

Change for Peace Fellowship

**Are there any differences in Gender equality
in Myanmar before the coup and after?**



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How do you accept equality between men and women? The man is high in glory and can lead everything. The head of household religious elites suppress the role of women in leadership with the dominant ideals of phoenicism. This is the conception of violence against women from the structure of society. Where violence is physical, they engage in violence in several ways, including psychological and sexual. As physical violence, women are beaten by men, domestic violence, beating and punishing imprisoned women, etc. Psychological violence, emotional damage and loss. Blocking the right to live and think freely. In the world, violence against women and girls is the most common and the most silent for justice. Especially from a cultural and religious point of view like Myanmar, women are seen as inferior. Myanmar's decades-proxy war, culture and society has significantly impacted on gender equality. So, are there any changes and impacts on Gender equality before the coup and after. This research paper aims to any differences in Gender equality in Myanmar before the coup and after.

Introduction

Gender equality is a universal principle of human rights and really important for sustainable development. In Myanmar, there are many cases of gender inequality. Traditionally, most ethnic groups favor men over women. So, Men have always been the dominant species over women. Due to the favoring of men, most women are facing challenges and discrimination in daily- life, there are low chances for women to participate economically and politically. Also, the religion assumes women are low species and men are the majestic ones. According to data from the United Nations Statistical Commission, Myanmar has been placed 118 out of 162 countries (in 2019). So, what are the challenges Myanmar women are facing today? What are the consequences? What are the outcomes? Are there any differences before the coup and after?

1. Before The Coup

1.1 Gender Norms and Cultural Context in Myanmar

Understanding the gender norms and cultural context in Myanmar requires a historical perspective, influence of religion, gender role and expectations, ethnic diversity and different ideology, perspectives from economically and politically and gender dynamics. Culture, ideology, and historical building have shaped gender roles and responsibilities. If we look into Myanmar history, males are dominant and women are subordinate positions in society spheres. Due to the fact, there are many influences male upon women socially, economically and politically. Influence of religion is really strong in Myanmar. Particularly Theravada Buddhism shaped society and gender norms. In History, Monks can intervene not only in politics but also in economics. While Buddhism teaches for equality and respect, cultural interpretations and practices create inequality. Ancestors and religious people assign specific duties and virtues to men and women.

In Myanmar, gender roles, expectations and responsibilities are assigned. Women's primary roles are in the domestic sphere, caring for the family, and maintaining social harmony and can't intervene in men's affairs. On the other hand, men are expected to be the source of

income, protector and also hold the family authority. These roles are not should be, they are must be through cultural practices.

Myanmar is a diverse country with numerous ethnic groups, each having its distinct cultural practices and gender norms. Despite having the different cultures and norms, the same thing is women are the least favored with different challenges. While traditional gender norms persist, there are signs of evolving gender dynamics in Myanmar especially between 2015- 2020. Socioeconomics changes, effect of Aung San Sú Kyi, Access to education, urbanization and access to internet creates the chances for equality, particularly among Gen Z. Myanmar has gone from being in the grip of economic recession amid political confusion to accelerating the transition under the civilian government and creating job opportunities for many people.” Between 2015 and 2018, Myanmar's GDP increased by an average of more than 8 percent per year, and poverty decreased from 48 percent to 32 percent” the World Bank's 2019 release "Myanmar's Urbanization: Creating Opportunities for all" stated in the statement. In addition, as part of the government's plan to reform education, new basic curricula will be drawn up, and women's rights will be included as moral and civic subjects. Children's rights drafting the Declaration of Human Rights and the right of a citizen to vote was taught. In addition, the sexual violence of women and children was effectively sought justice. Expanded participation in the labor market, education, politics, economics and civil society organizations create more opportunities for women and change the traditional gender norms.

1.2 Legal, Policy Framework, Convention and Treaty for Gender Equality

The Constitution of Myanmar provides a foundation for promoting gender equality and for reducing discrimination and gender-based violence. Article 34 guarantees equal rights and opportunities for women However, challenges remain in translating these constitutional provisions into effective mechanisms for gender equality due to the male dominant political culture, corruption and weak reform process. Between 2015-2020, Myanmar's new democratic government had taken steps to address gender inequality and promote gender equality through legislative reforms. The Protection and Prevention of Violence against Women Law (2019) to prevent domestic violence and provides legal protections for women.

The Myanmar National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2013-2022) sets a framework and strategies to promote gender equality, diverse workforce and women's empowerment. Myanmar. According to UN women, Legal, Policy and Institutional frameworks for Gender Equality: Myanmar acceded to Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women(CEDAW)in 1997 and reported to CEDAW Committee in 2008 by submitting its 2 nd and 3 rd combined report .It aims to increase awareness, capacity-building, and sustained commitment from government agencies and international organizations to effectively implement gender equality across all sectors. Despite efforts, challenges and gaps remain for gender equality in Myanmar. Limited resources, weak implementation mechanisms, and persistence of deep-rooted gender norms hinder gender equality. Access to justice, especially for women, remains a challenge. There is a need for strengthening institutional capacity, institutional reforms, awareness, more access to education and enforcement of gender-responsive laws and policies.

1.3 Gender Equality in Education and Economics

Education plays a huge role in empowering women and girls. When girls are educated, they gain knowledge, skills, and confidence to participate fully in society. Investing in quality education can help women to break the cage. Now, the literacy rate of women has increased due to easily accessible education and the huge participation rate of women in the education and health sector. In Myanmar. Women face challenges such as limited access to formal employment, wage gaps, occupational segregation, and barriers to career advancement. Traditional gender roles and expectations often limit women's choices and opportunities in the workforce. Developing a supportive ecosystem that includes business development services, networking opportunities, and platforms for knowledge sharing and collaboration. Encouraging public-private partnerships and engaging with industry associations can also promote women's employment. In conclusion, Before the coup the increased percentage of gender equality in Myanmar is slowly but surely.

2. After the coup

According to the United Nations, they stated that” Myanmar Women living under the pandemic and military rule are starting to see their future disappear before their eyes. They are scared to leave their homes and the peace, political and economic rights they enjoyed for a decade are rapidly disappearing.

2.1 Women in Political Participation

The political sector can only benefit from the participation of all citizens. After the military coup in Myanmar, the first peaceful public protest was led by women. Also, due to the military council's brutal suppression, the first people who were hit by a bullet in the head were women. Not only that the army beat women and kidnapped them. Women face forced arrests and sexual abuse. In spite of these dangers, the women protested. They actively participated in the armed struggle. Voices of oppressed women were loudly expressed. Women, it is the drinking river of politics as well as the backbone of the revolution. Also, women played a major role in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). The CDM movement is a peaceful protest movement that has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. More than a quarter of teachers in basic education participated in CDM.90 percent of those teachers are women. In addition, nearly 20,000 university teachers participated in CDM. About three-quarters are women. Looking at these factors, women's participation and leadership during the revolution is worthy of recognition. In addition, 8 percent of the 70 campaign leaders of the local NGO Gender Equality Network are women. In the days following the coup, women carried the flag of the wasps in the protests, breaking through conservative views and discrimination. (Winn, 2021) The National Unity Government (NUG), a revolutionary government to end the military dictatorship, has many female ministers and leaders who are fighting for democracy at the forefront.

2.2 Security and Safety

Security has become a massive issue for women in Myanmar. Almost one in three women reports not feeling safe in their own ward/village during the day. Insecurity is higher in urban areas; younger women in townships experience more violence and feel it more acutely. This is a

considerable departure from 2019, when reliable data showed that only 3.5 percent of women felt unsafe during the day. When asked about moving outside their own ward or village, more than half of the women report not feeling safe and, disturbingly, over a third of women report feeling unsafe in their own homes at night. Violence against women has been associated with the military, with reports of sexual assault, rape and killing of women, particularly from ethnic minority communities.

Such reports led to UN Secretary-General António Guterres listing the Myanmar Armed Forces as “credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence.”¹⁴ Women in the survey were asked for a general evaluation of their current feelings of safety. According to an interview, one in four women (25.7 percent) stated, “Women are not safe and secure when they go outside during this period.” Specifically, the survey asked women how safe they feel during the day in their own ward or village). Almost one in three women reports not feeling safe (30.1 percent) and this feeling of insecurity is higher in urban areas (34.7 percent), in areas experiencing more violence and conflict (36.6 percent) and among younger women (34.2 percent).

2.3 Economics

Nearly seven out of 10 women report that household income has fallen since the military takeover, undergoing a continual decline in their incomes. In households who took a loan, the loan was taken out by a woman in six out of 10 cases. The consequences of COVID-19 and the military takeover will not disappear quickly. Women are likely to face long-term setbacks in work force participation and income. Selling assets and using their own savings will have repercussions for their economic well-being far down the road. Households that took out a loan since the military takeover, the loan has been taken out by a woman in the household in 63.2 percent of the cases. Women often undertake micromanagement of money, and these are probably small loans to help tide the household over a difficult period.

Women are not safe and secure when they go outside during this period	25.7%
Jobs are not good and so women have no income	14.1%
It is difficult for women to find a job	13.5%
Women face many difficulties as they lost their jobs	12.5%
The social affairs and economics of women have become increasingly difficult because of the current political situation and COVID-19	8.1%
As factories are closed, there are more and more jobless women	7.1%
All is the same, nothing changed. All are okay with their jobs	4.7%
Doctors are not available at health centers , and it makes it difficult for pregnant women and other sick women to receive health services	2.8%
Transportation and travelling are not okay as there are many checkpoints on the way	3.0%
Women must start working outside like men in this situation	2.3%
Businesses become more difficult to run as transportation is not good	1.5%
Women do not get the same opportunities as men	1.0%
They can just start working now	0.8%
I wish there were more job opportunities for women	0.6%
There is more and more domestic violence and issues at home	0.7%
Women are not safe and secure even though they are staying at home because of the current political situation	0.6%
Although women can find a job and work, the salaries are reduced	0.4%
There are no places for women to go and seek support against violence	0.2%
Women are less educated and less knowledgeable	0.2%
Women who are involved in the civil disobedience movement must run and hide in the jungle	0.2%

Table: Please could you tell me in your own words about life for women in Myanmar over the last few months? (According to Research Paper of REGRESSING GENDER EQUALITY IN MYANMAR: Women living under the pandemic and military rule)

2.4 Sexual harassment and abuse of women

Myanmar after the coup in the country, the military council's violence against women gradually worsened. The military council, which is dominated by chauvinism, is influenced by the extreme beliefs of culture and religion, and cruel violence against women. In their mind, women are only considered to be used for sex, and are committing inhumane crimes. The coup army's sexual violence against women in prisons and the brutality of women in villages that were raided. Used as a military weapon. The military council oppresses anyone who opposes them with fear. Torture FGM and sexual assault on women became systematic. Women from the National Unity Government (NUG); Ministry of Youth and Child Affairs and National Unity Consultative Council the Gender Policy Coordinating Committee said in a joint statement on March 8 that the military council had sexually assaulted at least 122 women since the coup began. In addition, since the start of the coup in February 2021, more than 4,000 women have been arrested and detained by the Thailand-based Political Victims Assistance Association, among them 15 have been sentenced to life imprisonment and 11 have been sentenced to death.

In addition, around 400 women died during the conflict and the military killing of women. It is said that there were burnings alive and sexual assaults and killings. Some women suffer from poor health care due to ongoing wars. Avoiding war, hiding in the forest, and dying in childbirth, it is said. Last year 2023 On March 1, military council troops raided Tar Tai Village in Sagaing Province and committed sexual violence, killing at least 17 civilians, including three women. VOA's April 2, 2023 issue of "The Burmese Army Rapes and Other Violence against Women, Says the Army Raped and Killed Women in Groups Targeted," the article said.

In conclusion, gender equality in Myanmar has rapidly decreased since the coup. Not only in safety concerns but also economically and politically. Due to the pandemics and the coup, education in Myanmar has been stopped for a long time. So, there is no chance to learn. Anyway, women in Myanmar really hope to stop this disaster in a victorious way. Right now, we can only wish the best we can.

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