

CHAPTER IV

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

In this chapter, the author describes the advocacy process of women's representation in parliament that conducted by local women's movements in Myanmar. The advocacy process focuses on addressing those obstacles explained in the previous part covering the socio-cultural aspect, educational aspect, financial aspect, and legal and institutional aspect. The author uses the Boomerang Pattern Model in analyzing and describing the advocacy process itself. This chapter is divided into four parts. First, the author draws out the process of establishing the network between the local women's movements and the foreign NGOs. Second, the author describes the program and project conducted by each women's movement in time period basis as a result of the transnational networking process and the donor funding from foreign NGOs to increase the representation of women in parliament in Myanmar. Third, the author describes the following advocacy process which is the pressure from foreign states towards the underrepresentation of women in parliament in Myanmar. In addition, the author also describes the pressure from an intergovernmental organization which is the United Nations. Lastly, the author disseminates the result of TANs in advocating the women's representation in parliament in Myanmar which uses the logic of appropriateness from March & Olsen in analyzing the change of behavior of Myanmar's Government. The author reiterates the implementation of tools of analysis, the boomerang pattern model and the logic of appropriateness in this chapter.

A. Establishing Transnational Advocacy Network

The local women's movements in Myanmar, WLB, GEN and WON; and the foreign NGOs, IWDA, Trócaire, and the Asia Foundation become the basis for the author

in investigating the establishment of Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) between the local NGOs and foreign NGOs in addressing the women's underrepresentation in parliament in Myanmar. Keck & Sikkik (1998) explained that the international contacts can accelerate the demands of domestic groups which will emerge the environment best for raising the issue, and then echo back the demand into the domestic atmosphere. In this part, the author uses the Boomerang Pattern Model as the tool to understand how TANs for women's representation in parliament in Myanmar can be well-established (see figure 1.1). In its early year, back at that time, local women's movements in Myanmar were difficult to advocate the issue of underrepresentation of women in parliament, or even only to voice what they really want as the Government of Myanmar blockaded their efforts. In comprehending the understanding of the initial advocacy process, the author provides the timeline with the important events that indicate the establishment of the transnational network.

1. The Government of Myanmar: Resistance against Myanmar's Women

The author captures the resistance against women in Myanmar in two dimensions, the first dimension is the resistance against women to be involved in politics particularly to assume the leadership role in the country, and second is resistance against women's rights activists in advocating the women's rights issue and gender equality in Myanmar. The unreasonable blockade from Myanmar's Government was actually the reason factor for the women's rights activists to begin searching for help outside the country as an effective way to pressure their government.

Back at that time, prior to the 1990 election there were many women in Myanmar who directly participated in the mass protests against the government especially the

8.8.88 Uprising in 1988. The NLD, opposition of military regime had become the prominent actor in leading the political reformation in the country to be more democratic. As a promise of SLORC upon the Democratization of Burma, the 1990 election was nothing but neglecting the democratization itself. The concrete action of Myanmar's Government in blockading women to participate in politics was very evident by neglecting the result of 1990 Election which won by the Aung San Suu Kyi-led party. The ruling government refused to accept the winning of the leader of pro-democracy opposition, Aung San Suu Kyi, who is a woman to be a de facto leader of Burma at that time. Furthermore, the exclusion of women from political position becomes clearer and more reasonable as the entire ruling elite were male (Moe, 2015). Not only being refused of its winning in the 1990 Election, but Aung San Suu Kyi must also remain under house arrest as detained under the State Protection Act for non-make sense reason of being misbehaved. The other women activists from NLD were also being harassed, restricted, and also arrested in the following years. Even the elected women MPs were forced to resign from the parliament. There were four women as the testifiers that their political rights had been taken by the government, namely Saw Myat Mar, Nengpi, Daw Khin San New, and Daw Nyunt Nyunt (Women's League of Burma & Novel Women's Initiative, 2010).

The exclusion of women from all spheres at all levels in Myanmar during the military regime cause the rise of local women's movement (see part four in chapter two, *Rise of the Local Women's Movements in Myanmar*). Women in Myanmar began to aware of this issue and establish the movements of women in the early 2000s. In order to avoid the intervention from government, they established its base outside Burma such as Women's League of Burma.

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). It is mentioned in the Ninth Report of International Development Committee of the United Kingdom (2014), as follows:

“Women's organizations and human rights groups had been documenting the high incidence of rape throughout the conflicts in Burma but because there had been no international verification the evidence had been sidelined”

Although those events do not really signify the impact of women's underrepresentation in parliament, women are hindered to participate politically because women are sexually assaulted by the government.

2. Initiation of Advocacy Process: Information Politics

The establishment of Transnational Advocacy Networks in Myanmar regarding this issue is discussed in this subpart. In this subpart, the author focuses on the implementation of theoretical basis that TANs are possible to be established under the situation that the advocacy of local organization is hindered by the national government, and the international opportunities are opened through highlighting the importance of information politics. 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.

Cheesmen, 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).

Keck & Sikkink (1998) explained that network members can be bonded together because of information. Furthermore, information exchanges are essential for network effectiveness. It is clear that non-state actors like NGOs in the establishment of TANs is able to gain influence by serving as alternate sources of information that might not only be in form of facts but also testimony. In the simple words, in this case, the process of establishing the advocacy network transnationally required the actual and real-time information exchanges about the status quo regarding the violation of human rights and neglect of democracy by Myanmar's Government. This ability to use the information to gain influence is called information politics (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

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. Therefore, the disclosed information was related to the ineffective and

inefficient implementation of CEDAW and BPfA by Myanmar's Government.

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.

According to the WLB First Activities Report of 1998-2001 (2004), the first international contact of WLB was made not long after its establishment which was in January 2000 when the organization sent five members to be a delegation representing WLB to present 2000 CEDAW Report in the 22nd Session of the CEDAW in New York.

“Women do not hold any positions of political or economic influence in Burma. There has been a noticeable decline in the number of women reaching medium to high positions in their various careers after 1962. This makes sense, as the government is a military junta; women are not permitted to be a part of the military, and are therefore effectively blocked from all positions of leadership or power in the country (Women's Organizations of Burma Shadow Report Writing Committee, 1999)”

Five months later, WLB sent back its delegation to New York for presenting its first report for Beijing Plus 5 at the 44th Commission on the Status of Women. The

active involvement of WLB in many international forums in the following years such as the United Nations Commission on Human Rights Conference (UNCHR); World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and other Intolerances (WCAR); United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSC) 1325 Lobby; United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Meeting Lobby; and some other parallel NGO international forums have brought possibility for WLB to establish the TANs for women's rights in Burma (Women's League of Burma, 2004; Women's League of Burma, 2009).

In its early years, WLB depended on the financial assistance such from the Women's Affairs Department of National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) for attending such international forums and conducting some projects (Women's League of Burma, 2004; Women's Organizations of Burma Shadow Report Writing Committee, 1999). NCGUB is the government established by the opposition parties in Burma and claimed to be the government in exile of Burma. WLB has been very active in publishing the documentation of the actual condition and situation of Myanmar's Women, including the situation that women in Myanmar are being underrepresented in politics through its report entitle *Constituting our Rights* that published in February 2006. In that report, WLB recommended the Government of Myanmar to recognize the principle of the full advancement of women, adopt a minimum 30% quota for women at all levels of government, adopt a proportional representation system of government, and create a Ministry of Gender Equality to enforce gender equality laws (Women's League of Burma, 2006).

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. By that, the author is able to indicate the emerging relationship between local women's movements and foreign NGOs for advocating women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament (see figure 4.2).

B. Donor Funding and Partnership of TANs for Programs 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.

1. Phase 1 (Post-1990 Election – 2010)

The first phase is argued to be held in the year after the 1990 election until the election in 2010. In the initial year of the establishment of Women's League of Burma, the increased participation of women in political leadership had become the prioritized areas of WLB until its Second Congress in 2002 (Women's League of Burma, 2009). 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. At large, the PEP which started in 2006 has some objectives, as follows:

- Building the capacity of women in the political decision-making processes,
- Training the young women to become political leaders,
- Increasing the feminist politicians,
- Raising the awareness of women's political participation in Burma's society, and

- Encouraging the women to participate actively in the movement for democracy and gender equality (Women's League of Burma, 1999).

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).

2. Phase 2 (2010 – Pre-2015 Election)

The programs and projects held in phase 1 were considered not really influential to increase the

representation of women in parliament Women in Myanmar remained difficult to be the representatives in parliament (see table 2.8 the Development of Women's Representation in Myanmar's Parliament). However, it was a significant improvement of 45% in terms of the eligible voters in the election of 2010 quantitatively from 20.8 million voters to 29.2 million voters (see figure 2.2 the General Statistics of 2010 Election). The slow progress of the improvement of women's representation indicated the need for more effective and efficient strategic initiatives from the local women's movements together with the support from the foreign NGOs.

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), part History of Myanmar: Military Junta to Democratic State, chapter 2).

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. The Secretary-General of

WLB, Daw Tin Tin Nyo also held the Eight-Day Visit to Myanmar Peace Centre, political parties, women's organizations, and other CSOs, as well as women's elected MPs for recalling the greater women's participation in the peace process and politics (Lwin, 2012).

“We will encourage greater female participation in the decision-making process. We have to push for at least 30% of seats in the Hluttaw for women. Daw Tin Tin Nyo in Press Conference in Yangon on 18 December 2012”

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 (see the table 2.5 Composition of Women MPs Post-2012 By-Election). 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).

In the same year, the Asia Foundation entered Myanmar and re-established its office in Myanmar. 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).

“The training is about the constitution, voting rights, civic education with a specific focus on gender equality and women rights. Phyu Sin Thet, PACER Project Alumni”

“One of the components of PACER's program is also to empower potential women candidates to participate and contest in the election. Pyae Phyo Swe, Gender Programme Officer of Trócaire”

“I received support from Trócaire for funding to run for the women political leadership training. Shwe Shwe Sein Latt, Elected MP for House of Nationalities in 2015 Election, NLD”

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.

3. 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.

Figure 4.1 12 Myanmar and Australia’s Former & Elected Women MPs



Source: <https://iwda.org.au/assets/files/group.png>

This program was targeted Myanmar’s elected women MPs for increasing their capacity to govern effectively and to be influential advocates for laws and policies that promote gender equality. All mentors and mentees, particularly the elected women MPs from Myanmar felt that they were benefitted from such program which beyond the targeted objectives, but emotional attachment.

“At the heart of mentoring is trust and connection. Nan Htwe believes it would bring us good fortune and augur well for our future relationship, which, in her words, would involve ‘opening her heart to me’. I feel touched to have this glimpse of her deep faith and to know that she trusts me to share this special place with her. Penny Wright, mentor of Nan Htwe Thu in this program (Penny Wright and Nan Htwe Thu stand in the right in figure 4.1) (IWDA, 2017).”

The mentorship program is expected to be a pilot program which will be further implemented in the following years with Akhaya Women as its pilot actor.

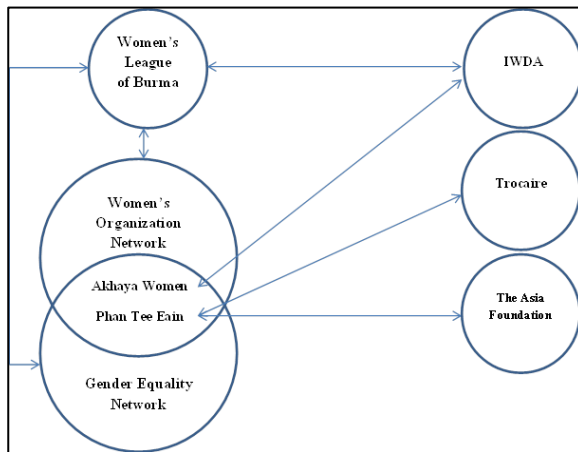
In 2017, Trócaire started its project again with Phan Tee Eain to strengthen rural and marginalized women towards gender-responsive regional and local governance which will be ended in 2021 funded by its primary donor. The project is set up to improve and secure access for women to a leadership position and decision-making process in regional and local governance (Phan Tee Eain, 2018). This project is conducted for the reason that the women in regional and local parliament are less represented than in the national parliament (see table 2.8 the Development of Women’s Representation in Myanmar’s Parliament). The project areas focused in Shan State and Thanintharyi Region. The project is conducted through holding some activities, such as Women Political Leadership and Facilitation Training (WPLFT), regional/state forum, modular course on women political leadership for potential, gender budgeting training and so on.

In June still in the same year, the Asia Foundation jointly organized the Second Women MPs Forum attended by 35 women lawmaker from six states/regions with Phan Tee Eain to further strengthen the participation of women elected MPs in the parliament. The Third

Women MPs Forum was again conducted jointly by Phan Tee Eain and the Asia Foundation in early 2018.

here are and will be a lot more program and project for increasing women’s representation in Myanmar’s Parliament. From those three phases, the author acknowledges that the TANs for increasing the representation of women in parliament in Myanmar are well-organized and structured; thus the established TANs are really effective in doing such program and project. The established relations between local women’s movements and foreign NGOs for women’s representation in Myanmar’s Parliament are described by the author in figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 Relations of Local Women’s Movements – Foreign NGOs for Women’s Representation in Myanmar’s Parliament



The effective and efficient TANs are required the strong support and pressure from the foreign states and even the intergovernmental organization, such as the United Nations (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Therefore, the author realizes that without the support from the United Nations and other foreign states, the women in Myanmar will remain underrepresented and women will be

excluded from all spheres in the society at all levels in Myanmar.

Later, in the following part, the author describes the advocacy process of pressure from the international community –foreign states and intergovernmental organizations in eliminating the underrepresentation of women in Myanmar’s Parliament.

C. The Pressure from International Actors

The TANs that established for advocating the women’s representation in parliament do not stop after the mutual relationship between the local women’s movements and foreign NGOs is well-emerged. In order to echo back the advocacy issue into the domestic arena, the established TANs need the support from the foreign states and intergovernmental organization. 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.

1. 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.

a. Australia

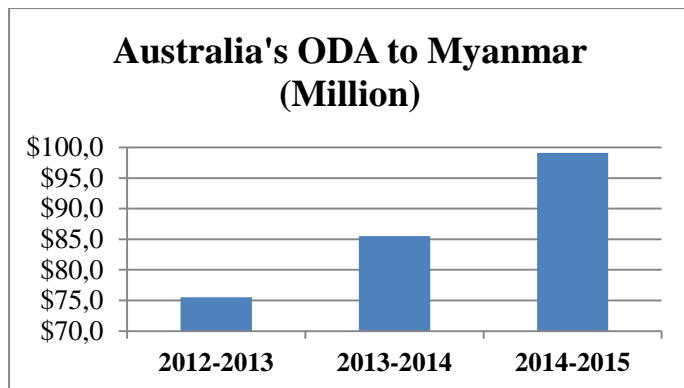
The Australian Government has been in the forefront in pressuring the Government of Myanmar since the political reform was urged in the country. Australia for the first time opened its diplomatic relations with Myanmar in 1953, before the military junta assumed in office. After the military junta assumed in office, the Australian Government lessened its diplomatic ties with Myanmar. The blatant violation of human rights by the ruling regime began to receive international criticism. The first sanction imposed by the Government of Australia to Myanmar was in 1991 responding to the refusal of the result of election in 1990 by the ruling regime. Sydney decided to impose an arms embargo and travel bans. The impost of Government of Australia did not change any decision of the military regime to accept the result of the election. Instead, they arrested the winning party members of the 1990 elections including Aung San Suu Kyi the leader of the party. The embargo to restrict on the export or supply of goods, specifically arms or related materials is enforced in the Australian law, particularly Regulations 4, 12 and 18 of the Autonomous Sanctions Regulations 2011; and Regulation 11 of the Customs (Prohibited Exports) Regulations 1958.

Later, the second impost of Australian Government to Myanmar's Government was the financial sanctions in 2007 in response to the Saffron Revolution which killed many monks and pro-democracy peoples, including women. The imposts given by Myanmar's Government were somehow pressured them to also grant women's rights including their rights to be representatives in parliament as women have always been excluded and marginalized in all aspects at all levels. The financial

sanction given by the Australian Government is enforced in Regulations 5, 13, and 18 of the Autonomous Sanctions Regulations 2011. Until today Australia still maintains the arms embargo and restrictions on the export or provision of services to Myanmar because of the ongoing issues on armed conflict, violation of human rights, and weapon proliferation (DFAT, 2018).

Apparently, Burma Aid Program was delivered by the Australian Government through its Official Development Assistance (ODA) since 2012 (see figure 4.3 and figure 4.4) (DFAT , 2018). The Australia-Myanmar Aid Program Strategy 2012-2015 was launched since then. The purpose of Australian aid to Myanmar is to help people overcome poverty by focusing on four objectives; improving the delivery of basic education and health services to the poor, improving the livelihoods of the rural poor, addressing the needs of conflict and disaster-affected people, and supporting reform and improved governance which include the women's participation in government.

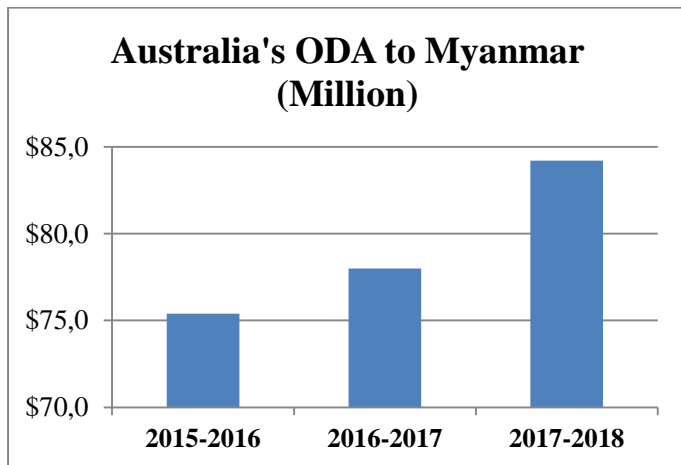
Figure 4.3 Australia's ODA to Myanmar in 2012-2015



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. In the following year, Australia launched another program named Myanmar Aid Investment Plan in 2015-2020 with Australia's ODA. Comparing Australia's ODA in 2012-2015 strategy and 2015-2020, Australian Government donated more funding to Myanmar during the transition period. Australia's ODA also aimed to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including gender equality in Myanmar. Furthermore, the Australian Government delivered the aid to Myanmar through Direct Aid Program (DAP) in 2018-2019 which is a small grants scheme for development activists under the supervision of the Australian Embassy in Yangon (Australian Embassy Myanmar, 2018). 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.

Figure 4.4 Australia's ODA to Myanmar in 2015-2020



b. The European Union (EU)

The European Union (EU) as mentioned earlier has a strong commitment to enforcing human rights within and outside its region. In regard to Myanmar, the presence of EU in Myanmar has been long-standing back then in the 1980s. 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. Before that, particular sanction was given to Myanmar by its member states individually. For instance, they suspended non-humanitarian bilateral aid in the late 1980s after the mass killings and harassment against protesters in Myanmar. The EU just made an arms embargo in 1990 and the suspension of defense cooperation in 1991. The Union's common position against the ruling regime was decided as the result of a dramatic diplomatic incident between Myanmar and Denmark. James Leander Nichols, a consul for Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland to Myanmar was sentenced to three years in prison and not even until he finished his sentence he died in prison two months later. In the following year, EU removed the access of Burma to the General System of Preferences' Privileges, and to the Everything but Arms initiative (EBA) (Tamen, 2003).

Tamen (2003) the EU strengthened its position as the results of NLD and other NGOs demands for further sanctions by introducing Council Regulation (EC) No. 1081/2000 of 22 May 2000. The regulation banned the equipment supply for international repression or terrorism, as well as froze the funds held abroad by listed banned person. The European Union has burdened a lot

more sanctions and pressure to Myanmar by using its partner in Southeast Asia which is ASEAN. EU boycotted the chairmanship of Myanmar in ASEAN in 2006 and resulted in the ASEAN decision not to let Myanmar chair the organization until it is ready (BBC, 2005). The EU also called the United Nations to further intervene in the democratization process in Myanmar since then.

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). It was only possible after the political transition was achieved in Myanmar and let the quasi-civilian regime to rule over the country (EEAS, 2018). Despite the better diplomatic ties between Myanmar and EU, EU still pressures Myanmar in accelerating its democratic reform until in 2015 when NLD won the election in the country. 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).

c. The United States of America

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. Myanmar which first was established as a democratic state which later replaced by the military regime changed the behavior of US toward Myanmar. The US lowered its level of diplomatic representatives to Chargé d'Affaires from the Ambassador and closed its USAID's Mission in Burma in 1962. The first sanction placed by the US to Myanmar due to the military crackdown in 1988 and its rejection to honor the result of the 1990 election. The US had initiated the suspension against Burma under the General System of Preference. The US Congress passed the Myanmar Freedom and Democracy Act (BFDA) and approved by the President in 2003 to give the broader sanctions such as a ban on the export of financial services to Myanmar, a ban on all imports from Myanmar, an assets' freeze of particular financial institution in Myanmar, and restriction of visa on government's officials as well as suspension on all high-level governmental visits (Tamen, 2003).

The diplomatic ties between US and Myanmar were worsened after the Saffron Revolution which killed many monks in 2007 had led the US to designate Myanmar a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFC) for severe violations reason. Together with the European Union, the US called for action from the United Nations to intervene situation on Myanmar particularly in Security Council. The US has always stayed firm in its position towards the situation in Myanmar.

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).

2. The Pressure from the United Nations towards Myanmar's Government

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. Earlier than that, the United Nations had called for regime's change under the international human rights law to ensure that democracy and human rights include women's rights, are granted to the people in Myanmar. Speaking of women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament, it attracted the international community concern after the country transitioned its regime in 2011. In this subpart, the author first describes the women's rights advocacy in general according to the implementation of CEDAW in the country. Further, the author describes the effort of UN particularly UN CEDAW Committee in pressuring the Government of Myanmar to increase the representation of women in decision-making under Article 7 of CEDAW.

After the accession of Myanmar to CEDAW in 1997, Myanmar has a responsibility to report its implementation in a certain period of time. Until today, Myanmar has submitted its implementation report three

times for five periods of reporting session. The first report was submitted in 1999 by the Government of Myanmar.

“In the Burma Socialist Programme Party, there were many women cadres working for the party at different levels. There were also women representatives in the Pyithu Hluttaw (Parliament) (UN CEDAW Committee, 1999)”

“During the reign of the State Law and Order Restoration Council, under section 6 of the Pyithu Hluttaw Election Law, it was prescribed that every citizen, irrespective of sex or creed..... Thus, under the said Law, men and women have the same rights as to voting and being elected (UN CEDAW Committee, 1999)”

The above was stated in the initial report of Myanmar to the UN CEDAW Committee on its CEDAW implementation. However, the Shadow report submitted by the Women’s Affairs Department of National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) expressed different situation. Although women are given the equal rights to vote and being elected under the law, women remained underrepresented as the Government of Myanmar reinforced the role of women in society.

“The constant official reinforcement of women’s stereotyped responsibilities –for home duties, but not public decision-making... the manner in which the government of Burma advocates its ideas about women’s roles not only indicates its lack of political will to work... but also demonstrates a clear lack of understanding of what gender equality for women in Burma means (Women’s Organizations of Burma Shadow Report Writing Committee, 1999)”

This is clear that women in Myanmar were underrepresented in decision-making body during the military regimes. Responding to that, 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)”

Later, the combined second and third periodic reports of Myanmar were submitted in 2007 by the Government of Myanmar. In that report, Myanmar’s Government stated that women were participating at the high ranking positions (Point 91), there were 35.34% of the working force serving at the State Organizations and Ministries are women with 12.71% of them holding the high ranking position (Point 92), and it was shocking that the number of women represented in decision-making level was 62% in academic teaching areas (Point 93) (UN CEDAW Committee, 2007).

Those data reported by the Government of Myanmar was not evident in the reality of women in Myanmar. In fact, women were not involved in any political decision-making process as women were not encouraged even restricted by the government to involve in it. This was even worse due to the Saffron Revolution which clearly showed the irrespective Government of Myanmar to human rights. There were monks and pro-democracy movement activists, including women’s activist died, because of the violation of Myanmar’s Government. The massive killings by the Government of Myanmar led the UNSC to hold a meeting discussing the situation in Myanmar. Unfortunately, the UNSC failed to adopt a draft resolution on the situation in Myanmar due to the veto power of China and Russia (United Nations, 2007). Despite the failure of UNSC to adopt a draft

resolution which will enable further intervention from UN to Myanmar, UN has always been on the side of human rights and democracy. Later, the UN Envoy, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari met the country's military leader bringing a message of outrage from the outside world in response to the Saffron Revolution (Mydans, 2007). 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. The UN Women continued its priority areas to implement CEDAW and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as follows:

- Gender-sensitive governance, peace and security
- Ending violence against women, girls and enhancing their access to justice
- Women's economic empowerment
- Coordination mandate

The program of gender-sensitive governance, peace and security includes the capacity building for women officials, especially women MPs in parliament (UN Women, 2018). It is not only UN Women that does the work for women's rights in Myanmar, but there are other UN agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Volunteer Programme (UN Volunteers), World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization and United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) (United Nations, 2018).

There have been some UN programs which focus on women empowerment and gender equality. The Human Development Initiative (HDI) which initiated in 2002-2012 had two community-based development projects namely Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP) and the Community Development in Remote Townships Project (CDRT). Those two projects were aimed at addressing the women's inequality and reducing their vulnerability. These two projects were funded by the UN about \$141 million (UNDP, 2013). The UN also supported the Democratic Governance in Myanmar by delivering the \$44 million in 2013-2017. This program aimed to enhance the legal awareness of vulnerable groups, including women in selected townships and villages (UNDP, 2017).

The author notices there are some projects which include women that will increase the women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament for the period of 2018-2022; namely the 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. 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). Furthermore, the United Nations conducts the program of Step It Up for Gender Equality in order to further gender equality and women's empowerment. 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). In general, the United Nations support for gender equality and women's empowerment in

Myanmar through conducting gender situation analysis (GSA); and giving technical guidance, technical assistance and financial assistance (United Nations, 2018).

D. The Result of Transnational Advocacy Networks in Advocating Women's Representation in Myanmar's Parliament

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 2016-2012 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 gender roles must be redefined that women are not entitled to do the house chores, but women have rights to do anything they want, including to participate in decision-making process. Additionally, it is clearly stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and also the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). There are a lot of programs which aimed to change the patriarchal view in society such as Political Forum held by the WLB and also Myanmar's Women Forum jointly organized by those three women's movements.

Second, the educational barrier also hindered women to participate in politics as women have lower educational background than men. Education is essential

for women's political participation because only women with a high educational background who have the confidence to run and compete with the men candidates in the election. Therefore, many programs were aimed to increase women's political education to increase their level of confidence. The Emerging Leadership Political Empowerment School (ELPES) conducted by WLB and its member organizations and the Women Leadership Training Needs and Training Initiatives conducted by the GEN and its networks are among the program aimed to give women education in politics. Not only that, 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) was also impactful in increasing the representation of women in Myanmar's Parliament. This is proven by the number of women MPs in Myanmar's Parliament in the period of 2016-2021 is higher than the previous period and even higher than the men MPs (Latt, Ninh, Myint, & Lee, 2017). The aforementioned program also has an objective to educate the voters, especially the female voters.

Third, in regard to the financial issues that women MPs always face is very critical until today. There were 10 women candidates were assisted financially by the WON (Women's Organization Network, 2016). Yet, there is no such special program to fund women candidates in running the election for campaign purposes.

Fourth, the most fundamental barrier which makes the underrepresentation of women in Myanmar's Parliament is the legal and institutional matters. Although the 2008 Constitution has granted equal access for men and women in all aspects, yet women remain underrepresented because the government's structure is still dominated by the military force (Tatmadaw). The 25% reserve seats for Tatmadaw in parliament become the actual barrier for women to participate in decision-making as women are majorly excluded from the military.

Furthermore, most of the political party in Myanmar do not have women's wings and/or simply do not support women's candidates in the election. The advocacy process which done by the local women's movements has brought some changes despite its insignificance. The WLB as a part of NCGUB has successfully drafted the Constitution which more women-friendly to be assessed in the parliament in 2006. However, the government was resistant and did not approve the constitution and instead approved the 2008 Constitution. In 2013, GEN worked closely with the government and assisted by the UN Women in drafting the 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.

Those are possible with the Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) involving the local women's movements, foreign NGOs, and the international actors which is the foreign states and the intergovernmental organizations. The author illustrates the advocacy process for increasing the women's representation in Myanmar's Parliament by using the model of boomerang pattern by Keck & Sikkink (1998).

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 can be understood because Myanmar are vulnerable to the sanction and also the material consequences.

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

