

THE ADVOCACY OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT IN MYANMAR BY LOCAL WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

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Abstract

This article is aimed to explain the advocacy process for increasing women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament by the local women's movements. The women in Myanmar have been underrepresented in all aspects, including in the parliament at the union and state/region level. The underrepresentation of women in Myanmar's Parliament only makes women more vulnerable. The number of women's representation in parliament at national and state/region level was increasing from 3.7% in 2010 to 10.08% in 2015. The author believed that the local women's movements played central role in advocating this issue to increase the women MPs. In order to analyze the advocacy process of the local women's movements, the author used the Boomerang Pattern from Keck and Sikkink explaining about the Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs). In understanding the change of state behavior, the author reiterated the logic of appropriateness by March and Olsen. The data analyzed in this research was the secondary data using library research method. This research signified that the advocacy process for increasing the number of women in Myanmar's Parliament is: 1) The local women's movements establish the network with the foreign NGOs due to a non-functioning channel to the government and; 2) The INGOs set the issue in international level and push some foreign states and the United Nations to pressure Myanmar. In return, the state changed its behavior and began to increase the women's representation in the parliament.

Keyword(s): *Women's Representation, Local Women's Movement, Myanmar, Boomerang Pattern, Logic of Appropriateness*

INTRODUCTION

"Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. (United Nations, 1948)"

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) grant everyone the rights to take part in the government, directly or through their representatives which means everyone regardless their sex is entitled to the political rights to vote and to run in the election. However, it is the fact that men are dominating the decision-making process and women are somehow excluded from the process. In 2015, there were only 43 countries that surpassed the target of 30% minimum target of women's representation in parliament. There were 70 countries has less than 15% women in parliament, and 5 countries with no women representative (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015 in Murage, 2017).

Myanmar is one among those 70 countries where women are represented less than 15%. The elected women MPs are only accounted for 10.5% in 2015. Prior to 2015, women in Myanmar were really underrepresented in parliament as they only accounted for less than 5% of the parliament. Despite women MPs in Myanmar's Parliament were far below the

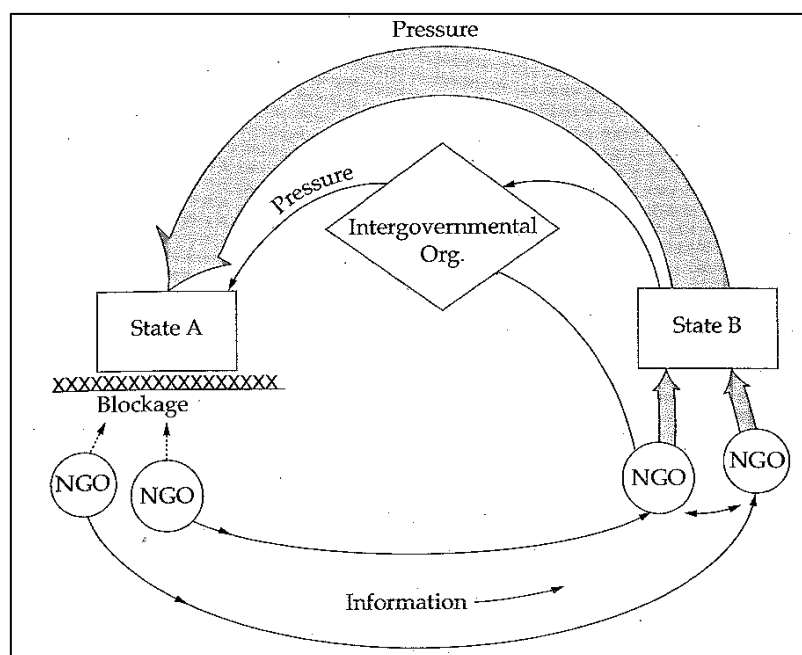
global average in 2015, there was a significant improvement from the 2010 election to the 2015 election. The author believed that in increasing the women MPs in Myanmar's Parliament there was an advocacy process conducted by the local women's movements. This article is aimed to explain the advocacy process by the local women's movements in Myanmar to increase the number of women representatives in Myanmar's Parliament.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to explain the advocacy process by the local women's movements in Myanmar, the author used the Boomerang Pattern by Keck & Sikkink (1998). Additionally, the Logic of Boomerang Pattern by March & Olsen (2011) is used to understand the change of behavior of Myanmar to increase the women's representation in the parliament.

Keck and Sikkink (1998), in their book entitled *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Network in International Politics* explain the pivotal role of Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) in the advocacy process in international politics. The concept of transnational networks embodied different characteristic, strategies, tactics and patterns of influence to the common domestic social movements. It [network] is a form of organization which is voluntary, reciprocal and has horizontal patterns of communication and exchange as its characteristics (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Transnational Advocacy Networks includes those actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services (Keck & Sikkink, 1999). Advocacy in itself is an effort to influence the government for changing the public policy (Azizah, 2014). The establishment of TANs is possible under certain circumstances, as follows: (1) there is an ineffective channel between domestic groups and their governments in addressing particular issue, (2) establishing network will ease the accomplishment of their missions and campaigns as well as in promoting them actively, and (3) the international events (communication and interaction) enable the formation and strengthen the networks. Further, Keck & Sikkink illustrated how TANs work in advocating certain issue which later named the Boomerang Pattern (*see figure 1*).

Figure 1 Model of Boomerang Pattern



As it is called Boomerang Pattern, the model of boomerang pattern illustrated that the advocacy process is done through putting the issue in international setting and emerge the transnational network to pressure the targeted actor. In detail, the advocacy process done by TANs can be explained as follows:

1. State A blocks the NGOs in the state A that want to advocate certain issue to the government
2. NGOs of State A establish and activate network with other NGOs in the State B
3. The NGOs of State B whose members of network cooperate each other and encourage their own State and if relevant a third-party organization
4. The State B and if relevant a third-party organization pressure State A

Keck and Sikkink explained the advocacy of women's suffrage by using the Boomerang Pattern. The author, in this case, does apply the Boomerang Pattern in explaining the advocacy process for increasing the women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament in 2015.

In comprehending the explanation of the behavioral shift of Myanmar which first exclude women from the decision-making process to the more inclusive political atmosphere for women the author uses the logic of appropriateness. The logic of appropriateness is defined as a perspective that views human action as generated by rules of appropriate or exemplary behavior, organized into institutions. The states followed the rules because it is seen as natural, rightful, expected, legitimate and also relatively fixed responses to defined situations. The rules prescribe, more or less defines the appropriate actions. It does also influence the actor to fulfill the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices, and expectations of its institutions. (March & Olsen, 2011). According to logic of appropriateness, Myanmar follows the rule of law to act appropriately which to some extent it requires the pressure from the external party to make them act in the more appropriate way.

RESEARCH FINDING

The Underrepresentation of Women in Myanmar's Parliament

The long-standing military regime in Myanmar makes it well-known as one of the isolated country worldwide until the regime changed. Thus author signifies that women's underrepresentation in Myanmar's Parliament also somehow due to the ruling military regime which excluded women. The number of women in Myanmar's Parliament is presented by the author in table 1.

Table 1 The Number of Women's Representation* in Myanmar's Parliament (1990-2015)

	1990 Election			2011-2016			2016-2021		
	Women MPs	Total MPs	%	Women MPs	Total MPs	%	Women MPs	Total MPs	%
Assembly of the Union	15	485	3.09	30	632	4.75	69	657	10.50
House of Representative	-	-	-	26	417	6.23	46	433	10.62
House of Nationalities	-	-	-	4	215	1.86	23	224	10.26
State/Region Parliament	-	-	-	26	881	2.95	86	880	9.77

Total	15	485	3.09	56	1,513	3.70	155	1,537	10.08
*Military-appointed MPs are included									

Table 2.1 shows that women in Myanmar were not represented in state/region parliament until the 2010 election. Although women began to be included in Myanmar's Parliament at the union and state/region level since 2011, women in Myanmar were still not really represented. There are some obstacles for women to be the representative in parliament in Myanmar which in this article is categorized into four obstacles; socio-cultural, educational, financial, and also legal and institutional aspects.

First, the socio-cultural barrier for women in Myanmar to be able to involve in decision-making process is the preservation of patriarchal culture in Myanmar society. The patriarchal system, the system which gives men superiority over women in all aspects is simply marginalizing and disadvantaging women by neglecting their presence. It has been accustomed in Myanmar society that divides the social and gender roles of women and men (Hedstrom, 2013). There is a belief amongst the Myanmar society saying that women are not only expected to taking care of children but also in charge to assure the well-being of all family members (Mra, 2000 in Belak, 2002). There are numbers of traditional Myanmar proverbs that hindering the women's role in public leadership roles (Gender Equality Network, 2013). Therefore, women are being consciously and voluntarily to be assigned in domestic matters, and men in public matters. In general, women's responsibility in the family is the house and the men's is earning money for the family (Belak, 2002). Not only that, the conservative religious belief of Burmese Buddhism considered women as spiritually lower than men, even the Buddhist nuns were considered below monks (Lian, 2015). The concept lies behind this belief called '*hpon*' defining the abstract quality upon the possession of morality and spiritual matters where women have the lesser degree than men (Grafilo, 2018). It is illuminating the way women are perceived by society and reinforcing the subordination of women over men. Being a good woman means abiding to behavioral restrictions taught in their religion. This belief is been practiced in society. Besides, some studies in both developed and developing countries found that the citizens tend to be male-bias in choosing the political leader or representatives (Aniza & Berry, 2012; Duflo, 2012 in Gender Equality Network, 2015). It also inevitably exists among Myanmar's citizen that they prefer men over women to be the political leader (The Asia Foundation, 2014; Gender Equality Network, 2013).

Second, the educational barrier also matters in making women less-represented in the parliament. The constitution of Myanmar grants everyone the equal access to education, yet girls and women are being neglected to enjoy the education as boys and men enjoyed. It is somehow related to the socio-cultural barrier which restrict the education for girls and women is constructed socially. Myanmar's people are really valuing the education in its high expense of money because it increases the status of a person, but this is only applicable to boys and men. The low educational level of women serves to disempower women away from effective political influence (Belak, 2002). Therefore, education does matters for the political participation of women because without education women's voices not even close to being heard in government (WEDU Global, 2018). It is only with education that women can be aware of what politics is and have leadership skills and experiences.

Third, the financial barrier contributes to the failure for women candidates in winning the election as they have lack of financial resource to support their political campaign. The author realizes that the socio-cultural aspect which limits women's role for only staying at home and men's role to be the breadwinner is ultimately affecting the financial condition of women. As women are responsible for the household and the denial from society, women are facing unequal opportunities to work outside the home (Belak, 2002). What makes it worse is actually when women are given a chance to work outside home women still earn less money

than men with the same jobs which only account for 70%-90% of what men earn (Baker, 2016). Furthermore, the lack of educational background leads the lack of particular skills and capacities for women to have a proper job as men. The women are more likely than men to work in the industry that needs labor with cheap salary. Given this situation, it makes sense that women are struggling to participate in politics because women have no resource, especially financially to support them in running the election (Gender Equality Network, 2017). Additionally, women candidates are less likely than men to get the financial support from their families, relatives, or even political parties they are in. It is reported that women candidates were more likely than men in charge of the entire fund of their campaigns themselves (Gender Equality Network, 2017; The Carter Center, 2015).

Lastly, the most prominent obstacle for women comes from the legal and institutional aspect which refers to the aspect coming from the government and other related institution such as political party that hinder women's participation in the election. First, the 2008 Constitution is still considered as a form of solidification of power from the military forces. The military forces are privileged to have 25% seats of the parliaments without the election. The male dominance in military forces leads to the unequal posture of parliament that favors men over women. Second, the constitution also designed the male-bias First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system. According to this system, all candidates are competing for a single seat which tends to result in fewer women being elected (Gender Equality Network, 2017). Third, the posture of established Union Election Commission as mandated in the constitution still makes women underrepresented in the commission (The Carter Center, 2015). Fourth, there are many of the existing political system are still in favor towards men candidates than women candidates. Additionally, the traditional media coverage also somehow not takes the women side and support them in the election, but misinforms the profile of women candidates (Gender Equality Network, 2017). The political party, in this issue, is an important platform for increasing the women's representation in parliament because women are unable to have a seat in parliament if they have no opportunity to be a member of political party and candidate for the MPs in the very first place. Most of the political parties in Myanmar excluded the women members through its complex membership requirements and selection.

The Rise of Local Women's Movements in Myanmar

The local women's movements were organized as it was aimed at breaking the status quo of women. Women as the most vulnerable group need to speak up so that they can be well-represented in society in all spheres in Myanmar at large. The situation when women are being disadvantaged out of the existing system and norm, there were some women who are aware of it and willing to address it. Thus, later there were several women's movements in Myanmar that aimed to be a part of the solution. In this issue, the author highlights three women's movements in Myanmar that advocate the issue to increase the women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament, namely the Women's League of Burma (WLB), the Gender Equality Network (GEN), and the Women's Organizations Network (WON).

Speaking of the rise of local women's movement in Myanmar, it can be traced back along with the fight for political reform against the junta government. Prior to the nationwide protest in 1988, there were two organizations of women based in Karen and Mon States already established namely Karen Women's Organization (KWO) and Mon Women's Organization (MWO). In the series of mass protest and demonstration in the late 1990s, women were involved by joining the Burmese Housewives Association and the young women joined the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF). The uprising was not strong enough in realizing the political reform in Myanmar. In fact, the regime reasserted

their control by imposing martial law. It is reported that women were violated physically and sexually by the Special Police (Women's League of Burma, 2007 in Hedstrom, 2013).

The Women's League of Burma became the most prominent women's movement in the country to advocate women's issue after it was established in 1999 as the result of the strong commitment of 13 women's ethnic organizations in Myanmar. The WLB faced many challenges from the government in order to advocate the women's issue. Later, only post-Cyclone Nargis in 2008, the women's organizations began to emerge such as GEN and WON to address women's issue particularly those who were affected by the disaster. After all, the movements of women in Myanmar began to rise and advocate the issue of women, including the underrepresentation of women in Myanmar's Parliament.

Actors of Advocacy Process for Increasing Women's Representation in Myanmar's Parliament

In this part, the author explains the actors involved in the process of advocacy in increasing the number of women in parliament. The local women's movements aforementioned earlier are the prominent actors in the advocacy process. But, the local women's movements do not advocate this issue only by themselves to be able to make the targeted actor of this advocacy process for changing its behavior. According to Boomerang Pattern, there are the foreign NGOs and relevant international actors which later establish the transnational network for advocating the issue in order to increase the number of women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament. In understanding the advocacy process, the author considers several influential actors which explained below along with the targeted actor.

The Targeted Actor of Advocacy

Myanmar's Government is the most prominent targeted actor as it is the one that hampers the enforcement of women's rights in the country, especially the women's representation in parliament. As have been stated earlier that the military junta causes the exclusion of women in society; thus military regime must become the prominent targeted actor. By having political reform and change in behavior, Myanmar will possibly include women and taking them into account in every aspect of life. The fact that Myanmar has ratified Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1997 and led to the establishment of Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs (MNCWA) which later renamed as Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAFF) did not change anything, but shadow institution.

"The creation of the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs, a committee comprised largely of military men, and the non-independent, non-governmental Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association, have both acted as vehicles for the promotion of national patriotic values rather than the empowerment of women. Programs created to provide services and information to women are afflicted by the same difficulties as other institutions, namely, lack of funding, training, freedom of information, and corruption. No government body or committee specifically dedicated to achieving gender equality exists in Burma. (Women's Organizations of Burma Shadow Report Writing Committee, 1999)"

This shows that the Government of Myanmar did not commit to the accomplishment of gender equality, not even to make women well-represented in the parliament. Other than Myanmar's Government that very clear as the targeted actor in this advocacy process, there is the political party which also becomes the targeted actor. The political party is the first platform which enables women to run in the election. Although being an independent

candidate is also possible, but women more likely than men perceived to be inappropriate from society. It is written in the CEDAW Implementation report by WON together with WLB in 2016.

“Women can be a member of the political party but they are only useful for the opening ceremony to arrange flower and prepare refreshment for the ceremony. Wai Lin, Sagaing Division (Women's Organization Network, 2016)”

However, it is only with the political party, women can have a better chance to be running the election. There are only a few numbers of political parties that established to support women's representation in parliament means there is a lot more political parties that do not support women to run in the election. It is based on the finding that in Myanmar, there is only a small number of political parties that have a women wing or department (Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy, 2014). The Women's Party from Mon State is the first and only all-women party in Myanmar to contest in the 2015 general elections (Myanmar Now, 2015). Not even one out of four candidates who ran in the election was elected in 2015 (Burma News International, 2018).

Local Women's Movements

The local women's movements are the most prominent actor in this advocacy process for increasing the number of women in parliament. There are three women's movements which explained by the author namely, the Women's League of Burma (WLB), the Gender Equality Network (GEN), and the Women's Organizations Network (WON). Each women movement has its own characteristics in doing its advocacy.

To begin with, the Women's League of Burma (WLB) was the first women's umbrella organization comprises of 13 women's ethnic organization that based in the border between Thailand and Myanmar established in 1999. The WLB has a strong commitment in addressing women's issue in general, which among them it focuses on addressing the violation against women, women's political participation and also women in peace process. In increasing the political participation of women, WLB has a particular program named as Political Empowerment Program (PEP) which has some projects such as political forum and the Emerging Leaders Political Empowerment School (ELPES) (Women's League of Burma, 1999). Besides, WLB also conducts the international advocacy for realizing the equal participation of women in politics.

The Gender Equality Network (GEN) and the Women's Organization Network (WON) were both network organizations which have member organizations within it to work for addressing gender inequality at its top priority. These two women's movements were established after the Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in 2008 for giving the most affected women in Myanmar the humanitarian assistance. There are Phan Tee Eain (PTE) and Akhaya Women the member organizations of both GEN and WON. These two organizations play important role amongst other member organizations of both GEN and WON that increase the women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament (Gender Equality Network, 2008; Women's Organization Network, 2016).

Foreign NGOs Involved in the Advocacy Process

There are some foreign NGOs involved in the advocacy process which becomes the first and foremost actors in establishing the transnational network together with the local women's movements in Myanmar. Those foreign NGOs play pivotal role in assisting the

local women's movements to put the issue in international setting as well as in jointly conducting the programs and projects which address the obstacles for women to participate in politics. There are many foreign NGOs that collaborate with the women's movements in Myanmar to address women's rights issue. However, there are three foreign NGOs amongst many that considered playing pivotal role in increasing the women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament, namely the International Women Development Agency (IWDA), Trocaire, and the Asia Foundation.

The author reaffirms the commitment of those foreign NGOs in supporting the local women's movements for increasing the women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament. First, the IWDA is the NGO based in Australia that established in 1985 for supporting women's rights in Asia and the Pacific. It envisions the gender-equal world whereby all girls and women are included in all spheres at all levels (IWDA, 2018). In Myanmar, IWDA collaborates with four women's organizations among them are the Akhaya Women, WLB and two other member organizations of WLB; Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) and Palaung Women's Organization (PWO). It started to enter Myanmar since 2008, particularly to start the partnership with WLB. Second, Trocaire is the NGO based in Ireland founded by the Catholic Church in 1973 since the Bishops' Conference of Ireland for development aid and donation purposes. Although it was founded for specifically addressing the poverty and unjust world, it also concerns with the gender inequality as one of the causes of underdevelopment. It has been working in Myanmar since 1995, yet it just opened its office in 2008 post-Cyclone Nargis (Trócaire, 2018). It works closely with the PTE for increasing the women's representation in parliament since the 2010 election to date. Lastly, the Asia Foundation is a San Francisco-based nonprofit international development organization. It was established in 1954 and began to first open partnership with Myanmar in 1958. It had closed its office due to the military regime, yet it reopened its door to cooperate in 2013 (The Asia Foundation, 2018). The focus of the Asia Foundation in Myanmar is also empowering women politically together with PTE. These three foreign NGOs have significantly increased the women's participation for being lawmaker in parliament.

The International Actors: Foreign States and the United Nations

It is undeniable that the involvement of international actors is essential to the advocacy process of this issue. There are Australia, the European Union (EU) and the United States of America (US) who involved in the process of advocacy along with the role played by the United Nations (UN). Australia is a country which commits to accomplish gender equality for all both inside and outside Australia. In regard to the participation of women in politics, women in Australia's House Representatives are accounted for 30% of 150 MPs and 30 out of 76 senators in Senate (Parliament of Australia, 2018). It also supports the attainment of gender equality outside the country that showed by its foreign policy through Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) with the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy and Australian Aid (DFAT, 2018). The European Union (EU), although it is not a state in literal meaning it has the similar division of power just like a state in the union. It has a strong commitment to human rights and democracy. It is a leading global regional organization in gender equality. In European Parliament, women are accounted for 36.1% of all MPs in 2018 (European Parliament, 2018). Just like Australia, it also adopted the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations (2016-2020) which deliver the aid on gender equality for external parties (European Commission, 2018). The United States of America (US) has played central role in bringing political reformation in Myanmar through its inevitable power. Speaking of women's rights and gender equality, The US Constitution does

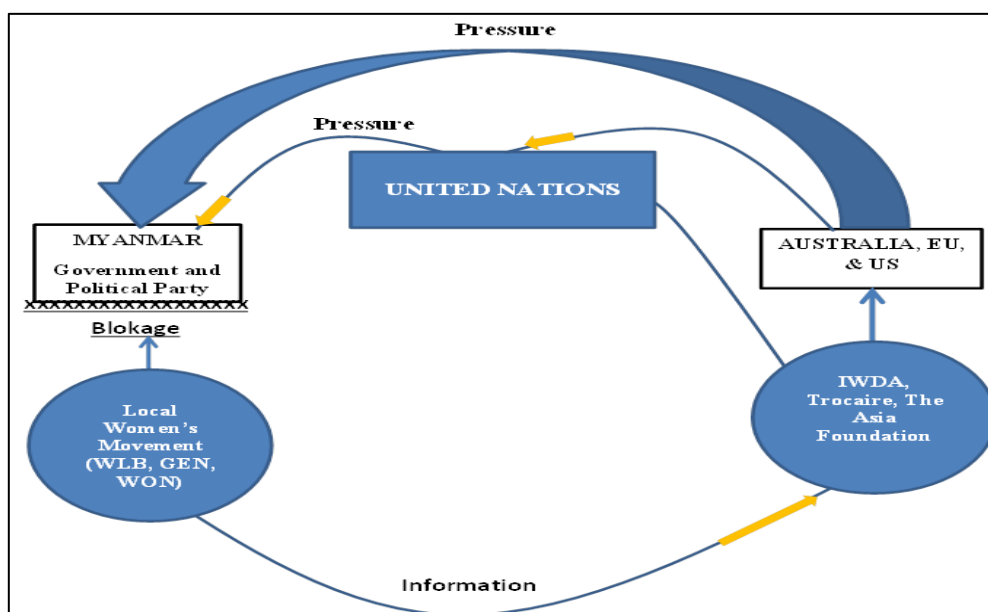
protect and grant women’s rights and gender equality for US citizens, including the women’s representation in parliament. Women are accounted for almost 20% in the lower house and accounted about 23% in the Senate (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018). The US also in its foreign policy supports women’s rights and gender equality through USAID under the Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy (USAID, 2012).

Those play important role in pressuring the Government of Myanmar, but without the involvement of the intergovernmental organization in pressuring Myanmar their efforts seems like ineffective and inefficient. The United Nations (UN) is one of them which have a central role in pressuring Myanmar for increasing the participation of women in politics. The UDHR as the international legal framework has stated that everyone has the rights to participate in government, directly or indirectly. Not only that, the UN adopted CEDAW and Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) for bringing the discrimination against women to an end. Currently, the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda has set 17 ambitious goals to be achieved worldwide by 2030, including the gender equality. These are the commitments of the UN in increasing women’s participation in politics particularly to be the MPs. Through the international conferences and forums, the UN also has able to pressure Myanmar to do so.

The Advocacy Process for Increasing Women’s Representation in Myanmar’s Parliament

Keck & Sikkink (1998) has illustrated the advocacy process of transnational network by Boomerang Pattern. In this part the author explains the advocacy process by the local women’s movements namely WLB, GEN and WON together with IWDA, Trocaire and the Asia Foundation with the support of Australia, EU and US as well as the United Nations in pressuring the Government of Myanmar to increase the women’s representation in Myanmar’s Parliament. The advocacy process is aimed to address the obstacles faced by women in Myanmar to be the representatives in parliament. The author illustrates the advocacy process for increasing the number of women in Myanmar’s Parliament in figure 2.

Figure 2 The Model of The Local Women’s Movements Advocacy for Increasing the Number of Women’s Representation in Myanmar’s Parliament



In this part, the author first explains the initiation of establishing the Transnational Advocacy Network (TAN) by the local women's movements which caused by the restriction of the Government of Myanmar as well as the political party in Myanmar to exclude women in politics. The disharmonious relations between the government and the domestic women's organizations lead to the creation of TAN between the local women's movements with the foreign NGOs. Second, the author explains the program and project ran by the established TAN in addressing the factors that hamper women's participation in decision-making process. In the following the author explains the pressure from the international actors toward the aforementioned targeted actors. In return, the advocacy process results in the increase of women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament in 2015 which had successfully doubled the number of women in Parliament in the 2010 election.

Initiation of Advocacy Process by the Local Women's Movements

The notable book entitled "*Debating Democratization in Myanmar*" edited by Nick Cheesman, Nicholas Farrelly and Trevor Wilson in 2014 gives the author a very insightful argument in understanding TANs on democratization process in Myanmar. Cheesman, Farrelly, & Wilson (2014) highlighted that the framing of the pro-democracy movement shifted the discourses of the authoritarian military regime towards democracy, non-violence, human rights, ethnic group rights, and women's rights. However, even until the 1990 Election was held, in fact Myanmar's Government still neglected the democracy. This led to the frustration of the pro-democracy movement, including the women's movement due to the ongoing negative response from the Government of Myanmar. It encouraged them to establish transnational network with other foreign NGOs concerning on women's rights issues and at the same time it generated international criticism and put pressure on the regime (Cheesman, Farrelly, & Wilson, 2014).

In the case of advocacy on women's representation in parliament in Myanmar, the women's movement in Myanmar majorly framed the issue in the larger context of women's issue. It is important to be noted that the Government of Myanmar already ratified the CEDAW and BPfA in 1997 which became the international legal basis for Myanmar in dealing with any form of discrimination against women. Although the government has ratified those two important conventions, women in Myanmar remain unsafe and being abused, marginalized or even excluded from society at all levels. Women in Myanmar were not even being taken into consideration as a part of the society. Hundreds of rape cases by the military force of Myanmar to women in border areas have been documented and disclosed by Women's League of Burma. The rape itself had been structuralized and systematized as the instrument for Myanmar's Government to protect its administration from collapse (Women's League of Burma, 2004). Therefore, the initiation to advocate the issue was there.

The author highlights the role of WLB as the first women's network organization comprising 13 women's ethnic organizations in Burma in initiating the establishment of TANs for women's rights issues in Burma (Cheesman, Farrelly, & Wilson, 2014). Regarding that matter, speaking of the first WLB's initiation in establishing the transnational network for women's rights, it did not really focus on the underrepresentation of women in parliament but more into criticizing the lack of implementation of CEDAW for protecting women's rights in general. Therefore, WLB published and disclosed the documentation of actual condition and situation of women in Myanmar to the international community at that time to dramatize the issue and gain the international support. The TANs for advocating the women's representation in Myanmar was firstly initiated by the WLB after it held its Fourth Congress WLB. The WLB Fourth Congress had resulted in two prioritized areas which were promoting increased women's participation in decision-making processes at all level and raising

awareness of the gender equality concept in local communities. The prioritized area of WLB after the Fourth Congress was strengthened by the Fifth Congress of WLB in 2006 that established the Political Empowerment Program (Women's League of Burma, 2009). In doing such program, WLB is supported by the foreign NGO which is IWDA. IWDA for the first time had established a partnership with WLB and its two other member organizations, PWO, and SWAN in 2008.

The other local women's movements, GEN and WON were begun to establish the network of transnational advocacy for women's representation in parliament since its establishment in 2008 because GEN and WON themselves are network organization per se. GEN and WON work closely with Trócaire since it opened its country office in Myanmar in 2008 and also the Asia Foundation since it re-established its office in 2013.

Donor Funding and Partnership: Program and Projects

The established TANs for women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament need to sustain its network so that it can be effective and efficient. As it is mentioned earlier that information plays a pivotal role in sustaining the network effectiveness. It is because when the information exchanges are intensively progressed the program and projects of TANs also can be initiated. The implementation of programs and projects are part of advocacy effort for addressing the obstacles for women to participate in politics. In this part, the author describes the programs and projects initiated by the local women's movements with the financial support and partnership from the foreign NGOs. The author divides the programs and projects based on the time period of the election that held in Myanmar into three phases since 1990.

Phase 1 (Post-1990 Election – 2010)

The first initiative for increasing women's political participation was initiated by one of WLB's member organizations, Karen Women Organization (KWO) in 2001 through holding the Karen Young's Women Leadership School (KYWLS). The KYWLS was aimed to improve the leadership skills of young women who are interested in working for organizations, especially the KWO (Karen Women Organization, 2018). In the following year, there were 5 women from WLB attended the Seminar on Parliamentary Democracy and Management of Parliament in Sweden with Member of Parliament Union (MPU) for the mission (Women's League of Burma, 2009). Not long after that, the WLB had implemented the program called Political Empowerment Program (PEP) in May 2006 with two projects namely, the Emerging Leadership Political Empowerment School (ELPES) and Political Forum. The ELPES is six-month-long political empowerment education that established in June 2008 to date which has given the WLB's members the knowledge and skills on leadership in Burma. As recorded by WLB, there are 40 women have been trained and graduated from this program. In supporting the ELPES project, WLB also runs the Political Forums which hold in monthly basis both inside and on the borders of Burma to exchange ideas and experience in political matters among the participant.

In the same year of the launching of PEP, with WLB's strong commitment in advancing the status of women in all spheres at all levels in Myanmar and ensuring the gender equality in society, WLB became the member of Federal Constitution Drafting and Coordinating Committee (FCDCC). Its participation as the member of FCDCC is to formulate the Constitution of the Federal Republic of the Union of Burma which guarantees the gender equality. The proposed Constitution was actually a constitution's proposal to

oppose the constitution drafted by the military force. WLB had successfully included the gender equality in Article 16 and Article 37 of the Constitution, as follows:

“Gender equality shall be guaranteed in the political, economic, social and cultural fields, and in the family. (Article 16. Gender Equality)”

“To ensure gender quality, at least 30 percent of the seats at all levels of legislation of the Federal Union shall be reserved for women. (Article 37. Reserved Gender Equality) (FCDCC, 2008)”

The gender equal constitution proposed by the FCDCC from the pro-democracy opposition was rejected to be adopted, not even to be discussed in the National Convention, the drafting committee of the 2008 Constitution. The FCDCC was supported by the Royal Danish Foreign Ministry and the Danish Burma Committee.

In 2008, IWDA started to cooperate with WLB and funded the programs and projects that in line with the strategic objectives of IWDA (IWDA, 2018). In the same year, after the Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar and caused the huge amount of casualties and losses, GEN and WON were established and some international NGOs began to open its offices in Myanmar, such as Trócaire. GEN, WON and Trócaire focused on the programs post-Cyclone Nargis as women were the most disadvantaged group out of the disaster. Still, in the same year, KWO established the project of KWO Emerging Leaders School for two periods of time in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 (Karen Women Organization, 2018).

In the following year, Phan Tee Eain (Creative Home) was established to provide civic and voter educations as the preparation for the 2010 election (Phan Tee Eain, 2018). Later, Phan Tee Eain promoted gender equality and preparing women potential candidate to run the election in 2010 and became the member organization of GEN and WON. Prior to the 2010 election, the Pa-O Women Union (PWU), the member organization of WLB also established the School for Pa-O Women’s Political Empowerment. It was operated for a one-year program to increase the skill of women in English language, computer and presentation skills, assertiveness training, peacebuilding, environmental stewardship, and Burmese history and actual events (Pa-O Women Union, 2018).

Phase 2 (2010 – Pre-2015 Election)

In phase 2, the author signifies the more vibrant and integrated effort made by the local women’s movements. This situation was somehow influenced by the new quasi-civilian regime under the President Thein Sein administration that Myanmar was getting more open to the international community and support the political reform (read subpart 2 the quasi-civilian government (2011-2015)).

In 2011, WLB conducted the political forum which attended by 1,390 participants attended the Political Forums along with other 26 women who gained skills leading, organizing, and facilitating of forums. The Akhaya Women, the member organization of both GEN and WON were conducted the project of mentorship for women’s groups’ leader. The mentorship program aimed to facilitate the establishment of women’s group other than the Akhaya Women. Most importantly, it aimed to enable women to learn and grow, and get out of the traditional gender roles box to be a potential women’s leader (Akhaya Women, 2018).

In 2012, WLB partnered with IWDA emerged the collaboration ELPES that was first established independently by WLB in 2008. The project remained in the same form but with more comprehensive method and funding from outside NGOs. In the same year, the Shan Women’s Action Network (SWAN) established the women’s empowerment program with the project named Young Women’s Leadership Training (YWLT) among them in partnership

with IWDA (Shan Women's Action Network, 2018). The YWLT provided the intensive training aimed to promote women's leadership and political awareness. The Phan Tee Eain also strengthened leadership skill and capacity of elected and potential women in Myanmar prior to the 2012 by-election (Phan Tee Eain, 2018).

The programs and projects prior to the 2012 by-election had successfully increased the women's representation in parliament. Although, it cannot be simply concluded that way because the all elected women MPs were from the NLD, those programs were believed to prepare the women candidate and also the female voter in running the by-election in 2012. The positive improvement showed by the result of 2012 by-election led to some suspension on sanction given to Myanmar from the international community, such as the European Union. However, WLB was firmly asked the international community, especially the United States not to lift the sanction because the positive improvement showed in the by-election result did not necessarily guarantee the better development and inclusion of women in Myanmar (Women's League of Burma, 2012).

In 2013, GEN has written a result of its notable advocacy process by successfully involved in the drafting of National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) 2013-2022 developed by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) together with the support from the Trócaire and other foreign NGOs (Gender Equality Network, 2013). The NSPAW 2013-2022 aimed for improving the system, structures, and practices to make sure the equal participation of women in decision-making and leadership at all levels of society (Gender Equality Network, 2013). It is mandated in the implementation of 30% gender quota system in legislative, executive and judicial political branches. However, in Myanmar herself, the gender quota is debatable among political parties and not yet to be implemented.

“This National Strategic Plan is a Government commitment to promoting and protecting the human rights of women throughout our country. Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Dr. Daw Myat Ohn Khin.”

In the same year, GEN with the support from Trócaire, and LIFT (Livelihoods and Food Security) Fund established the women's leadership training needs and training initiatives in Myanmar. In these initiatives, GEN identified 13 current programs by which the member organizations were administering the program and targeting young women as the potential leaders (Gender Equality Network, 2013; Maber, 2014). The Asia Foundation also entered Myanmar and re-established its office in Myanmar in the same year. In the early year of the re-establishment of the Asia Foundation's office, it did not hold any particular program and project regarding the issue. In the end of 2013, Akhaya Women held the mentoring walk for 15 emerging women's leaders who are often less experienced in the political leadership. The initiation of this project was able to create a conducive environment for both emerging and established women leaders in Myanmar (Akhaya Women, 2018).

Later, WLB and WON jointly organized the first Myanmar Women's Forum held in Yangon, on 20 – 22 September 2013. The forum was attended by over 400 participants made up of a diversity of women's background, from the ethnic' women organization, foreign and border based women's organization, political parties, female MPs, CSOs and other individuals (Women's League of Burma, 2013). The forum was resulted in the Joint Declaration between WLB and WON which also particularly discussed women and decision making (WLB & WON, 2013). It was not only a declaration, but Myanmar Women's Forum also had a recommendation as the outcome entitled “Women Need to be Protected by Law”. There were 12 recommendations for increasing the participation of women in decision-making (WLB & WON, 2013). The Second Women's Forum was held a month later on 29-

30 October 2013 by GEN jointly with other actors, including WLB, WON, Trócaire, UNFPA, Akhaya Women, Phan Tee Eain, UNFPA, and UNDP. The forum was attended by 270 participants and concluded the document used for the adoption of temporary special measures for accelerating women's participation in decision-making at high levels (Gender Equality Network, 2013).

The year of 2013 became the important year for local women's movements in Myanmar because the Second Women's Forum was conducted and uniting the vision of all local women's movements to narrow the underrepresentation of women in the decision-making process. Therefore, in November 2014, IWDA with the support and funding from the Foundation for a Just Society (FJS) organized the CEDAW Advocacy Workshop for catalyzing the joint advocacy strategies of the four women's organization in Myanmar, namely WLB, GEN, WON and also CEDAW Action Myanmar (CAM). This project was funded for increasing women's meaningful participation in decision-making process (IWDA, 2018).

In the same year, Trócaire, the Irish Catholic Church Agency for development overseas worked closely with Phan Tee Eain and Charity Oriented Myanmar to implement the project of Political Awareness of Communities and Civic Education of their Representatives (PACER) under STEP Democracy Program which funded by the European Commission (EC). The PACER project was held since 2014-2016 aimed for strengthening the civil society of Myanmar by promoting political awareness of communities and civic education of their representatives, with women's participation is in its specific objectives. The author quoted some testimonies from the beneficiaries and organizer of this project from the profile video of Women and Democracy in Myanmar (Trocaire, 2016).

In 2015, IWDA supported SWAN in organizing the YWLT inside the Shan State (Shan Women's Action Network, 2018). In the same year, the Asia Foundation together with Phan Tee Eain organized the First Women MPs Forum which aimed to present the joint research finding of the political participation of women in Myanmar. Through this forum, the women MPs were expected to work and do more in order to increase the representation of women in parliament at all levels (Latt, Ninh, Myint, & Lee, 2017).

Phase 2 had shown a positive result for increasing women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament in the 2015 election. Table 2.8 showed that the numbers of elected women in parliament in the 2015 election are doubled from the election in 2010

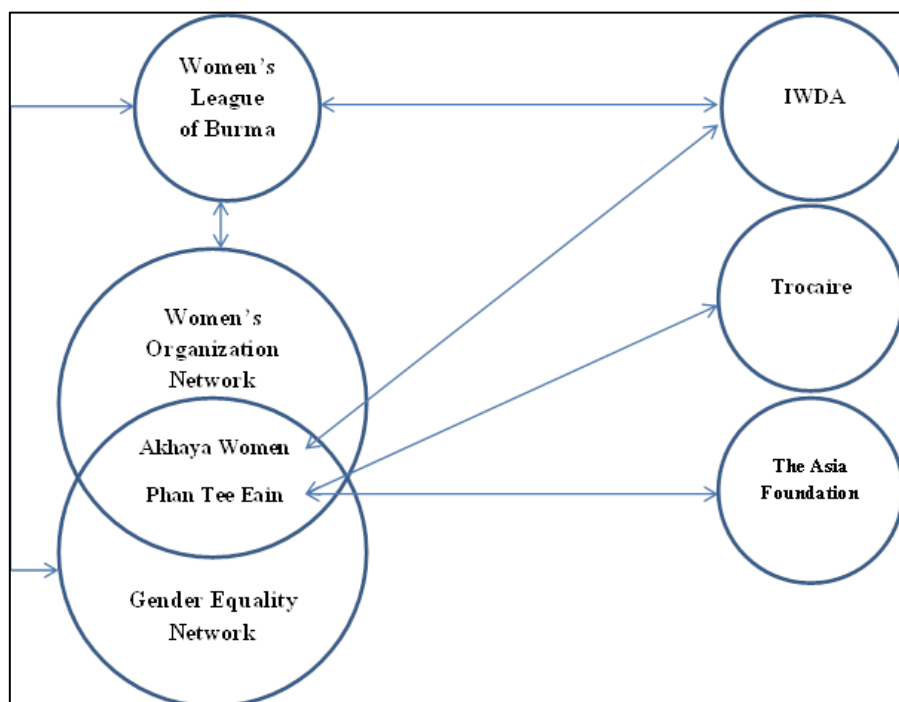
Phase 3 (Post-2015 Election – Present)

In phase 3, the local women's movements and the TANs have an ambitious goal to increase the representation of women even bigger in the 2020 Election. Considering the significant result in the 2015 election, there have been many more programs and projects funded by the foreign actors in this issue.

In December 2015, IWDA was granted around €14.2 million by the Government of the Netherlands, Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW) program (2016-2020). The IWDA has set a Women's Action for Voice & Empowerment (WAVE) program which benefitted 16 women's rights organizations, including 4 women's rights organizations partner in Myanmar. In 2016, IWDA supported the SWAN to hold a three-week Emerging Women's Leadership Training (EWLT) with 16 participants. The participants were trained about CEDAW, the Constitution and governance system of Myanmar, gender and feminism. Still, in the same year, the commitment of IWDA have never stopped, it supported Akhaya Women to organize a Dialog on Women Empowerment and Gender Equality with 17 women MPs. The dialog was organized for sharing a comprehensive understanding of the shortcoming of national law on Prevention of Violence Against Women (PoVAW).

In January 2017, for the first time under WAVE program, Akhaya Women and IWDA jointly piloted the first structured women’s political mentoring program in Myanmar. There were 6 Myanmar’s elected women MPs from 4 political parties who joined this project who were mentored by 6 other Australia’s elected and former women MPs. It was 12-month program with 2 exchange visits, 6-month visit to Myanmar and 6-month visit to Australia. Until today, the programs and projects aimed at increasing the number of women’s representation in Myanmar are gaining more support from the foreign NGOs and international actors. According to the explanation above, it can be concluded that the relations between the local women’s movements and foreign NGOs is presented in figure 3.

Figure 3 Relations of Local Women’s Movements – Foreign NGOs for Women’s Representation in Myanmar’s Parliament



The Pressure from International Actors

In the model of boomerang pattern, Keck & Sikkink (1998) explained that the foreign states and intergovernmental organizations have a role to pressure the targeted actor which in this case is Myanmar’s Government. In the very first place, the pressure from the international actors was aimed at the change of regime to support democracy and human rights. It is only in the post-2010 election, that women’s political participation, in particular, came into motion of global concerns.

Pressure from the Foreign States

As it is mentioned earlier, TANs need the support from the foreign states in order to pressure Myanmar’s Government to increase women’s representation in decision-making, particularly in parliament. The author notices the influential role of Australia, the European Union (EU), and the United States of America in pressuring Myanmar to do so. In this part, the author describes each foreign state action to pressure Myanmar, either through canceling the promise to give development aid or giving the sanction.

Australia for instance gave various sanctions against Myanmar's Government to reform its domestic politics. In the following of political reformation, regarding the matter of women's representation in parliament, it supported the Government of Myanmar with the Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA) since 2012. Australia's ODA in 2012-2013 was around \$75.5 million, in 2013-2014 was around \$85.5 million, and in 2014-2015 was around \$99.1 million. Currently, the Australia's ODA is delivered to Myanmar under the program named Myanmar Aid Investment Plan in 2015-2020 (DFAT, 2018). Australia's ODA also aimed to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including gender equality in Myanmar. They maintain good relations with the government and many local NGOs in Myanmar to conduct various programs and projects for democracy and human rights, as well as to increase women's representation in particular.

The European Union (EU) has appeared in Myanmar for very long time. The EU has donated the huge amount of money of €218 million to Myanmar for the humanitarian reason since 1994. Other than that, the EU led donor to Burmese refugee camps in Thailand since 1995 (European Commission, 2016). However, the European had stood clearly toward the military regime in 1996 when it adopted a Common Position on Burma. In the following years, the EU kept its sanctions against Myanmar until it reformed the domestic politics. In 2012, the EU opened its full diplomatic relations in Myanmar and also restored the position of Myanmar on EBA initiative as well as some suspension on the sanctions (European Commission, 2018). Today EU has been strengthening its bilateral cooperation and partnership in particular areas, such as economic, socio-politics, and defense. Began in 2012, the European Union committed to donor €150 million to Myanmar with the €100 million was distributed in 2012 and the rest €50 million in 2013. In the following year, the European Commission has developed the new chapter of development cooperation with Myanmar for 2014-2020: Rural Development, Education, Governance, and Support to Peace Building with €688 million donors which more than €90 million per year (European Commission, 2018). Some projects of EU are associated to increase women's political participation later for preparing the 2015 election, such as LIFT Fund and STEP Democracy (see part Donor Funding and Partnership of TANs for Programs and Projects) (European Commission, 2016). Under the development strategy of 2014-2020, the European Union established the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations (2016-2020).

The United States of America has established its diplomatic relations with Myanmar since Myanmar got its independence. The close relations between US and Myanmar have made the US to be the key player in enforcing human rights and democracy in the country. It burdened Myanmar with many sanctions when it was violating human rights. The US Government through its international aid for development institution, USAID's Mission was re-opened in 2012 which announced by Secretary Clinton (USAID, 2018). The United States delivers a quite huge amount of funding for improving the democracy and human rights' protection, as well as the promotion and protection of women's rights in Myanmar by establishing a good partnership with local NGOs within the country. The donor funding was transferred for the better democracy and citizens' involvement in politics, economic development and national reconciliation (USAID, 2018).

Pressure from the United Nations

The role of those aforementioned states was relevant to the presence of the United Nations' involvement in pressuring Myanmar. Speaking of the promotion and protection of women's rights in Myanmar, the United Nations involvement can be considered into existence after Myanmar acceded to CEDAW in 1997. The UN mandated the UN CEDAW

Committee in pressuring the Government of Myanmar to increase the representation of women in decision-making under Article 7 of CEDAW.

“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right..... (Article 7 CEDAW)”

The UN CEDAW Committee pressured the Government of Myanmar by using the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The UNGA Session is very important forum for UN CEDAW Committee to gain support by other UN member states to pressure Myanmar’s Government to comply with the CEDAW. The UN CEDAW Committee in its reports to the 55th Session of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), in the Myanmar section, part of principal areas of concerns and recommendation point 132 states as follows:

“The Committee recommends that, in rebuilding its economic and political structures, the Government ensure the full and equal participation of women in an open and pluralistic society (UN CEDAW Committee, 2000)”

In 2008, the UNGA successfully adopted the Draft Resolution on the Situation of human rights in Myanmar with 80 countries voted in favor, 24 countries against and 45 abstentions. Among the resolution proposed in a passed Draft Resolution, it constituted the women’s rights particularly on the implementation of CEDAW in Myanmar.

“Welcomes the dialogue between the Government of Myanmar and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the occasion of the consideration of the Government’s report in November 2008, as a sign of engagement in international cooperative efforts in the field of human rights, and encourages the Government to work to fulfill the recommendations of the Committee; (United Nations, 2009)”

The UN continued to pressure the Government of Myanmar until the regime change took place in 2011. Later after the regime was changed and replaced by the quasi-civilian government under the President Thein Sein administration, the UN was able to go further inside Myanmar. The UN Women entered Myanmar in 2013 and has consequently assisted the country to advance the status of women, including increasing the women’s representation in Myanmar’s Parliament. The National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) 2013-2022 would only be possible to be adopted by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) with the assistance from the UN Women and local women’s movement, which is Gender Equality Network (GEN).

After the 2015 election, there is a positive improvement of women’s representation in Myanmar’s Parliament that women accounted for 10.5% of MPs. This led to the more comprehensive program from the United Nations concerning women’s rights and gender equality in Myanmar. There have been some UN programs which focus on women empowerment and gender equality, such as Human Development Initiative (HDI) with the total budget about \$141 million, the program of Democratic Governance in Myanmar by delivering the \$44 million in 2013-2017, the program of Strengthening Accountability and Rule of Law (SARL) with the total budget \$27 million, and the Support to Effective & Responsive Institutions Project (SERIP) with the total budget \$56.5 million (UNDP, 2013; UNDP, 2017). Apparently, it also runs the Joint Programme Inclusive Development and Empowerment of Women in Rakhine State which ended in 2019 with the total budget \$7.1 million (UNDP Myanmar, 2018). One of the initiatives in this program is Women and Girls First. The initiative is a commitment to work across sectors of Myanmar society towards

women's inclusion and participation in political dialogue and decision making; towards friendly of women and girl legal processes and response from police, prosecutors and court staff; and towards protecting women and girls from gender-based violence (UNFPA Myanmar, 2016).

The Result of Advocacy Network

The advocacy process was aimed to address the obstacles of women to be the representatives in the parliament covering the aspects of socio-cultural, education, finance, and also legal and institutions. The effort of the local women's movements, WLB, GEN, and WON has been bringing a significant change in increasing the women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament by making some improvements in those aspects. In fact from the data provided in table 2.8 that women's representation in parliament from the period of 2011-2016 to the period of 2016-2022 is increasing almost three times from 3.7% to 10.08%.

Those three women's movements have committed to increasing the political participation of women by first changing the patriarchal culture. The women's organization also increase the educational background of women particularly and all citizens in general. They also assisted the women candidates in regard to the financial issues. Most importantly, they are able to address the legal and institutional barriers by finally urging the Government of Myanmar to adopt the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) 2013-2022. The 30% quota for women has been approved in the strategic plan, yet still not well-implemented in the country. Furthermore, some political parties piloted the women quota in preparing the 2015 election, such as NUP, NDF, and USDP (Than S. M., 2015; Aung & Solomon, 2015). In 2015, there was the one and the only all-women political party named Women's Party in Mon States established to increase the women's representation in Parliament.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the advocacy process for increasing the number of women in Myanmar's Parliament is: 1) The local women's movements establish the network with the foreign NGOs due to a non-functioning channel to the government and; 2) The INGOs set the issue in international level and push some foreign states and the United Nations to pressure Myanmar. According to Keck & Sikkink (1998), the targeted actor must be vulnerable either to the sanctions or the material incentives from the outside world or they must be sensitives to the pressures. Other than that, the logic of appropriateness by March & Olsen (2010) explained that the state will act appropriately according to the rule of law. Before women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament was increasing, there was a gap between the stated commitment and practice of Myanmar's Government in implementing the CEDAW. Therefore, Myanmar's Government and the political party eventually changed its behavior into an appropriate behavior following the mandate of CEDAW with the international pressure can be understood because Myanmar are vulnerable to the sanction and also the material consequences.

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