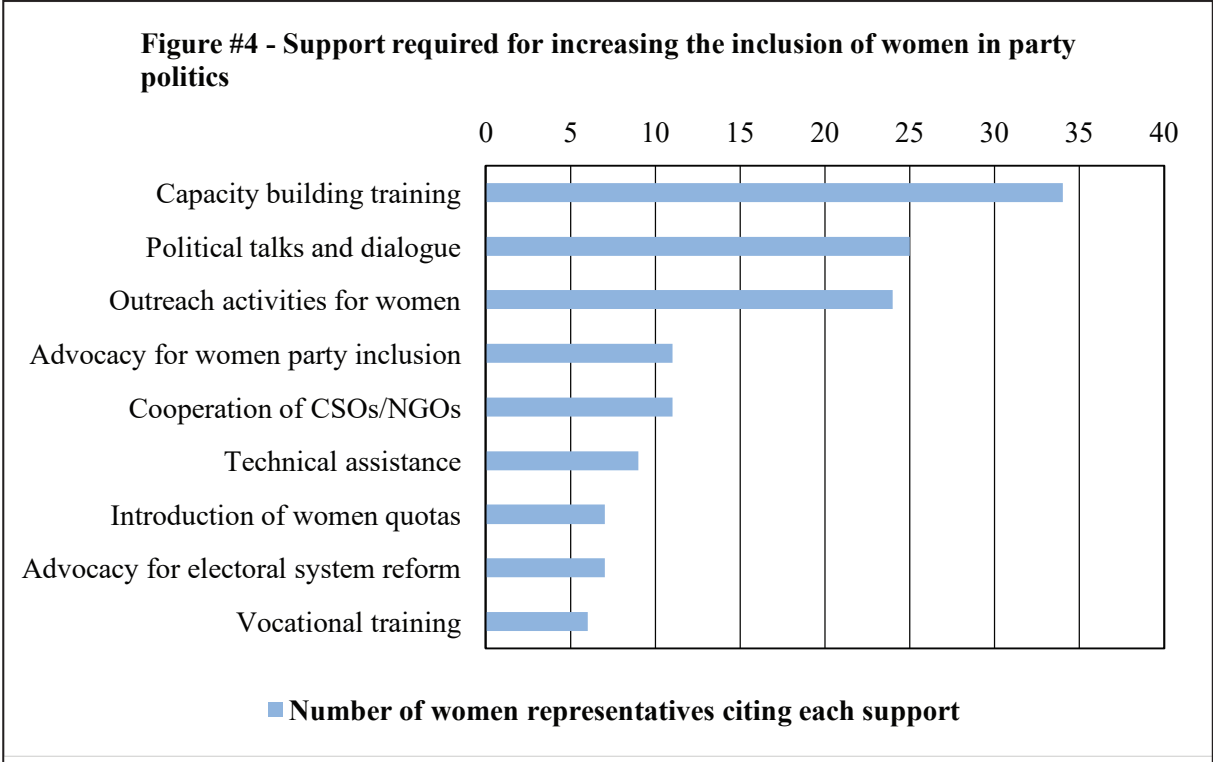
Outreach activities for women: As one of the key barriers for women to participate in politics is family duties and time constraints, the most effective way to mobilize women members of ethnic communities is to conduct outreach activities. A set of activities that are carefully designed to adapt to ethnic women's needs with a bottom-up approach would be the most effective way, respondents said.

Creating job opportunities and providing vocational training: Engaging in formal politics requires financial resources. For instance, party members pay monthly membership fees in most parties at a rate proportionate to the position held. Regardless of other types of support, if women do not have a source of income to fund their activities, they will remain less involved in party politics than men. According to some of the respondents' answers, some of the parties apply a scalable fee system where the higher one's position is in the party, the higher fees one is expected to pay.

Advocacy for electoral reform: To ensure more women's participation in party politics, women respondents highlighted the need to continue advocacy for the adoption of gender policies, either at the party level as a requirement for parties to compete in elections, or in the elections legal framework itself, e.g. with a seats quota.

Cooperation of CSOs/NGOs: More than 10 respondents mentioned that they need technical assistance from CSOs and NGOs to effectively engage in party politics. Others requested CSOs/NGOs apply a female quota in the implementation of programs related to parties, for instance by explicitly inviting women members to participate in their activities.

Figure #4 shows the number of respondents supporting possible measures for further inclusion of women in party politics.



Section II:

Ethnic Political Parties' Participation in the Peace Process

Definition of ethnic political parties (EPPs)

Ethnic political parties are those with a party name referencing an ethnic minority, where members are from the same ethnic group, and/or where parties compete only in areas where members of the same ethnic identity reside. Four parties which met these criteria identified themselves as state-based rather than ethnic parties.

In a total of 47 party leadership interviews, 43 respondents said they consider their parties to be ethnic parties. This was because their party was named after their ethnic group, its members were from the same ethnic group with no or few mixed nationalities, the party's aim was to represent their ethnic nationality including policy to preserve their ethnic identity, and they contested only in areas where their ethnic group resides. Four political parties, including one prominent ethnic party, said they do not consider themselves ethnic parties and prefer to be referred to as state-based parties. Reasons for rejecting the EPP label include membership being open to all ethnicities, policies that target all of Myanmar, and founding members who were from different ethnic groups. Some parties, despite being clearly grounded in ethnicity, define themselves as nationwide parties with the ambition to contest in more than one state or region and to represent all nationalities with broader policy objectives.

Ethnic political parties' analyses of 21st Century Panglong

The peace process under 21st Century Panglong is unsatisfactory and mostly seen as symbolic by respondents, who perceive it as not inclusive, not reflecting the realities on the ground, as replacing the Panglong commitments with merely the "spirit of Panglong," and as having weaknesses in technical aspects.

Party and women representatives of political parties share similar concerns regarding peace and showed little variation by gender. Respondents shared their analyses of the peace process under 21st Century Panglong from a variety of perspectives as described below.

General opinions: Most participants felt that the peace process is off track or not moving forward on matters seen as priorities by ethnic parties. Several respondents pointed to the many restrictions faced by various types of stakeholders (EPPs, CSOs, EAOs) on holding national dialogues⁶, which political parties are allowed to do. However, respondents did not specify the exact nature of the restrictions. To others, having ongoing peace talks is better than nothing, but even respondents with less skeptical views are unsure about practicalities and the effectiveness of the negotiations.

Approaches to peace and achieving a federal state: While some respondents thought the Panglong

6 National dialogues are political dialogues allowed under UPDJC's terms of reference and are organizing along three lines: ethnicity-based, region-based, and theme-based. Registered political parties, CSOs, ethnic armed organizations, regional and state governments are entitled to hold national dialogues individually or collectively under the supervision of UPDJC's supervisory committees.

conference is the only mechanism, others believe that it is not the only way to achieve peace and a federal state. A different view put forward is related to amending the constitution. A few respondents pointed out that correct amendment of the 2008 constitution could mean an NCA would no longer be needed. Several respondents feared that the NCA and Union Peace Accord⁷ will not be followed by constitutional revision, despite commitments.

Duration of the process: Participants agreed that the peace process would take a long time. The reasons given included that it takes time to collect voices from the ground for consultation and reach an agreement and that it requires building trust and patience.

Visions for achieving peace: A majority of respondents stated that peace has little chance to be achieved unless self-determination and federal democracy are ensured and the Tatmadaw changes its mindset and stops fighting. Respondents echoed that as long as political problems are still seen as armed conflicts, military abuses continue, peace actors persist in putting their interests above the interests of those whom they purport to represent, and/or the Panglong promises⁸ are not fulfilled, peace will not be possible. One representative remarked that 21st Century Panglong seems not to be going in the direction of the promises made by General Aung San in the original Panglong agreement⁹.

Interpretation of the meaning of Panglong: Some respondents think that the 21st Century Panglong, based as it is on the 2008 Constitution, is a replacement of the 1947 Panglong agreement, which could see the original concrete commitments being replaced by a more limited “spirit of Panglong.”¹⁰

Actors and the balance of power: Several respondents agreed that the peace process under the 21st Century Panglong is not inclusive. The barring of participation by registered but non-elected parties, without having gone through any legal process, is perceived as a violation of the NCA framework. Respondents felt that armed parties are more powerful than ethnic parties, which are not given equal respect or representation. Also, respondents asserted that the Tatmadaw is more powerful and can influence the government.

Perceptions of advantage: The composition of the actors in the peace structure can create disadvantages, representatives said. Of the three groups or blocs in the UPDJC¹¹, the Tatmadaw has the strongest, most unified voice, whereas armed groups and ethnic political parties have more diverse internal voices, making it more difficult to coordinate and to come up with an agreement.

Women’s participation: Most respondents felt that the level of women’s participation is very low in every sector, particularly the security sector. Few respondents commented that the agreement in the third 21st Century Panglong meeting on a 30 percent female quota was not sincere and merely a consequence of avoiding more controversial principles on the agenda, such as citizenship and human rights. For example, a few women representatives claimed that they were not informed

7 The officially agreed UPDJC’s recommendations consolidated from national dialogues through working committees become Union Peace Accord (or Pyidaungsu Accord) after being submitted to National Legislatures or the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw for ratification. Following the third Union Peace Conference or 21st Century Panglong conference, the Union Accord includes 51 agreed points.

8 The reference to Panglong promises/agreement by the respondents means the commitments made by General Aung San and the Bamar leaders under the 1947 constitution, which guarantees equality, ethnic rights and the right to secession.

9 Commitments made under the 1947 constitution or the Panglong Treaty.

10 The “spirit of Panglong” is a new concept introduced in the Union Peace Conference, referring to unity for nation building. The spirit of Panglong implies democratic rights, self-determination, liberty, equality and justice, and upholding principles of non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity, and perpetuation of national solidarity.

11 The three blocs making up the UPDJC are the government, EAOs and EPPs, with each having 16 seats. The Tatmadaw is in the government bloc and takes five seats (Hluttaw has two seats; the NLD government has nine seats).

before they signed the four gender-related points¹² of the Union Peace Accord.

Public participation and accessibility: According to respondents, citizens think that peace concerns the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed groups, not citizens. The public is neither informed about the peace agreements nor provided channels to participate. Respondents mention that the peace process is very centralized and does not include public voices or allow citizens' participation — for instance, the public is not informed of the option to form township-level peace committees. News media are the main source of peace information for a majority of respondents claiming lack of access to information.

Capacity: Respondents consider the government's role limited and believe it does not understand the process. A respondent stated that the government stands only on the rules and regulations and has no vision for the future. Also, respondents asserted that although political parties are involved, they are not effective, saying EPPs do not fully understand the framework. A few respondents said the UPDJC itself only presents the recommendations from lower levels and cannot come to any final decisions.

Problems with top-down approach: Respondents said the reality on the ground is more complicated than perceived at the Union or subnational level. This is due to interethnic and land conflicts, the disproportionate suffering of women, and the intimidation of locals in conflict areas. Therefore, peacebuilding should use a bottom-up approach, respondents suggested.

Recommendations: Respondents suggested ensuring a ceasefire as the first step, then moving to dialogue on a federal democracy. They suggested negotiators focus on common goals and build trust among themselves, ideally with the support of a third party. A few respondents said ethnic political parties need to unite and speak with a common voice.

EPP engagement in peace dialogues

Formal and informal interparty coordination for peace dialogues exists to an extent. Political parties with no representation in the formal peace process find ways through their alliances to give input, influence negotiations, and make recommendations.

There were 16 ethnic political parties able to engage in the formal peace process through either UPDJC's political parties' forces at the national level or various working committees at the subnational level. As there are a total of 23 winning political parties (24 after the 2018 by-election) making up the political party bloc, they hold monthly meetings, inviting other parties and CSOs to share peace updates. They also engage in informal dialogues through their alliances and networks. Informally, almost all ethnic political parties got to engage in dialogues, from participating in events organized by CSOs and NGOs to attending formal peace dialogues as representatives upon the invitation of their allied armed groups. In one instance at least, an EPP attended the peace dialogue as a representative of an EAO.

In terms of interparty coordination, there are 24 ethnic parties engaging to give input and provide

12 Principle #1: In establishing a Union based on democracy and a federal system, no citizen of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar may be discriminated against based on gender difference and policy must be established for equality. Principle #2: A minimum of 30 percent involvement of women in every sector is to be encouraged. Principle #3: In establishing a Union based on democracy and a federal system, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is to establish and implement policies that prevent gender-based violence. Principle #4: Increase the capability of women to support gender equality.

recommendations. The common trends include coordination through the following:

- Ethnic party alliances, such as United Nationalities Alliance (UNA), Nationalities Brotherhood Federation (NBF), and Ethnic Nationalities Political Center (ENPC).
- Bilateral engagement with some of the 23 winning political parties.
- Smaller networks, sometimes interethnic.
- Engagement with or representation through the allied armed group(s).
- State-based larger networks.

Although most parties participate in some sort of coordination, six EPPs do not.

Figure #5.1 shows the number of parties engaging in either formal or informal peace dialogues. Sixteen parties engage in both formal and informal peace dialogues and there are twenty-four other parties engaging informally. Six parties have no engagement.

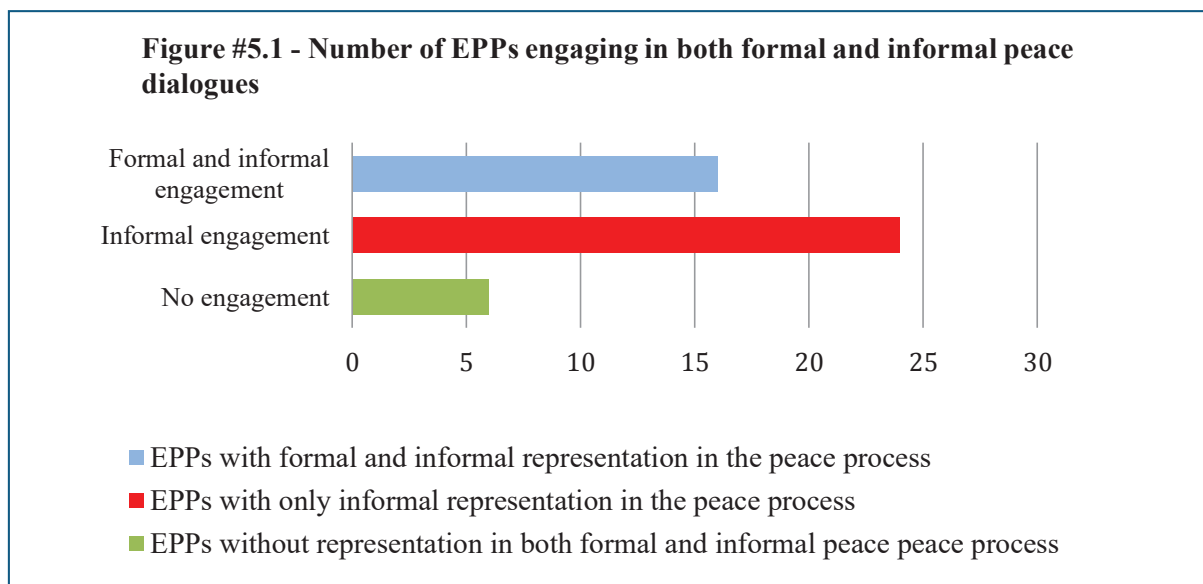
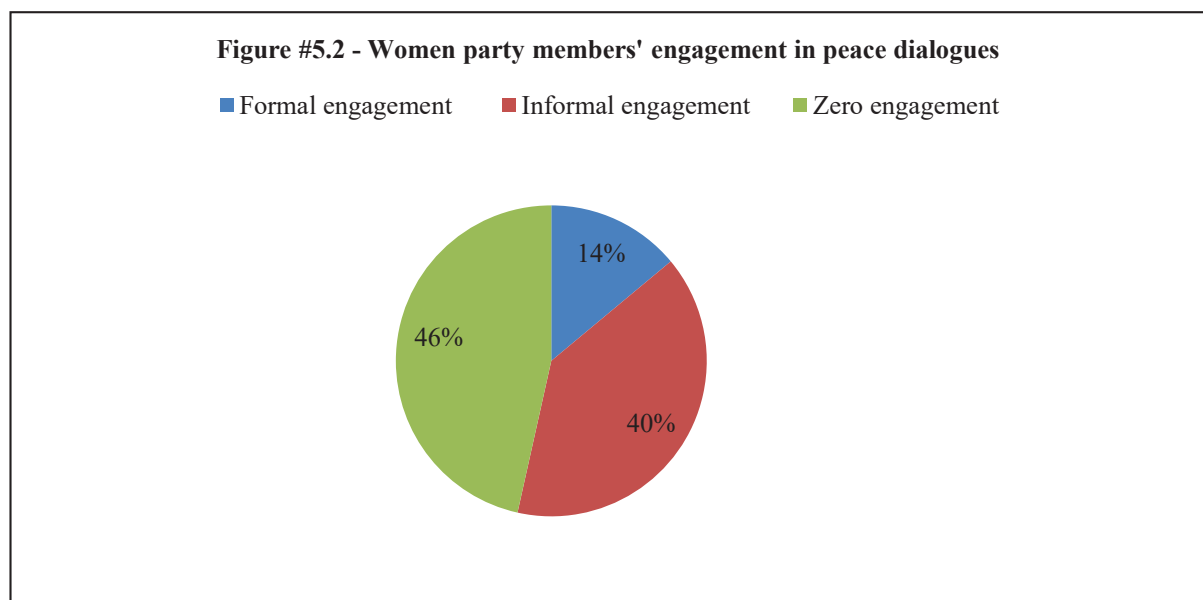


Figure #5.2 shows the percentage of women party members who had formal or informal engagement in peace dialogues.



EPPs' party manifestos on peace

The majority of ethnic political parties have at least a general clause regarding peace in their party platforms or manifestos. However, most parties still lack concrete details in their platforms on approaches and actions to achieve peace.

The majority of ethnic political parties (26) include peace clauses in their platform or manifesto as general objectives. However, when it comes to specific policies, approaches and action plans, only eight parties said they have policies regarding peace. The other 18 parties have a general clause such as “The party will strive for federal democracy,” “The party will build the state based on Panglong spirit,” “The party supports democracy,” “The party will ensure to live in harmony,” “The party will attain democracy and peace,” “The party will work for peace and security,” “The party will protect ethnic rights,” etc. Few EPPs align on the same policy or the clause of their allies or federations.

Nineteen ethnic political parties said they have no peace-related platform or manifestos. Reasons provided by parties for not having any peace-related policy include time constraints for policy drafting before they entered elections, the fact that the peace process was not yet initiated at the time the party was founded, and that they are more concerned with other issues relevant to them and perceive peace as army business. The Shan Nationalities League for Democracy Party does not fall into the above categories as it is currently drafting a peace-specific policy.

Challenges for EPPs to participate in the peace process

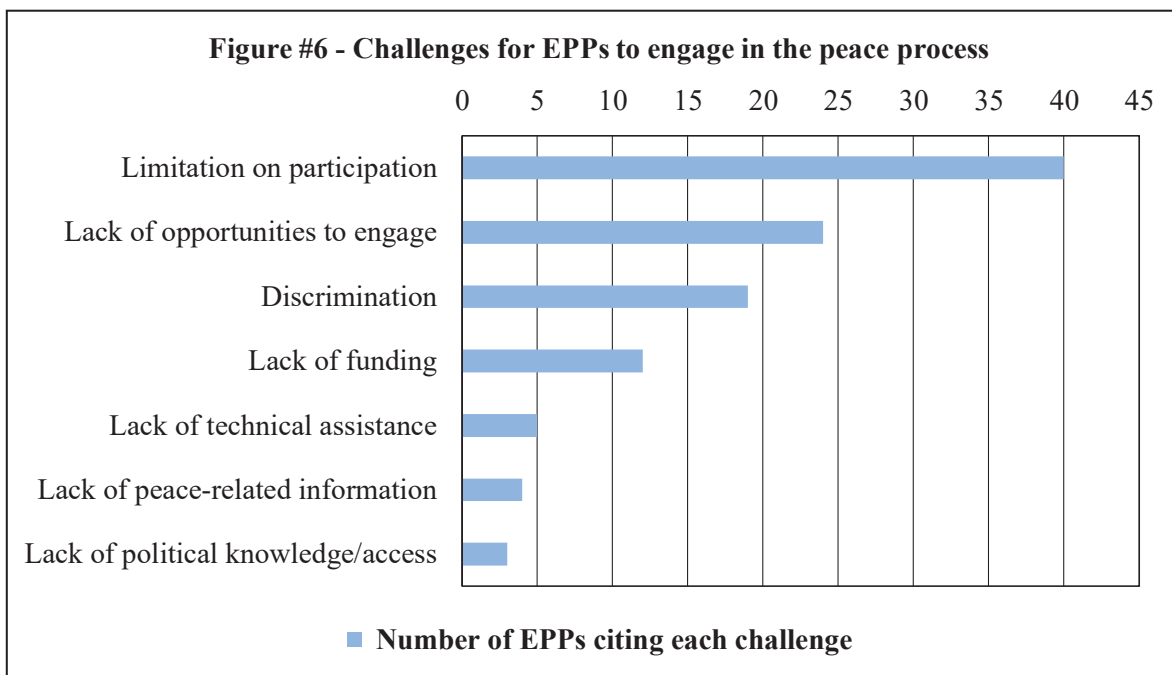
A key challenge for ethnic political parties is the limitation of their participation in various levels of the peace process, given that there are no alternative channels to engage in the process or access other decision-making venues.

There are challenges for ethnic political parties that bar them from effectively engaging in the peace process. The key challenge for most EPPs is the limitation of their participation in the formal peace process or representation in the UPDJC and its working committees because they did not win a single seat in elections¹³. Referring to the previous administration, where all registered political parties could read their recommendations at the Union Peace Conference, parties mentioned that there no longer are alternative channels to access decision-making levels and present regional issues.¹⁴ They said restrictions are placed on national dialogues in ethnic states such as Kachin, Shan and Rakhine, although none of the respondents could elaborate more on the exact nature of restrictions. Apart from these limitations, respondents stated that ethnic political parties lack funding, peace updates, and technical assistance to effectively participate in the process. Some representatives mentioned that they also lack political knowledge. The 2008 Constitution is also viewed by a few as a limitation.

¹³ Both 2015 general elections and 2017 by-elections.

¹⁴ Ethnic states face peace-related issues such as land conflicts, interethnic conflicts, social and human security and discrimination and human rights violations.

Figure #6 shows key limitations to effectively engage in the peace process as perceived by EPPs.

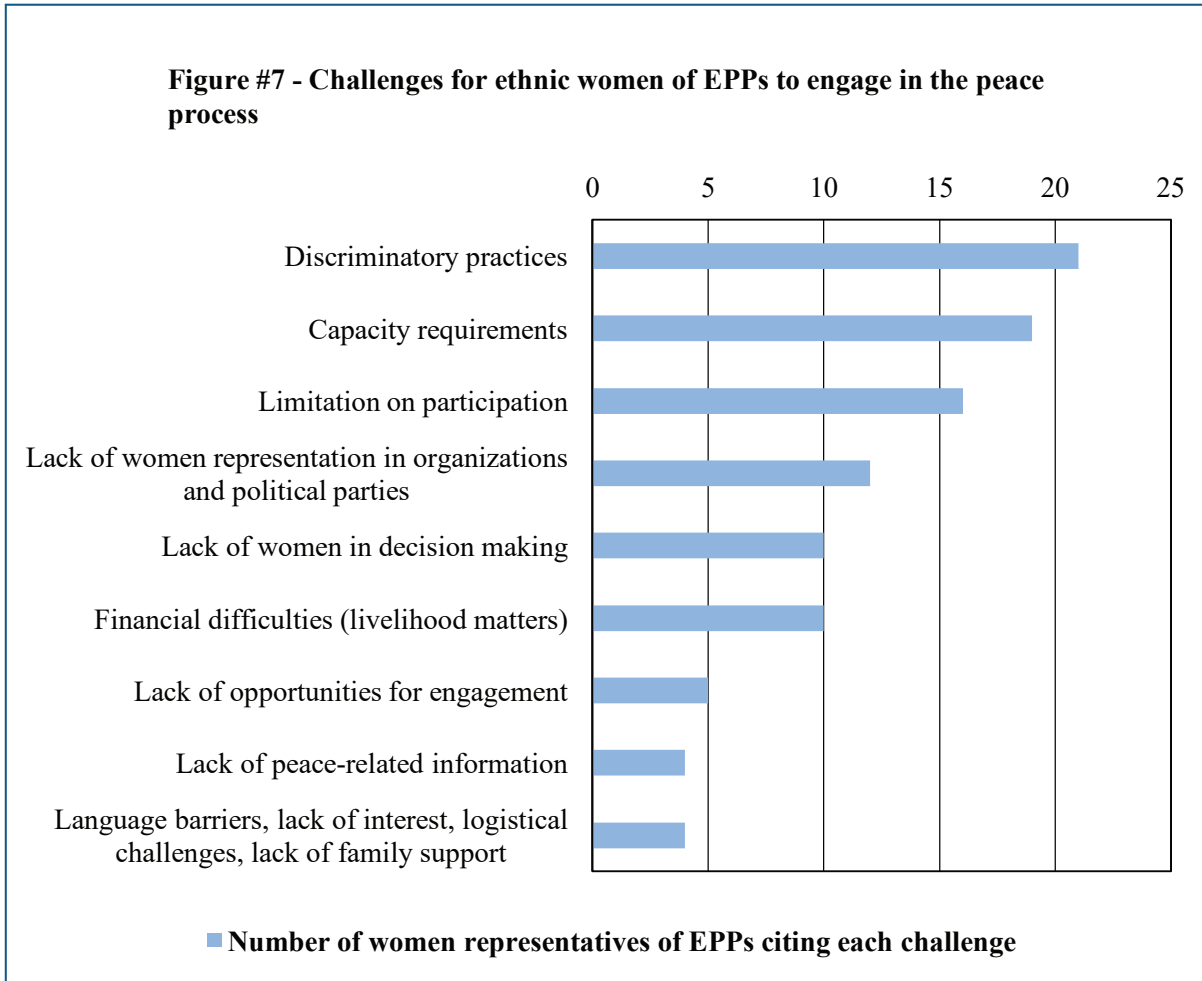


Challenges for women from EPPs to participate in the peace process

Limitations on the participation of political parties without elected representation in the peace process reinforce the exclusion of women of ethnic political parties in a context where women already face discrimination.

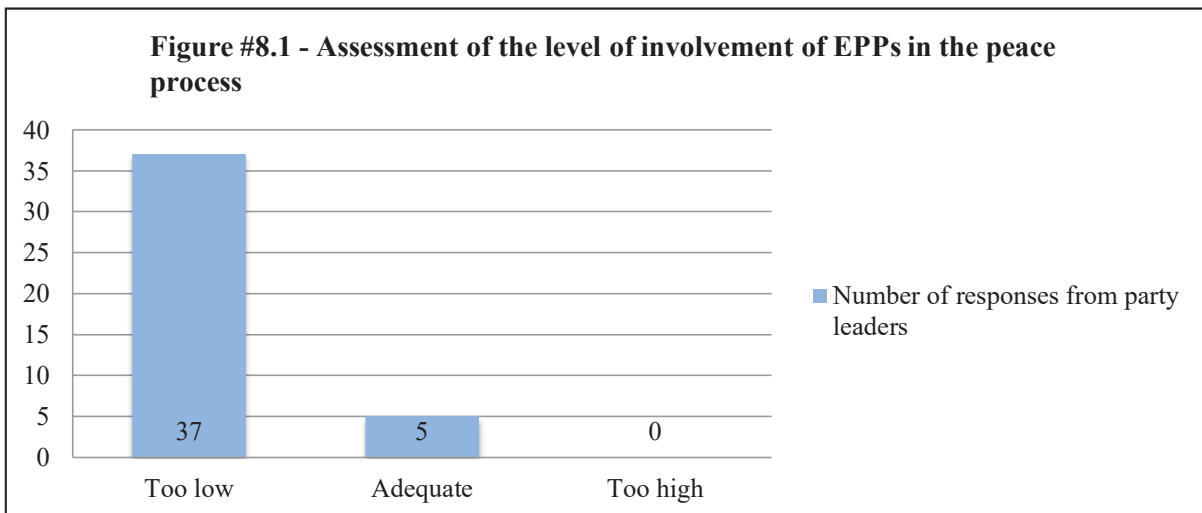
Women of EPPs pointed out that the limitation on the participation of ethnic political parties in the peace process intersects with the exclusion of women. As ethnic political parties with representation in the formal peace process tend to choose peace delegates based on seniority without gender balance, many parties end up having male representatives. Meanwhile, women of EPPs who got representation in the peace process (six out of 43 interviewed) reportedly face discrimination and are given less respect by male counterparts. In addition, women of EPPs face challenges of capacity requirements, financial difficulties, and language barriers. Respondents said ethnic women lack opportunities to engage in peace dialogues both formally and informally, to give their inputs or to keep informed. A few respondents also identified other challenges such as lack of information and lack of representation in political parties and decision-making.

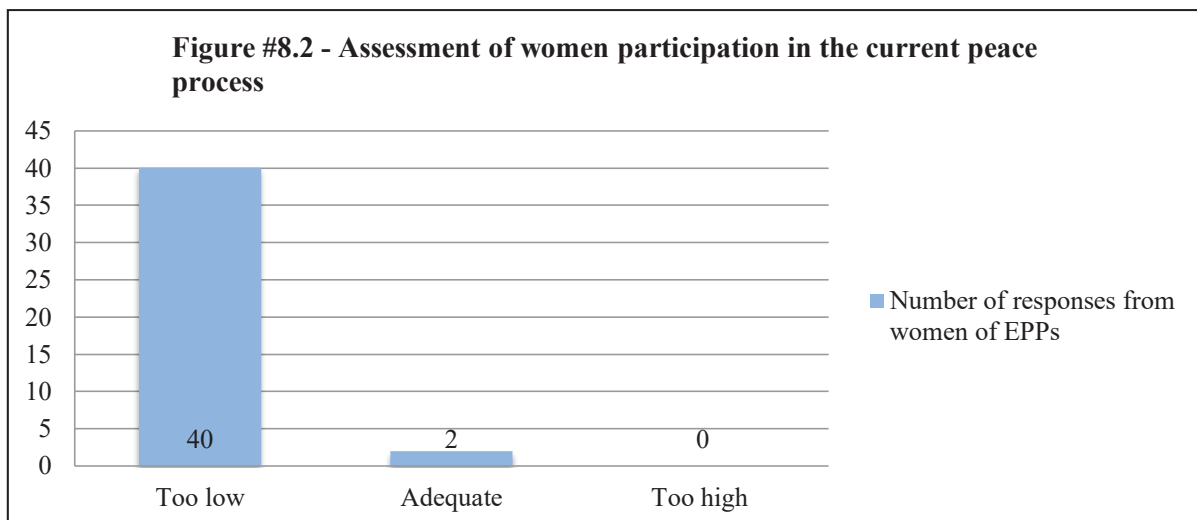
Figure #7 shows the key limitations for women of EPPs to effectively engage in the peace process.



Possible measures for effective participation in the peace process

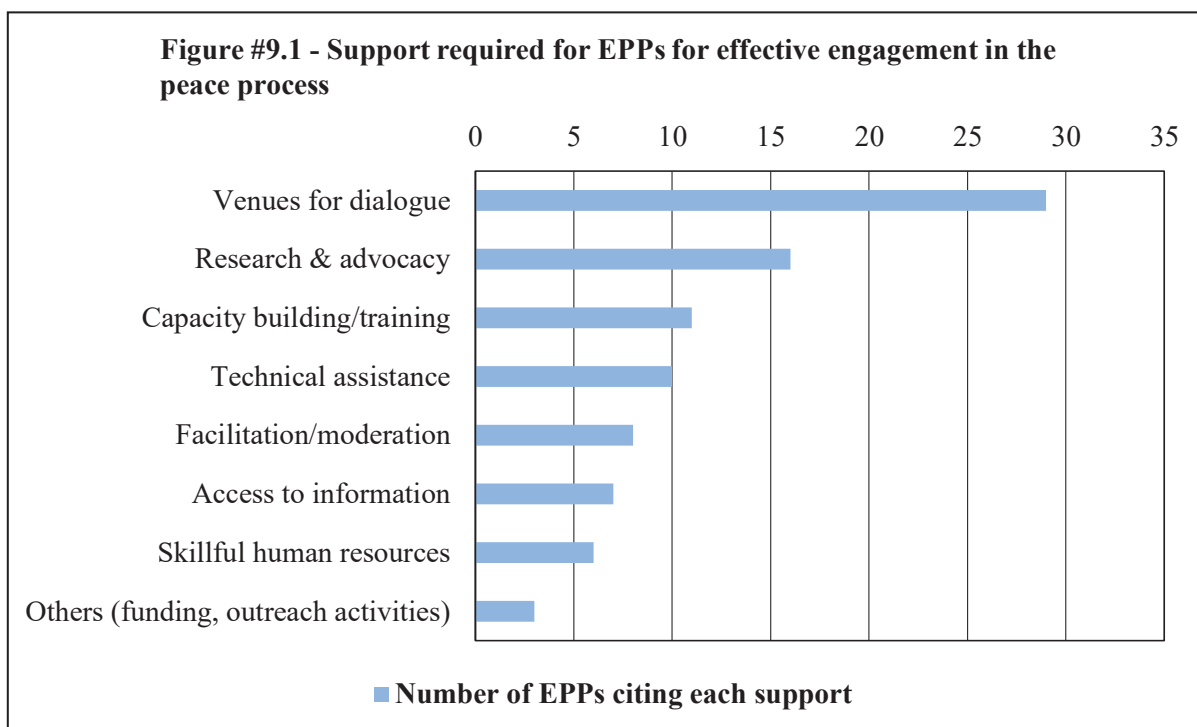
There were mixed responses to the question of whether greater women and EPP participation in the peace process is necessary. Some answered yes because it is currently very low, but some – principally EPPs already having representation in the peace process – maintained that quantity does not matter and answered no.

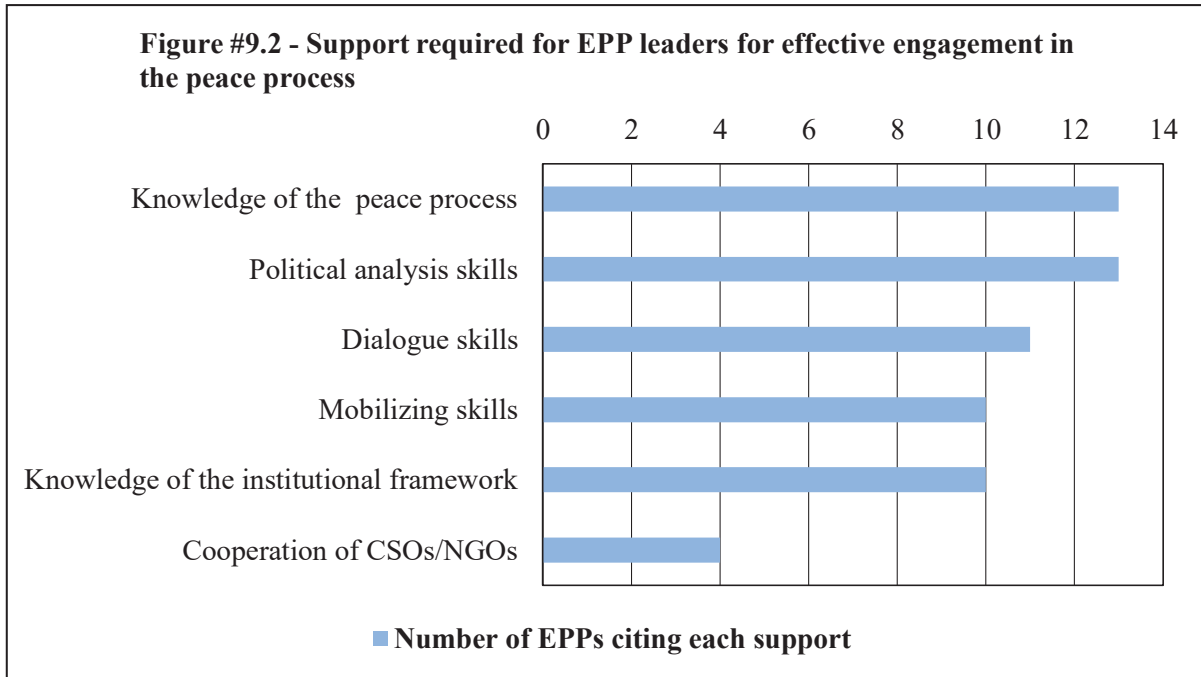




Party leadership’s views on participation of EPPs

Given the limitations discussed above, party representatives addressed the need for venues for dialogues. More than 20 ethnic political parties also mentioned the need of technical assistance and capacity building and training. A few respondents said there is little possible to do to support ethnic political parties unless the current structure and framework of the peace process are changed. They recommend conducting research on EPP exclusion and advocating for reform of the framework. Greater access to peace-related information is pointed to as necessary by several respondents. Nine ethnic political parties mentioned they would need skillful human resources and funding to effectively engage in the process. A few parties also think they will need the cooperation of CSOs/NGOs in their outreach and peace campaign activities.

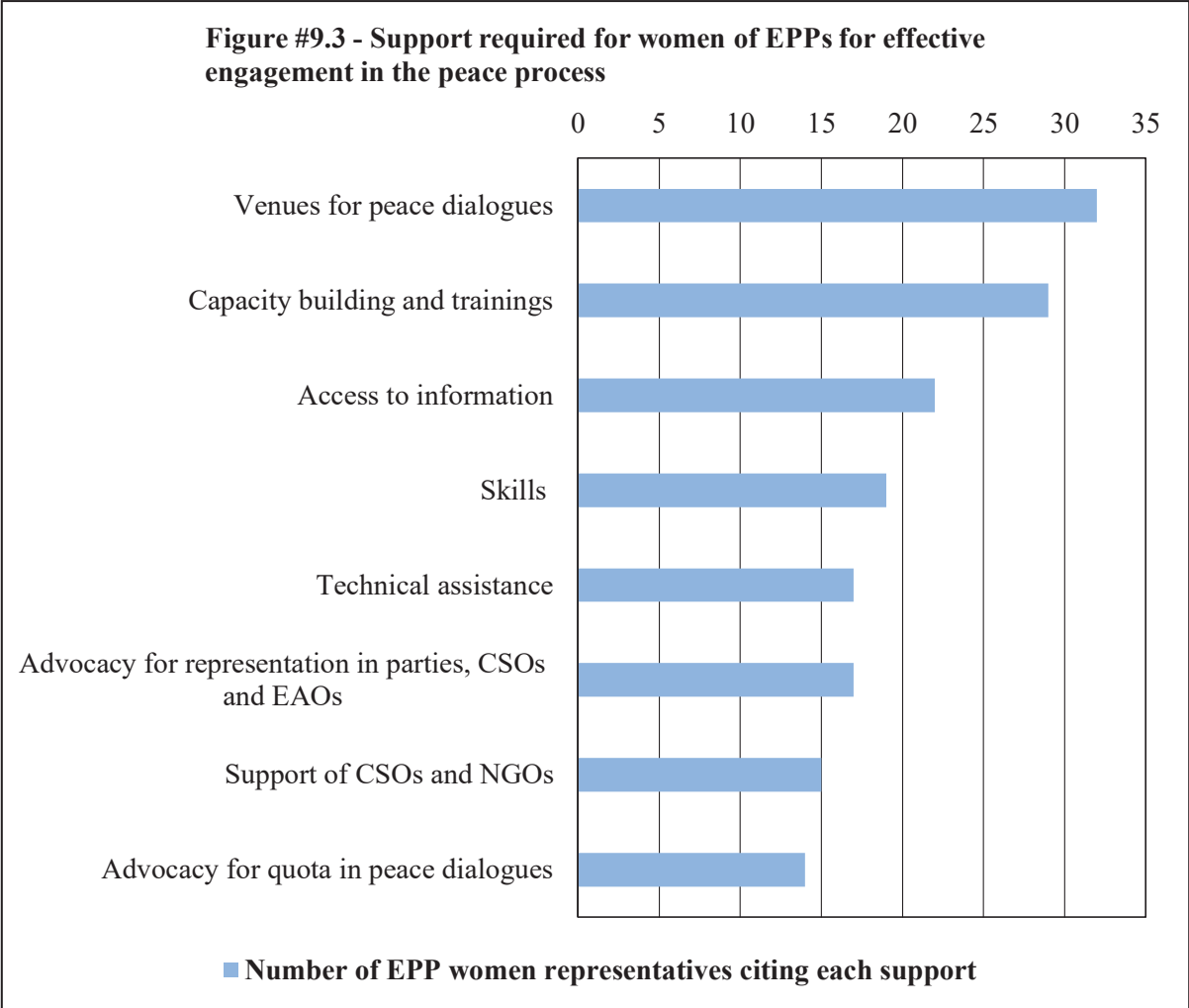




Women representatives' views on participation of ethnic women

Women representatives believed that broader participation of ethnic women in the peace process would give voice to women and children and ensure gendered policies. Moreover, as women know the issues on the ground, they can link between citizens and decision makers and integrate different perspectives into the Panglong negotiations.

In order to increase their effective participation, women representatives stressed advocacy for inclusion of women not only in peace dialogues but also in the decision-making positions of every sector, political party, CSO, and EAO. Other needs include venues for peace dialogues, being informed with peace updates, being provided with technical assistance, and being equipped with skills and capacity training. Female representatives also mentioned that the cooperation of CSOs/NGOs in advocacy — inviting women deliberately to the events, electoral law reform to adopt a quota, and awareness campaigns, for instance — can change male perceptions. In terms of capacity-building training, women representatives said they need skills in research and data analysis. This would help women hold fact-based negotiations in party and peace dialogues, for instance, they said.



Section III:

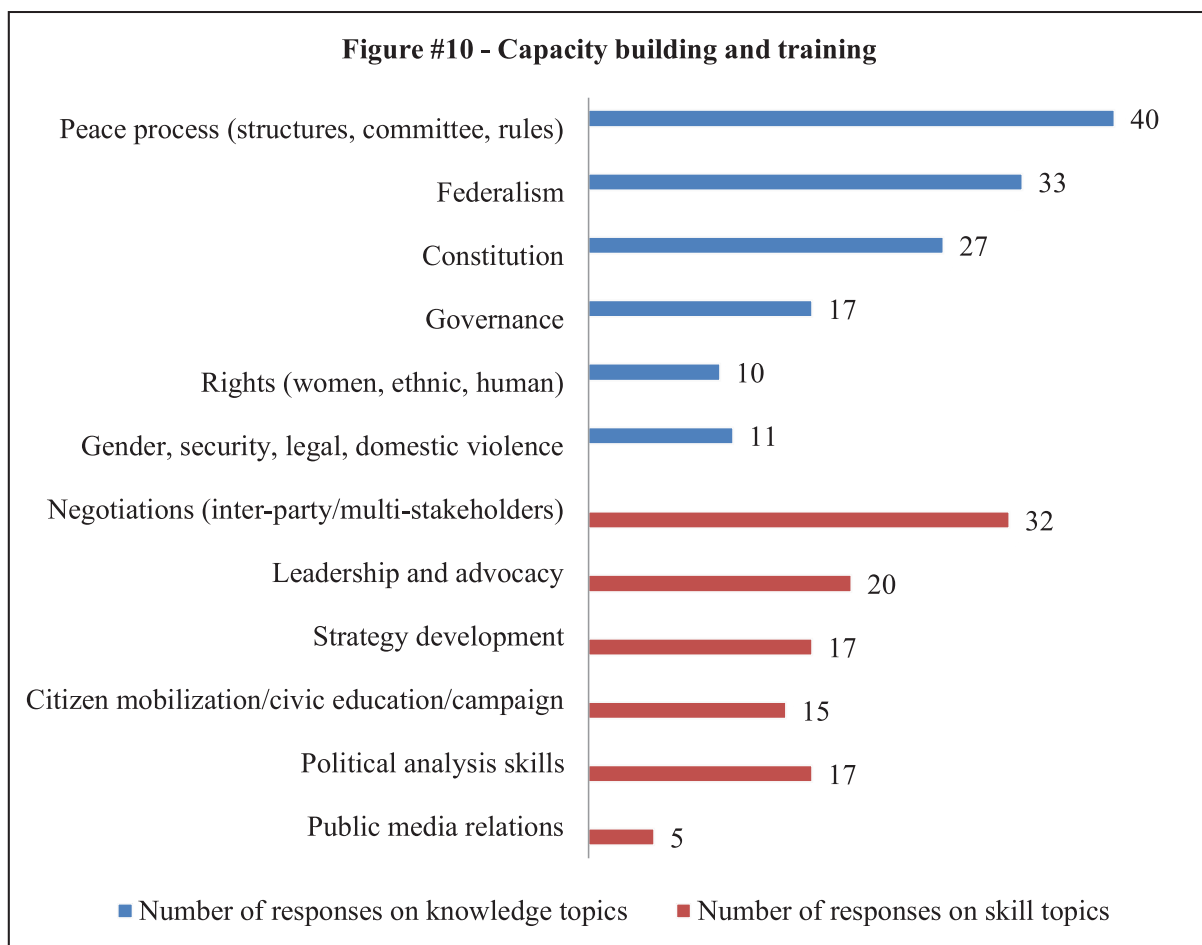
Capacity Building and Training

Party and women representatives frequently mentioned the need for capacity building and training in response to questions regarding how to increase women's participation in politics and the peace process. The same went for ethnic minority political parties and citizens. This section is to understand what kind of knowledge and skills the respondents wanted to incorporate in capacity building and trainings.

Knowledge matters: Most respondents mentioned topics related to: peace, including the peace process itself (structures, framework, committees); women's rights; federalism; the constitution; governance; human rights; ethnic rights; gender; domestic violence; women's empowerment; equality; security; and laws.

Skills: Most respondents identified training that would equip them with skills such as inter-party and multi-stakeholder negotiations, leadership skills, research and advocacy, citizen mobilization, political analysis, public and media relations, confidence building, strategy development, and civic education techniques.

Exposures: In addition to the knowledge and skills, some respondents suggested that regional and international exposures would also be needed; this may be in the form of exchange programs or study visits to advance knowledge and experiences.



Section IV:

EPP engagement of citizens on peace

This section aims to understand parties' activities to engage citizens on the topic of peace, support required by EPPs for effective citizen engagement on peace, and citizens' attitudes toward peace as perceived by EPPs. In cases where there is no or only limited party engagement with the citizens of their constituencies, the assessment tries to understand the limitations or requirements of concerned EPPs.

Parties' citizen engagement

There is only limited engagement between ethnic political parties and citizens of their respective constituencies in the peace process, mainly due to complexities of the process itself, parties' lack of peace updates, parties' limited resources to organize public meetings, restrictions on party activities, and the presence of more pressing regional issues.

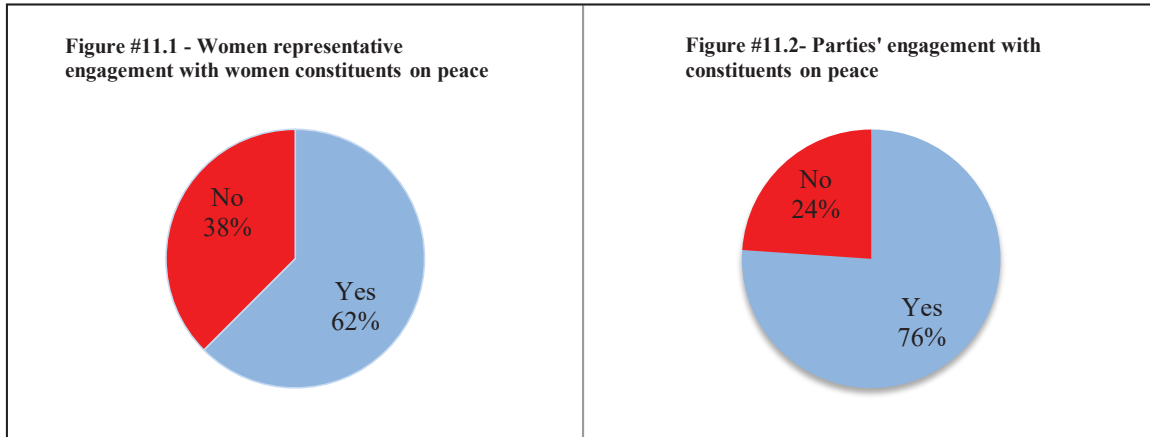
One-third of political parties interviewed stated that they engage with their constituents and give peace updates either formally and regularly or informally. One party holds 21st Century Panglong experience sharing sessions with their constituents and distribute pamphlets and organize monthly workshops to give constituents peace updates. Some parties inform their constituents about their position, recommendations and peace updates only during election campaigns, party anniversaries or significant ceremonies and the party's national conference. In some cases, parties do not focus on the national-level peace process directly; instead, they engage with their constituents about regional issues such as land conflicts, interethnic conflicts, social and human security, and discrimination and human rights violations, etc. In some cases, the party gives attention to issues such as forced recruitment as these are of more concern to constituents.

There are over 20 political parties that do not engage with their constituents on peace-related matters. The common reasons given were lack of funding to organize public meetings, lack of information, lack of formal position (as the party did not win any seats in elections, or do not have an official status in the peace process), and low constituent interest in the peace process. Political parties that are excluded from the formal peace process or do not have any channels to engage informally tend to have outdated information. Political parties also complain about the lack of channels or mechanisms to keep them informed or engaged in the peace negotiations, beyond merely observing the Panglong process.

A representative explained the situation by saying, "We have to share peace updates with our people based on the newspapers." Non-winning political parties said local authorities restrict parties' meetings with their constituents, while some smaller ethnic parties say they are no longer active in the area.

EPP engagement with constituents

Figure # 11.1 and Figure #11.2 show the percentage of women and EPP party leaders who engaged their constituents on peace.



Citizen attitudes towards peace

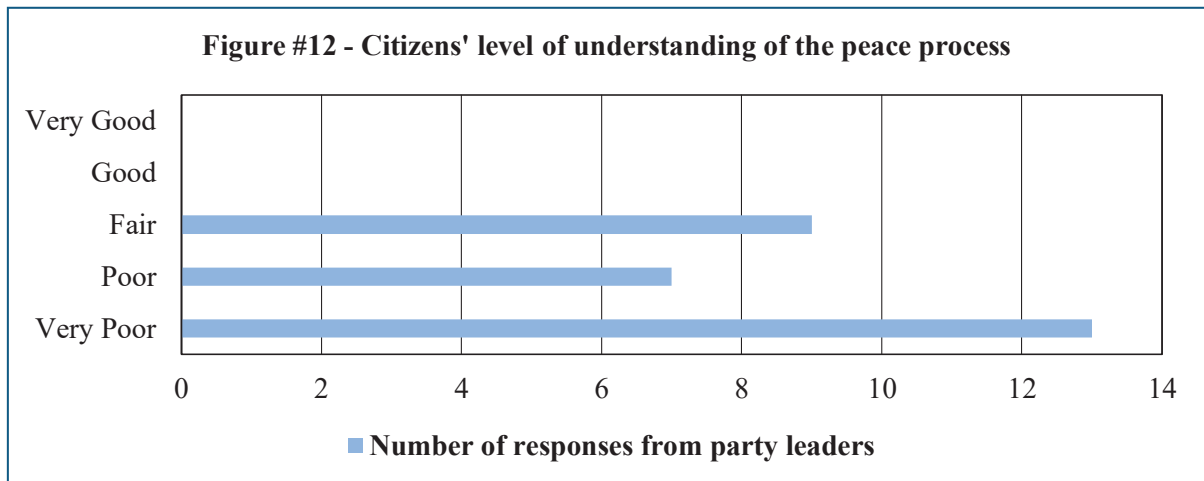
Citizen desire for peace is deemed strong by EPPs. However, citizens do not know how to participate in the peace process, nor how peace can be achieved. There are different levels of understanding of peace among citizens. To some, peace means the lack of fighting or absence of military troops in the area, while to others peace means regional safety and development. Many do not fully comprehend how the 21st Century Panglong process works.

According to party and women representatives, citizens' understanding of and interest in the peace process differ geographically. Depending on which states they reside in and whether fighting occurs, some are less hopeful that peace can be achieved; others thought that peace is not related to them. Some simply hope for a ceasefire and the departure of military troops from their area, while others hope for regional development and communal peace. Yet, in general, the peace process is seen as a matter between the Tatmadaw and the EAOs, and there is nothing citizens can do. Although citizens are longing for peace, they feel that it is far away and out of their hands. Even those who have a particular interest and support the peace process under 21st Century Panglong do not know the ways they can participate, due to a lack of information or clear understanding of how it works.

Assessment of citizens' level of understanding of the peace process

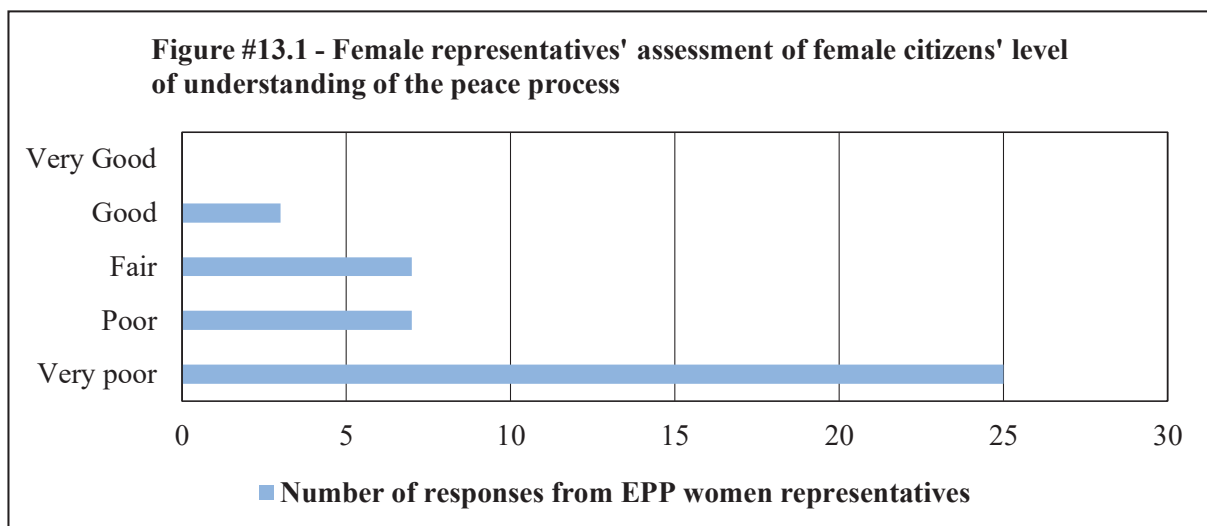
Party leaders and female representatives assessed this question based on their differing interpretations of citizens' level of understanding of the peace process. Three respondents thought female citizens' level of understanding in their constituency is good. Most of the respondents think the opposite when it comes to the framework, structure, deals, institutions, etc. of the peace process under 21st Century Panglong. Most respondents consider that due to the process's highly centralized and nontransparent nature, citizens are struggling to understand it; as a representative from a political party puts it: "The peace process is too elitist for citizens to understand."

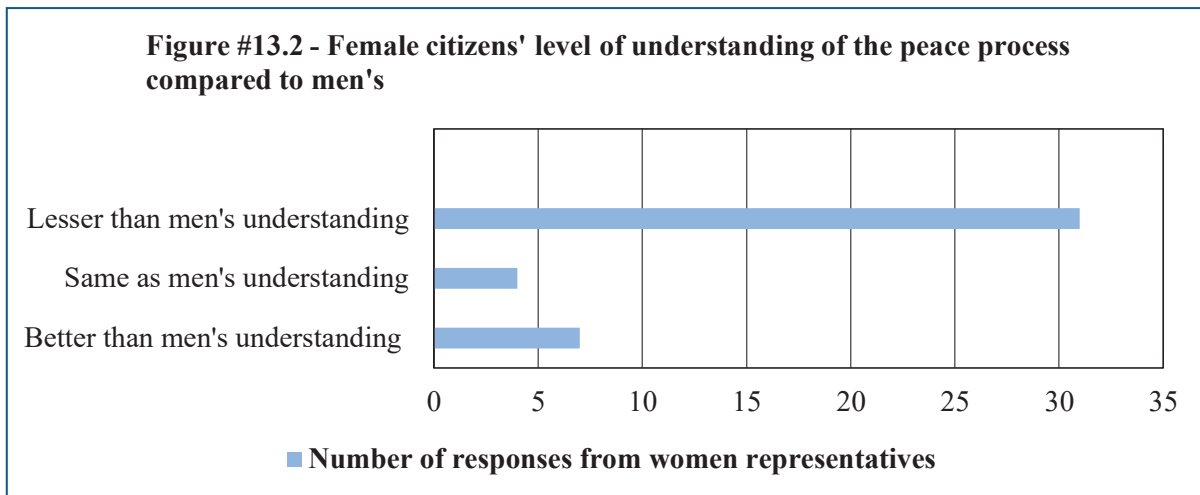
However, some representatives said the level of understanding has increased compared to previous years due to technical advancements and social media. This confirms another representative’s comment that only those who follow news on social media are informed about the peace process, while sectors of the population with less access to social media, in particular those using only radios for source of information, are less informed.



Assessment of women constituents' level of understanding of the peace process

Figure #13.1 shows female representatives’ assessments of women’s understanding of the peace process in their constituency. Figure #13.2 compares to men.





Responses indicated that there could be a difference between rural and urban women, and educated and less educated women, in how they compare with men. A party representative mentioned that women in their constituency do not know at all about the peace process. Compared to men, women have less understanding of the peace process, as women are usually busy with household chores while men have time to follow news and have informal chats with friends and colleagues. A party's representative mentioned that male citizens often attend party-organized public meetings, while younger women do not. A few respondents mentioned that women might have the same understanding of the peace process as men, but simply have fewer chances or venues to discuss their opinions.

Possible measures for more citizen engagement on peace

Party and women member representatives identified some areas for more effective citizen engagement on peace, which are summarized as follows:

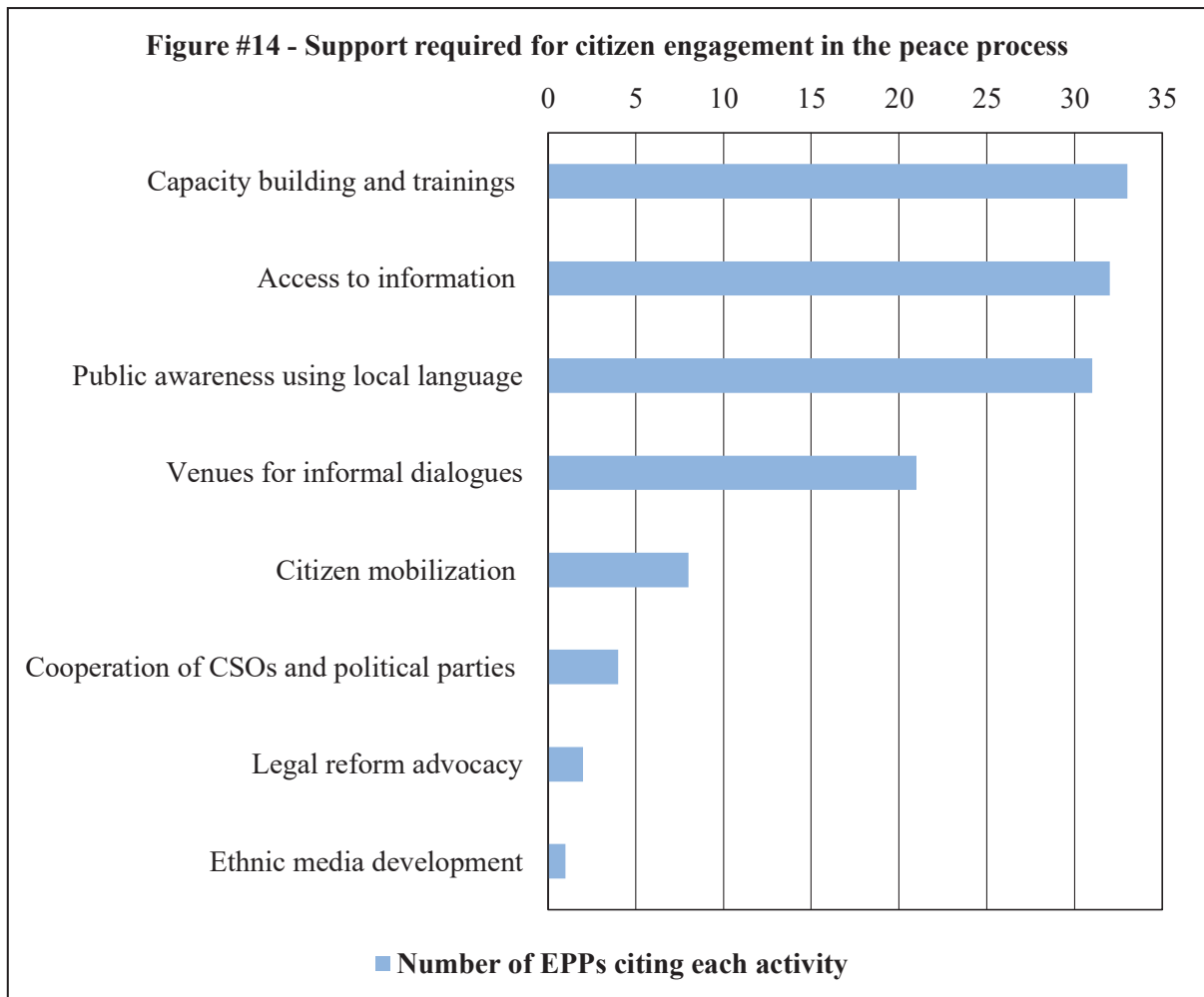
To increase citizens' level of understanding: Representatives mentioned different approaches such as capacity building and training on political analysis skills, public awareness, civic education campaigns and outreach activities to increase understanding – particularly for those who are in IDP camps and mothers with busy schedules. The most important thing for effectiveness is to customize messages in different local languages and by using local media.

To create the space and channels for engagement: Respondents suggest creating venues for informal dialogues such as town hall meetings, public hearings and citizens' workshops, through which citizens can be mobilized for active participation. Respondents also mention the need for development of ethnic media to keep citizens informed and to understand contexts, as well as to voice their opinions. This was seen as important as they cannot participate in the peace process directly.

To advocate for legal reform: As there are restrictive regulations and practices, party representatives recommended research and advocacy for legal reform to ensure active citizen engagement. Rules to be reformed regard freedom of assembly, the scrutinization by authorities, oppression of collective and individual rights, and pressure on citizens to be apolitical and disengaged from the political process. Respondents also said the government should allow public meetings in all areas under signatories' or non-signatories' control so that citizens of that area understand the peace process better.

To provide vocational training or create job opportunities: As funding is the vehicle for every motion or activity, lack of income or financial difficulties discourage citizens from effectively engaging in public affairs. Having a source of income to fund their own activities would help citizens mobilize and effectively engage in the peace process, party representatives suggested.

To develop a way to coordinate: As cross-party coordination can reach out to different party supporters effectively and efficiently, some respondents recommended parties to develop a way to coordinate. They also suggested working with CSOs/NGOs for effective technical assistance and public outreach.



Conclusion

Frustration is widespread among women representatives and leaders of ethnic political parties because of restrictions and limitations on their participation in the peace process and politics. Interviewed parties' leaders and women representatives acknowledged the need for strategies or action plans to overcome challenges and structural barriers. The following is a summary of recommendations, taken from interviewees' responses.

Key recommendations of respondents

A strategy for a collective voice: Gender inclusion in the peace process has slightly improved as organizations such as Women's League of Burma advocate for more women in ethnic armed organizations. However, it is still weak in terms of unifying a collective voice. Women of ethnic minority political parties should develop a network, maintain regular coordination, and cooperate to fill this gap.

A strategy for effective peace negotiations: To provide fact-based and informed negotiations in peace roundtables, women of ethnic political parties should develop a strategy to keep each other informed, connected, and prepared in all five sectors of the peace process to assist their mother parties in developing concrete policies and in negotiations.

A strategy for effective inclusion of women representatives: To overcome external and structural barriers, women of ethnic political parties should draft a gender policy that includes special mechanisms or affirmative actions and advocate accordingly for adoption by political parties, peace institutions, and electoral bodies.

A strategy for access to information: To inform citizens with peace updates, women of ethnic political parties should create alternatives for access and disseminate peace-related information. This includes making peace information available in local languages and disseminating through local media.

A strategy for mobilizing citizens: To mobilize citizens around matters regarding peace, women of ethnic political parties should develop mechanisms including interparty coordination to maximize the coverage of party supporters and increase citizens' participation.

A strategy for inclusion: To include concerns and recommendations of those who are excluded from the formal peace process and those who do not have opportunities to engage in informal dialogues, women of ethnic political parties should develop an inclusive channel or medium to bring those voices to negotiation tables and ensure their inclusion.

National Dialogue of the Women of Ethnic Political Parties

Conference's Agenda and Overview

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November 2018





**National Dialogue
of
Women of Ethnic Political Parties**

**Broadening our Participation in Politics
and the Peace Process**

28 to 30 November 2018

Objectives of the conference

1. Strengthening women's involvement in Ethnic Political Parties (EPPs)
2. Promoting women's voices in the peace process
3. Supporting dialogue among EPPs
4. Enabling EPPs to better represent civilian voices in the peace process

Chatham House rule

Chatham House rule applies. When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speakers, nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

Chatrium Hotel
40 Nat Mauk Street
Yangon, Myanmar



28 November 2018 (Wednesday): Learning Day

08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:30	<p>Opening remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lway Poe Ngeal, General Secretary, Women's League of Burma • Greg Kehailia, Country Director, The Carter Center <p><i>Objective: Presentation of the methodology and main objectives of the conference.</i></p>
09:30 – 10:15	<p>Assessing the needs of political parties and their women members for inclusion in politics and the peace process: some preliminary findings – Q&A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Su Mon Thant, Program Officer, The Carter Center • Mu Caroline, Project Officer, Women's League of Burma <p><i>Objective: inform participants about the main findings of the need assessment survey conducted by WLB and The Carter Center.</i></p>
10:15 – 10:30	Tea break
10:30 – 11:30	<p>Input session I: Myanmar Peace Process: framework, updates and stakeholders' perspectives – Q&A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Min Zaw Oo, Executive Director, Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security (MIPS) <p><i>Objective: inform participants about the design of the peace process and last updates.</i></p>
11:30 – 12:30	<p>Input session II: Women in the Peace Process</p> <p>A gender analysis of the Union Peace Agreement and Panglong 21 process – Q&A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lway Poe Ngeal, General Secretary, Women's League of Burma <p><i>Objective: inform participants about the challenges and opportunities for inclusion of women in the peace process.</i></p>



“Being ethnic, women, and civilian: unpacking the perspective of intersectionality” – Q&A

- Maw Day Myar, Joint General Secretary II, Women’s League of Burma

Objective: support participants’ understanding of the notion of intersectionality.

12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 14:00	Cont’d: Input Session II
14:00 – 15:15	Input session III: political parties, civil society and the Myanmar peace process: the importance of civilian voices - Q&A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thwin Lin Aung, Director, Genuine People’s Servants • Cherry Zauhau, Country Program Director, Project 2049 Institute <p><i>Objective: inform participants about the challenges and opportunities for involvement of civil society and political parties in the peace process.</i></p>
15:15 – 15:30	Tea break
15:30 – 16:15	Input session IV: women in politics: an overview of Myanmar’s party policies and legal framework – Q&A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Htet Oo Wai, Country Representative, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) <p><i>Objective: look into the gender policies of Myanmar’s political parties as well as in the legal framework related to gender inclusion in politics.</i></p>
16:15 – 16:30	Wrap up by the Women’s League of Burma
16:30 – 17:00	Reimbursement and allowances



29 November 2018 (Thursday): Innovation Day

- 08:45 – 09:00 Registration/signature
- 09:00 – 09:15 Presentation of the breakout sessions methodology
- Maw Day Myar, Joint General Secretary II, Women League of Burma
- 09:15 – 09:45 Icebreaker, group picture and working group's assignation
- 09:45 – 10:30 Breakout session I

Working Group A	Working Group B	Working Group C
Women in politics <i>Legal aspects and parties' policies, reform advocacy strategies</i>	EPPs in peace process <i>UPDJC and beyond, strategies for inclusion of political parties in the peace process</i>	Women in peace process <i>Strategies for inclusion of women in the peace process (national/local, track II, etc.)</i>
Facilitator: Nang Zin Nwe, Policy Board, Women's League of Burma Co-Facilitator: Nan Mar Lar Kyaw Thein, Policy Board, Women's League of Burma	Facilitator: Su Mon Thant, The Carter Center Co-Facilitator: Mu Caroline, Women's League of Burma	Facilitator: Nang Kham Yard, Policy Board, Women's League of Burma Co-Facilitator: Nang Moet Moet, Women's League of Burma
Rapporteur to be designated	Rapporteur to be designated	Rapporteur to be designated

- 10:30 – 10:45 Tea Break
- 10:45 – 11:30 Breakout session II

Working Group C	Working Group A	Working Group B
Women in politics <i>Legal aspects and parties' policies, reform advocacy strategies</i>	EPPs in peace process <i>UPDJC and beyond, strategies for inclusion of political parties in the peace process</i>	Women in peace process <i>Strategies for inclusion of women in the peace process (national/local, track II, etc.)</i>
Facilitator: Nang Zin Nwe, Policy Board, Women's League of Burma Co-Facilitator: Nan Mar Lar Kyaw Thein, Policy Board, Women's League of Burma	Facilitator: Su Mon Thant, The Carter Center Co-Facilitator: Mu Caroline, Women's League of Burma	Facilitator: Nang Kham Yard, Policy Board, Women's League of Burma Co-Facilitator: Nang Moet Moet, Women's League of Burma
Rapporteur to be designated	Rapporteur to be designated	Rapporteur to be designated



11:30 – 11:45 Pause

11:45 – 12:30 Breakout session III

Working Group B	Working Group C	Working Group A
Women in politics <i>Legal aspects and parties' policies, reform advocacy strategies</i>	EPPs in peace process <i>UPDJC and beyond, strategies for inclusion of political parties in the peace process</i>	Women in peace process <i>Strategies for inclusion of women in the peace process (national/local, track II, etc.)</i>
Facilitator: Nang Zin Nwe, Policy Board, Women's League of Burma Co-Facilitator: Nan Mar Lar Kyaw Thein, Policy Board, Women's League of Burma	Facilitator: Su Mon Thant, The Carter Center Co-Facilitator: Mu Caroline, Women's League of Burma	Facilitator: Nang Kham Yard, Policy Board, Women's League of Burma Co-Facilitator: Nang Moet Moet, Women's League of Burma
Rapporteur to be designated	Rapporteur to be designated	Rapporteur to be designated

12:30 – 1:30 Lunch

13:30 – 14:00 Rapporteurs' coordination

14:00 – 14:45 Presentation and discussion of recommendations / women in politics

- Rapporteurs of the three WGs

14:45 – 15:00 Tea break

15:00 – 15:45 Presentation and discussion of recommendations / women in peace process

- Rapporteurs of the three WGs

15:45 – 16:30 Presentation and discussion of recommendations / EPPs in peace process

- Rapporteurs of the three WGs

16:30 – 17:00 Wrap up by the Women's League of Burma

17:00 – 17:30 Travel reimbursements



30 November 2018 (Friday): Solidarity Day

08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:30	<p>Welcome address to EPPs' leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lway Poe Ngeal, General Secretary, Women's League of Burma • Greg Kehailia, Country Director, The Carter Center <p><i>Objective: give EPPs' leaders an overview of the objective of the conference and of the work covered during the previous two days.</i></p>
09:30 – 10:00	<p>Overview of the needs assessment's findings for EPPs' leaders – Q&A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Su Mon Thant, Program Officer, The Carter Center • Mu Caroline, Project Officer, Women's League of Burma <p><i>Objective: inform EPPs leaders about the main findings of the need assessment survey conducted by WLB and The Carter Center.</i></p>
10:00 – 10:30	Tea break, group picture
10:30 – 12:00	<p>Presentation and discussion of recommendations of Day 2: panel of three rapporteurs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPPs in peace process (30 min) - Mu Caroline, Women's League of Burma • Women in politics (30 min) - Nang Zin Nwe, Policy Board, Women's League of Burma • Women in peace process (30 min) - Nang Kham Yard, Policy Board, Women's League of Burma <p><i>Objective: brief the leaders of EPPs about the recommendations proposed by the women of their parties.</i></p>
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 15:30	<p>From recommendations to actionable strategies: inter-party high-level dialogue</p> <p><i>Objective: the leaders of EPPs will exercise their leadership by developing objectives and strategies to make politically concrete and actionable the recommendations formulated by their women members. Discussions will be structured in working groups.</i></p>



15:30 – 16:00	Tea break
16:00 – 17:00	EPPs' synthesis on actionable recommendations and strategies
17:00 – 17:15	Conclusion by the Women's League of Burma
17:15 – 18:00	Reimbursement / logistics
18:30	Solidarity Dinner (White Rice restaurant - tbc)

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National Dialogue of Ethnic Women in Political Parties

“Broadening our Participation in Politics and the Peace Process”

National Dialogue of Women of Ethnic Political Parties
Organized by Women’s League of Burma and The Carter Center
November 28 – 30, 2018

OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The National Dialogue of Ethnic Women in Political Parties was held in November 2018 and was attended by representatives of 47 ethnic political parties. The national dialogue was the second phase of the project: “Broadening Participation of Women of Ethnic Political Parties in the Peace Process” implemented by the Women’s League of Burma and The Carter Center, with the support of UKAid.¹

The project has four objectives: i) strengthening women’s involvement in Ethnic Political Parties (EPPs); ii) promoting women’s voices in the peace process; iii) supporting dialogue among EPPs; and iv) enabling EPPs to better represent civilian voices in the peace process.

The structure and content of the conference was informed by the findings of the EPPs Needs Assessment Survey conducted from August to November 2018. The conference had three main cross-cutting themes: a) ethnic women’s inclusion in politics; b) women’s participation in peace dialogues; c) and EPP participation in the peace process. It was designed to achieve two outcomes: 1) facilitation of a dialogue among women and party representatives across EPPs; 2) initiation of the development of common recommendations by EPPs.

The conference took place from November 28-30 and was attended by 46 women representatives and 42 representatives of party leadership groups for a total of 88 participants from 47 EPPs. The first day consisted of a review of the Myanmar peace process, the significance of civilian voices and the role of political parties in the peace process, and the principles of gender analysis. The second day focused on a dialogue among women members of EPPs focused on formulating a set of recommendations for women representatives to discuss with their party leadership. The third and last day saw that dialogue expanded to the EPP leadership, as (mostly male) representatives of EPP leadership joined the dialogue to discuss how to convert the recommendations proposed by the women participants into actionable objectives and into policies implementable by EPPs.

Recommendations formulated by women representatives**I. Ethnic women’s inclusion in politics:**

The women of EPPs suggested three key areas for increased participation of women in politics: a) advocacy for party policies and electoral requirements, b) formulation of public outreach programs, and c) an information and knowledge-sharing platform.

¹ The views and recommendations expressed in this document are those of participants in the national dialogue and do not necessarily reflect those of The Carter Center, the Women’s League of Burma, or the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Women of EPPs believe that political parties should adopt a gender policy or 30 percent quota mechanism to increase inclusion of women in party leadership. This would include a minimum requirement for forming party central executive committees (CEC) and the adoption of child-care policies and gender budgeting in party policies. The Union Election Commission (UEC) should endorse a 30 percent quota for women's inclusion in party CECs by setting it as a requirement to compete in elections. Parties should abandon traditional practices and old policies that encourage or tolerate gender-based discrimination for ones that meet international standards. Parties should have public outreach programs in which they disclose their policies so that female citizens can be informed about how they can participate in politics and in parties. Parties should have introduction strategies for potential female candidates to reach out to



their constituents and build trust at an early stage. Parties should also create a venue for talks and knowledge-sharing to keep female members informed about political affairs. Parties should work with public figures and influencers to mobilize women to participate in politics.

II. Women's participation in the peace process:

The women of EPPs recommended coordination among women of political parties, EAOs, CSOs, Hluttaws (elected legislative bodies) and the Tatmadaw (military) by establishing an effective network. They also indicated the need for a formal or informal information-sharing mechanism to keep women of EPPs informed of peace-related updates and enable them to disseminate peace-related information in local languages to their constituents. They also agreed on an “inclusivity” principle and suggested a collective call for removal of restrictions on the participation of non-elected political parties in 21st Century Panglong. Women of EPPs agreed to advocate with their respective party leadership to send female representatives to peace dialogues. Other suggestions included mentoring programs for women of EPPs, capacity building, trainings, technical assistance, and income-generating activities (notably assistance to create job opportunities for women) to allow women of EPPs the financial ability to sustain their political commitments.

III. EPPs in the peace process:

The women of EPPs agreed that EPPs with representatives in the peace process should represent EPPs without a formal role, as well as citizens' voices at large. To reach that goal, women representatives recommended that state-based political parties organize peace dialogues every three months and a peace forum once per year. Ethnic party alliances such as United Nationalities Alliance (UNA) and Nationalities Brotherhood Federation (NBF) were also advised to organize forums, inviting EPPs that are not member of their alliances so as to be more inclusive. Women representatives also advised multi-stakeholder coordination in the form of regular dialogues between CSOs, EPPs, and signatory EAOs at the state/region level. All EPPs should to coordinate for inclusiveness and to advocate for compliance with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) that allows the participation of all registered parties in the peace process beyond the 2020 elections. EPPs participation in peace dialogue would also benefit from greater access to peace-related information, which could be facilitated by disseminating peace-related materials such as statements and analytical papers to EPPs, in particular the lowest levels of party organizations, which rarely receive information flow.

Priorities formulated by EPPs

I. For the inclusion of women in politics:

- i) *Building a women's network:* EPPs suggested the idea of forming a meeting club for women in each township to exchange knowledge, information, and strategies for effective advocacy for more inclusion of women in politics. Knowledge and information from regular meetings would help women gain confidence to be involved in politics and to take leadership positions in political parties.
- ii) *Advocacy for curriculum development:* Raising awareness and changing mindsets is at the core of promoting the inclusion of women in politics and gender equality. EPPs

suggest that party CECs cooperate with departments of the Ministry of Education to develop a curriculum that introduces gender-equality concepts. Parties with elected representatives and experts should work together to submit policy recommendations to parliaments.

- iii) *Adopting rights-based and gendered policies in party's policies and programs:* Political parties should review their policies and adapt them to international standards that guarantee gender equality, ethnic, and human rights in order to replace traditions and old practices that encourage gender-based discrimination. Parties should also adopt gender policies such as a minimum requirement for participation of women in party CECs or a 30-percent women quota. This could possibly be combined with affirmative action targeting less-educated or less-experienced women, regardless of their level of qualifications, to encourage women from diverse backgrounds to engage in party politics. Parties should advocate with parliaments to draft childcare policy/law and consider gender budgeting.
- iv) *Cooperation with CSOs and NGOs:* Parties should cooperate with CSOs and NGOs to organize capacity-building programs and trainings for women members and promote gender awareness within EPPs. Through media or other influencers, parties should mobilize women to participate in politics.
- v) *Advocacy for women's inclusion in electoral framework:* Parties should advocate with the Union Election Commission to review party registration and election laws and by-laws to set a 30-percent women's quota in party CECs as a condition for electoral registration. The UEC should also take measures - at least temporarily - to create an even playing field, such as revising campaign periods to give adequate time for women in ethnic states to campaign, reducing deposit amounts for women candidates, and providing security for women candidates to encourage women to participate in politics.



- vi) *Beyond parliament, advocacy for women's inclusion in all democratic institutions:* EPPs should advocate for the inclusion of women in other branches and at other levels of the governance system than parliamentary institutions – for example, ward-level administration and municipal institutions.

II. For the inclusion of ethnic women and EPPs in the peace process:

- i) *Collective advocacy for inclusion of EPPs in the peace process:* The EPPs suggested that all political parties should agree on an “inclusive” principle in the peace process and collectively push for all registered political parties to be able to participate in the peace process, as allowed in the NCA, and for relaxing restrictions on the attendance of non-elected parties in 21st Century Panglong.

EPP peace dialogue initiatives: EPPs should organize peace talks and dialogues for women of different states and regions and discuss EPP alliances in order to endorse and support implementation of recommendations for inclusion. EPPs should promote the establishment of a network among stakeholders/organizations working on peace, including CSOs, ceasefire signatory EAOs, and the Tatmadaw. EPPs also recommended regularly holding peace conferences and dialogues among state-based parties at various levels (township, district, state/region levels), as well as organizing a peace forum in each state and region.

- ii) *Designate women representatives for peace dialogues:* EPPs should systematically explore the feasibility of sending women representatives to peace dialogues.
- iii) *Technical assistance to women leaders:* International community and civil society should provide emerging women leaders with technical assistance, including training on public relations techniques and vocational trainings, to encourage and support the emergence of women entrepreneurs for a broader women's participation in politics.

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The Carter Center and the Women's League of Burma have been working together since August 2018 to implement the project Broadening Participation of Women from Ethnic Minorities in the Peace Process. The Carter Center and the Women's League of Burma would like to thank the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, whose financial contribution enabled our engagement on the Myanmar peace process. We would also like to recognize the excellent work of the staff members of the Center and WLB who supported the project.



The Carter Center

The Carter Center was founded by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, in 1982. In partnership with Emory University, The Carter Center has helped to advance peace and health in more than 80 countries. A nonpartisan, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization, The Carter Center employs more than 1,200 people at its Atlanta headquarters and 18 field offices globally. The Carter Center has had a presence in Burma (Myanmar) since 2013 and began long-term election observation work in December 2014, in advance of the November 8, 2015 general election. In 2016, The Carter Center released its [final report](#) on the election. The Carter Center shared its methodology, tools and resources with domestic citizen observer groups and worked with them to



strengthen their capacity for engagement in advance of the 2017 by-elections. The Carter Center built on these advances by working with its civil society partner for observation of the November 2018 by-elections and for the 2019 Yangon municipal elections. The Carter Center began work in support of the peace process and women's participation in the peace process, in 2018. More information is available on cartercenter.org.

The Women's League of Burma

Women's League of Burma (WLB) was established on December 9, 1999 with the aim of increasing the participation of women in the struggle for democracy and human rights, promoting women's participation in the national peace and reconciliation process, and enhancing the role of the women of Burma at the national and international level. There are 13 member organizations from different ethnic groups and background, working together towards the aims of WLB. More information is available on womenofburma.org.



