

Overview of trends in achieving gender equality and women's advancement

In the Union of Myanmar, women enjoy equality with men as an inherent right. A Myanmar delegation, which had attended the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, had the opportunity to apprise the world community that women are fully enjoying their rights in the country. The Myanmar Delegation joined other delegations in adopting the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women.

In fulfillment of the commitments made in Beijing, the

Committee for Women's Affairs (MOCWA) was established

under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and designated as the central body for women's affairs. The committee is chaired by the Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and members include Ministers from related ministries such as the Ministry of Health, Education, Labour, and Foreign Affairs.

The Vice Presidents of the notable women's organizations of the country, Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MCA), Myanmar Women's Sports Federation (MWSF) and Myanmar Women's Education Association (MWEA) are also members of the committee. The Myanmar Women's Working Committee for Women's Affairs is also a member of the committee. The Myanmar Women's Working Committee for Women's Affairs was formed in 1995.

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Women in July 1997. The initial report of the country to the Convention was submitted in March 1999.

The MNCWA adopted the Myanmar National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women in December 1997. It holds regular meetings every three months and reviews reports submitted by the MNWCWA on its activities and developments. It has also adopted the short-term plan of action for the Advancement of Women.

Committee and has laid down policy guidelines

especially for those living in the far-flung regions.

In the Statement of the Secretary (I)

Council, Lt. General Khin Nyunt, on 27 July

following Policy Guidelines were laid down:

- (a) To effectively promote the near leveling of the socio-economic status of the women down to the grass-roots level;
- (b) To educate and organize the Myanmar women to uphold the tradition, culture and to safeguard one's own lineage and religion with a view to combat the infiltration and influences of foreign culture which could lead to social problems;
- (c) To strive in unison for the emergence of a peaceful, modern and developed nation by all the women forces from government departments, non-governmental organizations, social organizations and members of the Union.

- (e) To make endeavours by the Women's sector to achieve the political, education and social objectives of the State by formulating relevant aims and objectives based on the momentum of success gained.

The MNCWA has identified six critical areas of concern for the advancement of Myanmar women namely: Education, Health, Violence Against Women, Economy, Girl Child and Culture. Sub-committees for these six areas have been set up accordingly. Out of the six areas of concern identified, five areas are taken from the twelve critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. Culture is an additional area of concern of the MNCWA. These six areas

are considered basic and the most relevant for the advancement of Myanmar

The activities on these areas are to be carried out with the cooperation

and collaboration of the Ministries concerned as these areas are already dealt

with the programmes and functions of the MNCWA. The MNCWA

will also be able to implement the plans and

though only six areas have been

given due attention. Most of the

for Action are interrelated and

advancement of the role of women

can benefit the areas of Women

in Power and Decision-

making. Regarding the area of

media, the number of female

is, camera crews, engineers, announcers, vocalists, mediators, reporters

and during the recent years, the MNCWA representatives sit on the censor

Myanmar Motion Pictures and Video. The media is urged not to give a

image of women to the public but to have the awareness of their role

and contributions to the family, the community and

programmes more effectively and

identified for focus. The remaining

critical areas of concern of the B

interdependent. Integrated progra

in the Health, Education and Eco

and Poverty, Human Rights of

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and contributions to the family, the community and

In the Women and the Environment area, the environmental programme among the Myanmar women has increased significantly over the past decade and Myanmar women pay much more attention to the environmental issues and have become more convinced of the importance of protecting the environment.

Accordingly, the Myanmar women are now actively involved in environmental activities such as tree planting, soil conservation, agro-forestry, clean-up activities of the Myanmar National Environmental Affairs. Furthermore, the Myanmar National Environmental Affairs, the principal organization for environmental women officials in the higher hierarchy of the organization. The Myanmar National Environmental Affairs has plans to participate in National Afforestation Programme by planting of trees in public places in cities and towns during the rainy months designated as

the area. Myanmar Women and Armed Conflict is not relevant to Myanmar since the country is not involved in any armed conflict.

women enshrined in CEDAW and to continue to...

Myanmar laws on Women's rights, April 1998.

National Seminar on Women's Development, 6-7 May 1998

First Myanmar Women's Day Celebration, 3 July 1988

First Myanmar Women's Conference, 6 to 9 December

8

National Consultation on Violence against Women and the

of the Health Sector, 12 to 15 January 1999

(f) Third International Women's Day Celebration, 8 March 1999

(g) The submission of the initial country report to the CEDAW

March 1999

authorities

and radio.

occasions

men in the

These occasions were attended and addressed by... and widely publicised through media such as newspa... Interviews with the Leaders of the Women's organiza... were also broadcast to enhance the public awareness o... national development endeavours.

country has suffered from the contagion effect and the Foreign Direct Investment

(FDI) inflow has dropped in the country. To recover from the effect, some

remedial measures have been taken as necessary and restructuring and recovery

strategies have been laid down based on national requirements. The country

self-sufficient in basic food requirements. So the effect is relatively low in the

As follow-up to the World Summit for Children which was held in New York in September 1990, Myanmar acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in July 1991. Subsequently it became a state party to the Convention on 15 August 1991. The Government promulgated the Child Law as a State Law on 14 July 1993 to implement the rights of the child recognized in the Convention. The Myanmar National Committee on the Rights of the Child (MNCRC) was formed in September 1993 to implement the provisions of the Child Law effectively and successfully.

PART THREE

Implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for ActionA. Innovative policies, programmes, projects and good practices.

The Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs has implemented five critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and one additional area of Culture. The activities carried out in implementation of these 6 areas of concern are as follows:

Education and training of Women

for admission, selection, and

every educational institution is

quality of teaching staff, and

out discrimination due to sex.

education.

II (EFA) project to achieve

stry of Education is providing

tionary for needy students. The

Primary Education by enlisting

throughout the country. There are no

Every school has started using

Primary level since 1998-99.

great success due to the

the collaboration of the Government

Child Welfare Associations.

examination are same for male

providing same curricula, teaching

teaching-learning materials for all

Almost all forms of education at all

Myanmar is launching Ed

Universalization of Primary Educa

special funding for free textbooks,

Government is trying to ensure un

the support of parents and co

school fees for primary educ

continuous assessment and prog

The Regional Office

Ayevalwaddy, Mandalay and

Departments and Myanmar

The national and international NGOs offer stipends and scholarships to the needy students to increase enrollment and retention rates.

The functional literacy programmes for 15+ age group is implemented in

in Divisions.

to eradicate illiteracy among 15+ age group.

townships in Rakhine State with the
to reduce the female illiteracy rate of

established in Buthidaung and
collaboration of the UNHCR
26.49% at present to 11% by

such as sewing and embroidery
women and girls are held with the
part of the Human Development

The vocational training
classes, livestock breeding to
collaboration of UNDP and
Initiative (HDI) programme.

for skill-based literacy programme
and literacy programmes, continuing

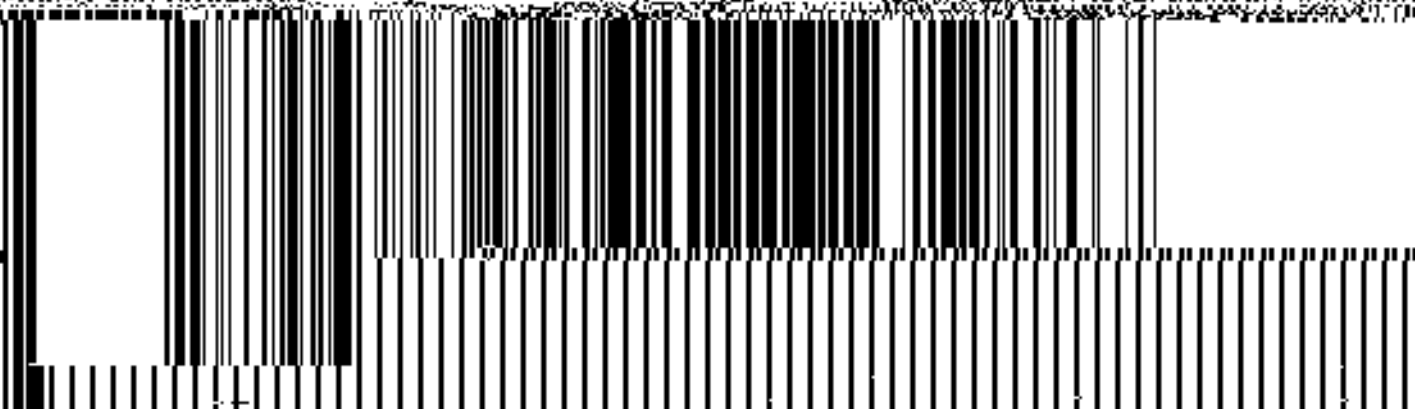
Teaching materials are
through Non-formal Education

educational programmes and offer vocational training for dropouts from secondary
and tertiary levels are providing same opportunity for men and women. Project on
skills-based literacy programme for women and girls. The project has been
implemented by Myanmar Education Research Bureau / UNDP in many
townships and is still in progress.

To ensure access to quality education and training at all appropriate levels
for adult women with little or no education, Myanmar Educational Research
Bureau, Myanmar National Commission for UNESCO and Asia /Pacific
Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) from Japan are in the process of
negotiations to establish Literacy Resource Centres for Girls and Women (LRC)
in 1999.

Almost all the teaching staff at primary and secondary levels is female. At

tertiary level there are female demonstrators, technicians and teachers.



Women and Health

Myanmar women have an equal access to health care services with men.

Health care is provided to all citizens in Myanmar without any discrimination.

There is no traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and

alien to the Myanmar culture and girls, such as female genital mutilation

totally unknown in the country.

of Natural Health Plan. The reproductive health

Myanmar, is promoted by the introduction of birth spacing programme

early 1990's. The programme has been extended to 117 out of 324 townships

the end of 1998. The activities are being conducted by the various departments

the Ministry of Health in collaboration with local and international NGOs,

related Ministries and private sector as well.

Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association has conducted training

on life skills for women in 96 townships since 1997 to strengthen prevention

programmes that promote women's health. Both urban and rural women

been given information on AIDS/ STD prevention, prevention of other infectious

diseases and basic necessities for healthy living. These women pass on

information to the others. The programmes will be expanded to remaining

townships in the following years.

To reduce maternal mortality rate to less than one per thousand live

by the year 2001, health services particularly primary health care are

strengthened. Under-one-infant care and under-five-child care are

strengthened in order to reduce mortality rates of infants and children by one

of the 1000 live births.

The Department of Health has done training courses on syndromic

management of STDs for general practitioners, township medical officers, doctors

for maternal and child health.

and basic health staff in 90

townships. The training courses will be extended to the remaining townships by

in the year 2001.

community materials (CEC) regarding the information, education

been produced in different ethnic languages. The prevention of HI

of the community, including youth and students are given

Township health departments.

has been found that the magnitude of both physical and mental violence are quite low as expected.

A small-scale study was conducted in four townships on marital violence by using quantitative and qualitative methods. The data of two townships has been analyzed, and it is found that the percentage of mental violence is higher than physical violence. The main causes for violence are financial problems, alcohol, and disharmony with in-laws and adultery.

Two counselling centres each in Yangon and Mandalay Divisions have been established to help the victims of violence. It is in the process of establishing at least one counselling centre each in States and Divisions.

The training workshops on Systematic data collection and Counselling Methodology were held in Yangon.

The Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races has established eight vocational training centres for girls and women in the town adjacent to neighbouring countries to prevent trafficking in women and girls.

The Department of Social Welfare conducts domestic science training courses in States and Divisions for young women and girls to be able to carry out income-generation activities.

The MNCWA has established a task force on trafficking of women, with the participation of departments concerned.

The MNCWA, a local NGO is also combating trafficking of women by means of educating, alleviating poverty and generating income. Credit and loan schemes have been implemented in 50 townships. Vocational training programmes have been conducted so far in 25 townships and it will be increased to 50 townships by the year 2000.

In Myanmar there exist Laws which counter sexual exploitation, trafficking and sale of children across borders. One of the Laws namely The Suppression of

Women and the Economy

Myanmar has replaced its centrally planned economy with a more liberalized economic policy and has instituted structural reform measures to pave the way for market oriented economic system. The Government has also liberalized domestic and external trade, promoted the role of the private sector, and opened the country to foreign investment and trade.

the border area development as top priority. The Government has been carrying

building of roads, bridges, hospitals

primary schools especially for girls

As a result, social standards and

and the regional development

clinics, basic educational school

and women are setting up comm

living conditions of the nation

Association, and the Myanmar Red Cross Society are providing various training courses for youth including the girl-child at the township level.

The Sub-committee on girl-child is conducting an action research on

in Yangon Division to protect and safeguard the

its target group

rights of the girl

and District authorities are

States and Divisions

distributed five thousand copies

country.

of the Child is the most

defining the rights of the child,

practices against girls are being held

The Sub-committee on g

of Manual for Women's Development

The National Committee

responsible organization in protecting

including the girl-child.

Women and culture

an area of concern of the

of the top priority areas in the

Women and culture has been

the social objectives of the

national prestige and integrity.

to the cultural heritage to safeguard the Myanmar culture and traditions.

debates on the essay and poetry competition, exten

the topics such as the role of women in preserving the

Women's Day etc are being held annually at basic

and singing of Myanmar traditional music and da

competitions are organized at the State and Divisio

held to revive and encourage the wearing of traditio

Classes on religion for girls and young women are being held during the summer vacations. The Myanmar tradition of venerating elders is included in textbooks and public actions as well as in other media.

Publication for women with a focus on Myanmar culture and traditions are being published. Special radio talks and television spots for women-related matter will be aired on a regular basis by the year 2000.

B. Obstacles encountered

In implementing policies and measures in the above-mentioned six critical areas of concern, only a few obstacles have been identified. If there exist no discrimination against women, these obstacles are common in nature to other policy implementations. There is a lack of human resources in the organizations due to the fact that most of the personnel who are on committees have their primary duties. They can only perform the duties on committees as their secondary duties. There are also lack of financial and material resources for the initiation of innovative projects on the advancement of Myanmar women. Furthermore, it is necessary to motivate and educate the entire women-folk to enable them to participate in the activities for their own benefit.

There are no traditional practices harmful to the health of girls. Though there are sensitive issues and social stigma regarding violence against women, there are no social

C. Commitments to further action and initiatives

The Myanmar National Working Committee for Women's Affairs (MNWCWA) has adopted the Myanmar National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women in August 1997.

Some of the activities to further action are as follows: -

(a) Universal access to basic education and completion of primary

education by at least 80 per cent of the population by the year 2001.

Education for girls in rural areas is being strengthened. The literacy rate of 26.47 per cent in 1990 is being raised to 40 per cent by the year 2001.

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(f) Develop training programmes on the causes, consequences of violence against women for police, prosecutors, judicial personnel and prison officials from 45 townships of Yangon Division by the year 2000.

(g) Enforce existing legislation against the perpetrators of violence against women.

(h) Enhance rural women's income-generating potential extending access to skills and resources for non-traditional income-generating activities at the national and local levels.

- (i) Advocacy meetings on negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls are being conducted in all States and Divisions by the year 2000.
- (j) National Committees on the Rights of the Child will be formed in all the townships by the year 2000.
- (k) Ensure universal access to and completion of primary education by all children by the year 2000.
- (l) Myanmar traditional music and dance, composing and singing

annually. . . . competitions have been held in
 annually. (m) Traditional
 being held during vacations. (n) Religious ci