

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

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

The statement above is stated in article 21(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted by the United Nations in 1948. It implies that everyone regardless their race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or other status to participate and involve in political activities. In a more specific way, this article legitimates women that they have equal opportunities and rights in the political matter as men.

However, the man still dominates the world in all matters, including politics. The equality between men and women in politics is not yet accomplished worldwide. Some countries have made progressive change in term of women’s political rights such as European countries, especially Sweden, Norway, and Ireland. Yet, some others just have shown only slight progress even no progress, not to mention; Middle East countries, and mostly the developing countries. 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 of developing countries that have a terrible record in terms of women’s representation in parliament. The preservation of long-standing and deeply-rooted patriarchal culture partly becomes the reason of gender-based discrimination against women in Myanmar,

including in political sphere. There is an ideology called 'Hpon' in Myanmar, which believed that men have spiritual and moral superiority over women (Grafilo, 2018). Hedstrom (2013) explained that the patriarchal system accustomed in Myanmar society gave emphasis on the assigned domestic role of women –women and girls should be obedient wives and good daughters, and concerned with the family matters only. The role division itself is promoted by the Myanmar National Committees for Women's Affairs (MNCWA). It is stated in its website that "*in Myanmar family... The husband provides the financial needs...The women may go out to work for social development; they still have the major responsibility to look after the family*" (MNCWA, 2012 in Hedstrom, 2013). The government believed that women are only responsible to the private matters. Meanwhile men belong to be in the public space, including being the government officials or member of parliaments. Therefore, the woman never be assumed to be a political leader, or at least involved in political activities. The exclusion of women from political decision-making was impacted to the men's domination in leadership positions from the village-level to the union-level (Murage, 2017).

Historically speaking, during the military junta regime Myanmar was isolating herself from the global community, leading to the political stalemate. The country remained underdeveloped until it redefined its strategy and opened up the door to an external party for cooperation. Myanmar's women did not directly enjoy their full rights because of the military junta government which controlled over Myanmar since 1962 following the coup d'état under General Ne Win until 2011. For that reason, of the IPU's record, there is no available data of women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament both in national and state/region level. It was very explicit that the dictatorship government excluded women and undermined women's rights (IWDA, 2016). From this

situation, junta’s government was the other reason for the absence of inclusion of woman.

Although the quasi-civilian government assumed in office in 2011 as the transitional government from the military junta government to the more democratic government, the effort in increasing the women’s representation in parliament remains resisted by many actors. It is a belief that the 2010 election conducted by Myanmar’s Government under the 2008 Constitution was a fake election which established the fake post-election structure (Burma Campaign of UK, 2010). Under the 2008 Constitution, the 2010 election was held by excluding the main opposition party which is National League for Democracy (NLD) and bringing up the Union Solidarity Development Party (USDP) as the military-shadow political party. The government’ structure still dominated by the military as the constitution ruled that 25% of parliamentary seats are given to the military. In fact, the power is not in the hand of parliament but in the hand of National Defense and Security Council (NDSC). By that women were not accounted significantly to be a member of parliament.

Women make up slightly more than half of the population in Myanmar (Moe, 2015). Nevertheless, women in Myanmar are struggling to involve in political activities. Table 1.1 shows the very low number of women’s representation in parliament in the last decade (Latt, Ninh, Myint, & Lee, 2017).

Table 1.1 Women in Myanmar’s National and State/Region Parliaments 2011-2016 and 2016-2021

	Elected MPs		Military-appointed MPs		Women as % of Elected MPs		Women as % of All MPs	
	Women/ Men 2011- 2016	Women/ Men 2016- 2021	Women/ Men 2011- 2016	Women/ Men 2016- 2021	2011- 2016	2016- 2021	2011- 2016	2016- 2021

National Parliament Total (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw)	28/438	67/424	2/164	2/164	6.0	13.7	4.8	10.5
Upper House (Amyotha Hluttaw)	4/155	23/145	0/56	0/56	2.5	13.7	1.8	10.3
Lower House (Pyithu Hluttaw)	24/283	44/279	2/108	2/108	7.8	13.6	6.2	10.6
State/Region Parliament	25/634	84/575	1/221	2/219	3.8	12.7	2.9	9.7

The table represented that women in Myanmar struggle to be the representative in parliament both in National and State/Region level. The 2010 election was won by the USDP, the military-shadow political party, and in the 2015 election was won by the NLD, the opposition of the government. Despite the little progress of women's representation in Myanmar from the election in 2010 to the election in 2015, the number of women MPs in Myanmar is still under the world's average which is 23.6% in 2017 according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). It is also can be seen that there is no significant change in women's representation appointed from military force.

Understanding the women's representation in parliament is complex because it discusses not merely about the women in parliament but also how women can get into the parliament. Education and financial barriers hinder women to participate in the election because it makes women have no confidence to compete with the men candidates. The lack of interest from women to be involved in politics, low level of education of the female voters, and undemocratic campaign environment contribute to the low level of women's representation. Other than that, the legal and institutional barriers become

the most prominent factor of the underrepresentation of women in Myanmar's Parliament. The military junta that excluded women from political participation was the first and foremost problem. In the following, the political party becomes the next prominent platform for increasing women's representation in parliament. Women are unable to have a seat in parliament if they, themselves have no opportunity to be a member of political party and candidate for the MPs.

In advocating those issues, local women's movements in Myanmar play an important role. Women's League of Burma (WLB), Gender Equality Network (GEN), and Women's Organization Network (WON) are among the local women's movements that tirelessly advocate the more representation of women in parliament (Maber, 2014). Looking back to table 1.1, it implicitly shows that the little progress has been made for increasing the women's representation in parliament. Behind this progress, there is a noble advocacy effort which eventually enables the situation. This thesis is aimed to examine the advocacy process conducted by the local women's movement, especially WLB, GEN and WON in increasing the women's representation in parliament through addressing the obstacles for women to become the members of parliament. This thesis is limited to the role of those women's movements in increasing the number of women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament by addressing those obstacles.

B. Research Question

Based on a set of background above, the research question of this research is formulated as follows: ***How does the advocacy by the local women's movement for increasing the number of women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament?***

C. Theoretical Framework

1. Boomerang Pattern Model

The author will use one of the models of Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) by Keck & Sikkink. 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. By that, it is obviously understood from its terminology that according to Keck & Sikkink (1999) a Transnational Advocacy Network 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 mentioned that there are seven actors such as, international and domestic NGOs, research and advocacy organizations; local social movements; foundations; the media; churches, trade unions, consumer organizations, intellectuals; parts of regional and international intergovernmental organizations; and parts of the executive and/or parliamentary branches of governments (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

According to Keck & Sikkink, 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.

Model of boomerang pattern is aimed to explain how the TAN does work which emerged when there is ineffective channel between domestic groups and their governments in addressing the problem or solving a conflict. Given this situation, Keck & Sikkink argued that there is a “boomerang” pattern which can explain the

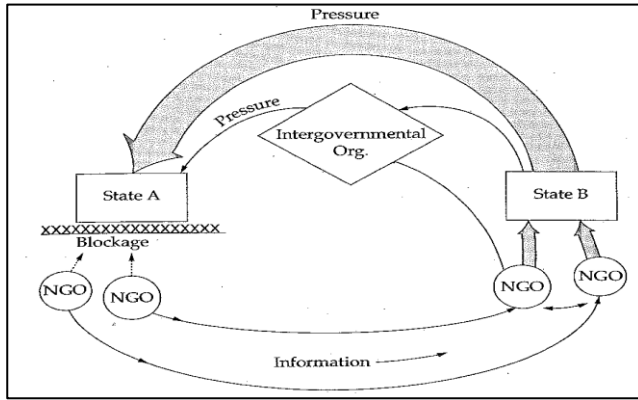
advocacy process. Governments are both the primary guarantors and primary violators of their citizens' rights. When the state does the violence against the rights of its citizen, and the domestic groups have no way to address the violence; thus they try to seek out the support from international community for addressing the violence. The so-called "boomerang" characteristic of TANs is possible when the domestic groups are blocked and have no access to channel the issue to the government. The model of boomerang pattern can be seen in figure 1.1 (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

From the model of boomerang pattern, 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

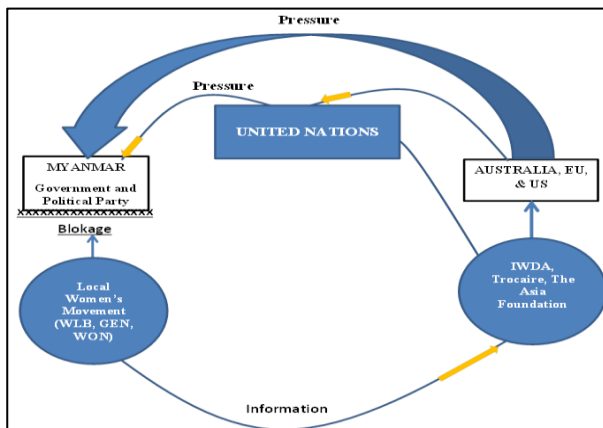
In doing their work, NGOs set the issue into an agenda (agenda setting) before they establish and activate the network. In setting the issue into agenda, NGOs will further expose the advocacy issue and frame it into the broader scope. For instance, the advocacy of women's rights can be exposed and framed in the human rights issue. Henceforth, the NGOs will begin to establish and activate the network with other NGOs in other powerful states that shared the same values, ideas, and principles. The formation of networks highly requires the exchange of information among them to ensure the smoother advocacy process.

Figure 1.1 Model of Boomerang Pattern



In this thesis, the author examines the advocacy process of women’s representation in parliament in Myanmar by the women’s movements, particularly WLB, GEN, and WON. The implementation of the boomerang pattern model is presented in figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 The Model of The Local Women’s Movements Advocacy for Increasing the Number of Women’s Representation in Myanmar’s Parliament



The advocacy process of women's representation in parliament in Myanmar can be described, as follows:

1. Myanmar's Government and political party become resistant to the women's movement which advocating the women's representation in parliament by harassment, restrictions, and intimidation as well as political arrestment;
2. Women's League of Burma, Gender Equality Network and Women's Organization Network establish the network prominently with the International Women's Development Agency in Australia, Trócaire in Ireland, and The Asia Foundation in the United States of America.
3. Those foreign NGOs encourage their states to take certain action responding to Myanmar's Government action;
4. Australia, EU, and USA together with the United Nations pressure the Myanmar's Government by giving financial sanction, travel restriction and also arms embargo to urge Myanmar's Government for increasing the women's representation in Parliament.

2. Logic of Appropriateness

Constructivism is an approach which expands the realm of theoretical explanation by arguing that the states behave based on the "logic of appropriateness" and the "logic of material consequences" for their actions (Finnermore, 1996; Finnermore & Sikkink, 1998). The action of a state follows the logic of appropriateness when it is generated by subjective assessments of outcomes of possible alternative actions. Meanwhile, the action of a state follows the logic of appropriateness when it is influenced by the rules relevant to the current situation. In this thesis, the author will use the logic of appropriateness in order to examine the advocacy of women's representation in parliament.

March & Simon (1993) explained that the logic of appropriateness governs what could perhaps better be called 'rule-based' (or 'recognition-based') action (March and Simon, 1993 in Martin Schulz, 2014), following a path that is guided by rules. It is reaffirmed by March & Olsen (2011) which defined the logic of appropriateness 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).

In understanding the logic of appropriateness, the institutions of democratic governance are used to understand the setting. In democratic governance, it is beyond the instrument only for implementing pre-determined preferences and rights. It includes accepting responsibility for enabling an institutional context within which continuous political discourse, change is possible, and roles, identities, accounts, rules, practices, and capabilities that construct political life can be executed (March & Olsen, 1995 in March & Olsen, 2011). The rules of appropriateness are also comprised in the modern democracy foundational norms. In the democratic state, citizens and officials play altogether roles in ensuring that the democracy is done as it is supposed to be. Mill (1962) described that the genuine democratic government is only possible if the citizens and officials are law-abiding, enlightened, active, civic-minded, and acting with self-restraint and distance to individual interests, passions, and drives. According to the logic of appropriateness, the misuse of public institutions and power for certain individual purposes is considered as corruption and

degeneration of politics that is not appropriate because it does not follow the rules of democratic governance (Viroli, 1992 in March & Olsen, 2011).

In examining the phenomenon of advocacy of women's representation in parliament in Myanmar, the logic of appropriateness can be used. It is explainable that in order to be seen that Myanmar is acting appropriately towards the situation and the existing rules, Myanmar as the ongoing transitioning democratic state should increase the women's representation in parliament.

D. Hypothesis

The advocacy by local women's movements for increasing women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament is through the process, as follows:

1. They establish the network transnationally with IWDA, Trócaire, and The Asian Foundation, so that they receive donor funding for conducting the program such as Myanmar's Women Forum, women leadership training and capacity building, Women Emerging Leader School and Women Political Empowerment School.
2. The established network put up the issue into the intergovernmental organization, such as the United Nations and together with the other states to eventually pressure Myanmar to act appropriately according to the international convention by increasing the women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament.

E. Scope of Research

The author focused on the process of advocacy conducted by local women's movement, especially Women's League of Burma, Gender Equality Network and Women's Organization Network through establishing Transnational Advocacy Networks with the foreign

NGOs to increase the women's representation in parliament, particularly from 2010-2015.

F. Research Objective

The objectives of this research are:

1. Describing the urgency of women's representation in parliament which makes this issue is highly important to be advocated;
2. Describing the process of advocacy conducted by local women's movement through establishing Transnational Advocacy Networks to increase the women's representation in parliament;
3. Describing the typology and characteristic of each local women's movement which is Women's League of Burma, Gender Equality Network and Women's Organization Network in advocating the women's representation in parliament in Myanmar.

G. Research Methodology

1. Type of Research

This research is a descriptive study which uses the library research method which aimed at explaining the advocacy process of local women's movements for increasing the number of women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament.

2. Type of Data

This research used the secondary data of the information about the Transnational Advocacy Networks, specifically about the local women's movements, foreign NGOs, foreign states and intergovernmental organization which involved in the advocacy process for increasing the number of women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament.

3. Data Collecting Method

The author used the library research method for collecting the data and information which relevant to the topic. The data and information are obtained from books, journal article, scientific writings, online source, and other relevant sources to this research. All collected data is analyzed by using the qualitative methods.

H. Writing System

Chapter I

In this chapter, the author describes the background, research question relevant to the background, theoretical framework, hypotheses, research scope, research objective, research methodology, and writing system.

Chapter II

In this chapter, the author describes the underrepresentation of women in parliament in Myanmar. In addition, the author elaborates the obstacles that are faced by women in Myanmar to be involved in politics, particularly to be the representatives in parliament.

Chapter III

In this chapter, the author describes the actor of the advocacy process conducted by the women's movement. In the following, the author explains the targeted actors; the local women's movements including WLB, GEN and WON; the foreign NGOs including IWDA, Trócaire, and The Asia Foundation; and the international actors such as Australia, the European Union, and the United States of America as well as the United Nations.

Chapter IV

In this chapter, the author explains about advocacy process in increasing the women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament. The author describes the government's resistance against local women's movements, followed by the relations of those NGOs

with other foreign NGOs such as IWDA, Trócaire, and the Asia Foundation. Further, the author explains the management of donor funding from the foreign NGOs which used for the program. Lastly, the author explains the pressure from international actors, particularly Australia, the European Union and the United States of America and the United Nations as the intergovernmental organization to the Myanmar's Government to increase the women's representation in parliament.

Chapter V

In this chapter, the author closes the thesis by concluding the whole chapters explained previously.