

# WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN MYANMAR: EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS 2011-2016

## Executive Summary

“No one is a master since s/he was born. We become knowledgeable and efficient because of nurturing from the environment and communicating with people. Don't look down on yourself. Your capability in your family is the same as your capability in the outside world. The important thing is to have high confidence. Your will is the key. If you intend to work for the betterment of your family, environment and country, you will be successful. If you can't do it alone, you can work together with others. That will make you successful.”

“Willingness to work and have strong will. Build up your capacity so that you will become qualified. Have self-confidence. Withstand the pressure and sacrifice when needed. Instead of thinking what you can get, think of what you can give. You must always think of how to be successful. Always encourage yourself.”

“You need to know how to search for information. Another important thing is good communication skill and a habit of working together with others. You need to put yourself into other people's shoes and understand their perspectives. Always improve yourself. Read books, especially study about laws. Keep updated with information.”

Shwe Shwe Sein Latt, Kim N. B. Ninh, Mi Ki Kyaw Myint and Susan Lee

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**The Asia Foundation**  
Improving Lives, Expanding Opportunities



## Executive Summary

Myanmar's stated commitment to women's role in public life is longstanding; women were granted the right to vote in 1935, one of the earliest countries in Asia to do so. Myanmar endorsed the Beijing Declaration in 1995 and became a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1997. The National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013-2022 identified a key priority as ensuring women's equal participation and leadership in governance at all levels of society.

In practice, however, women's ability to take part in Myanmar's political life has been very limited, made even more so by more than 60 years of military rule. This dynamic began to change with the 2010 general elections which marked the historic transition from military rule to civilian government. Members were elected to both a new national bicameral parliament with an upper and lower house and 14 parliaments in the states and regions.

While the military continues to maintain power through the constitutional provision that reserved 25% of parliamentary seats to the Tatmadaw (Myanmar Armed Forces), the first elected parliaments of 2011-2016 were much more active than anticipated by both international and domestic observers. Elected women made up only 6% of the Union parliament, with four holding seats in the upper house and twenty-four in the lower house. Additionally, only two women members of parliament (MPs) were appointed and represented in the 166-seats reserved for the military in the national parliament (56 seats in the Upper House and 110 seats in the Lower House). Across the 14 state/region parliaments, women

only won 25, or 3.8% of the seats.

Women's political participation is also challenged by the policies and practices of the political parties themselves. Myanmar now has more than 90 political parties, but only a handful have concrete policies promoting women's participation or set aside reservations for women candidates. Some 90% of Central Executive Committee members of political parties remain male. The percentage of women holding decision-making positions in state/region and district level party organization structures is around six percent. Women are similarly under-represented in ministerial and deputy ministerial positions as well as in the judiciary. A number of factors have been commonly identified as driving this marginalization, including a lack of experience and skills and embedded cultural norms held by both the broader society but also by women themselves which discourage them from active political participation.

The 2015 general elections afforded women in Myanmar their second major opportunity to participate in representational governance, and the number of women parliamentarians increased significantly to a total of 151 elected seats across both national and state/region levels. In the national parliament, 23 women parliamentarians entered the upper house and 44 entered the lower house. As such, the number of female representatives in the national parliament more than doubled from 6.0% to 13.7% of all elected MPs. This percentage of female MPs drops to 10.5% of all MPs including military appointed MPs, as the military only appointed two female MPs to the lower house.

At the state/region level, 84 women were elected, tripling the number of women parliamentarians

	Women as % of Elected MPs		Women as % of All MPs	
	2011-2016	2016-2021	2011-2016	2016-2021
<b>National Parliament Total (the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw)</b>	6.0%	13.7%	4.8%	10.5%
<b>Upper House (the Amyotha Hluttaw)</b>	2.5%	13.7%	1.8%	10.3%
<b>Lower House (Pyithu Hluttaw)</b>	7.8%	13.6%	6.2%	10.6%
<b>State/Region Parliaments</b>	3.8%	12.7%	2.9%	9.7%

Source: Amyotha Hluttaw Office; Pyithu Hluttaw Office; Phan Tee Eain and The Gender Equality Network 2014; and Union Election Commission Myanmar

from 3.8% to 12.7%. Thus far, the military has only appointed two female MPs in the states and regions (including Yangon Region and Shan State), bringing that percentage down to 9.7% when all MPs are considered.

Ahead of the November 2015 elections, The Asia Foundation (the Foundation) partnered with Phan Tee Eain, a Myanmar organization committed to women’s empowerment, to conduct a survey and in-depth interviews of the women parliamentarians who took office in 2010 and the 2012 by-elections – given their extraordinary role in Myanmar’s democratic transition and the importance of their insight to those who follow. The objectives of the study are:

- Document the experiences of women parliamentarians who took office from 2011

to 2016;

- Identify issues, challenges, and experiences common to this group;
- Raise awareness about the achievements and needs of women parliamentarians; and,
- Develop recommendations and support structures for future women candidates and parliamentarians.

This study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, with a survey questionnaire jointly developed by the Foundation and Phan Tee Eain and supplemented by personal interviews. Forty-five women completed the written surveys, while 19 took part in personal interviews out of a total number of 55 women MPs at both national and state/region levels. A review of relevant literature was conducted and where possible and relevant, the research team also integrated data of the women MPs who came to office after the November 2015 elections.

The collective experiences of the women who were elected to represent their communities in this first parliament not only provide insight into how their work as MPs has changed the lives of people in Myanmar, but also how these experiences have changed their own expectations for government and the political process, as well as for themselves. The key findings of the research are highlighted below.

### Background of Women MPs

- There is often the assumption that women MPs are not as well educated as their male counterparts. The research found that for women in both the 2011-2016 national and state/region parliaments, however, the level of educational attainment mirrored or exceeded that of their male colleagues.

Eighty-six percent of women MPs in the national parliament had at least the equivalent of a bachelor's degree (compared to 76% of male MPs), and about 17 percent had post-graduate degrees (compared to 7.6% of male MPs). Women elected to the national parliament came primarily from education, legal, and business sectors. Given that some 80% of teachers in Myanmar are women, it is not surprising that a high proportion of female elected representatives came from the education sector.

- In the national parliament elected to office in the November 2015 election, women achieved generally a higher degree of educational attainment than their male counterparts, with 93.9% of them holding at least the equivalent of a bachelor's degree (compared to 77.7% of male MPs), and 22.7% who obtained post-graduate degrees (compared to 8.5% of male MPs). In the states and regions, 92.8% of the 2016 female representatives had obtained at least a bachelor's degree (compared to 66.9% of male MPs), and 10.7% had post-graduate degrees (compared to 3.2% of male MPs). For this second generation of women MPs, many more came from the business sector, community service and political work than previously.

### **Campaigning for Parliament**

The 2010 parliamentary elections were neither free nor fair, and the National League for Democracy (NLD) boycotted the it, citing a lengthy list of complaints. As such, the first post-junta national and state/region parliaments were dominated by members of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), a dominance only mildly offset by the election of

43 members of the NLD in the 2012 by-election.

While expectations for the new parliaments were considerably muted, many analysts saw the thawing of military rule as an important step forward in the evolution of Myanmar's politics. The subsequent evolution of the Thein Sein government did provide expanded space for political discourse, although this was marred by setbacks on human rights in the last years of the administration. An increasingly vibrant national parliament, however, was a significant achievement of the country's nascent democratic transition.

- For the first generation of female parliamentarians, the support most appreciated by women candidates can best be characterized as motivational or emotional support, whether it was encouragement provided by parents, extended families, communities, religious leaders, or fellow party members. Women elected in both 2010 and 2012 consistently raised the importance of such social support as critical to their ability to first mount a successful campaign and later, to manage their responsibilities as an MP. With few exceptions, those women who were married and did have living parents tended to receive strong support from spouses and parents, with 37.8% of respondents reporting 'very supportive' parents and 35.6% reporting 'very supportive' spouses. Co-workers and friends were reported by MPs to be mixed in their support of their political ambitions.
- Unsurprisingly, given the uncertain and restrictive political context in which elections were held in 2010, few political parties had significant resources to provide their candidates, much less conduct skills-based

trainings. Civil society organizations were even more constrained in the support they were able to offer to candidates, and as a result, there were major gaps in resources available to candidates at a time when those resources were sorely needed.

- Generally, women candidates for parliament in 2010 reported receiving minimal information about their future roles as representatives to the national and state/region parliaments. One MP recounted that she initially did not understand election laws, and her party did not even have copies of such procedures to offer her.
- Political parties were cited as providing the most support to their candidates in the pre-election period, though that support was often limited and inconsistent, with 69% of women reporting receiving support to conduct campaign activities and voter outreach. In contrast, only 27% of the women said they received information before the elections about the role of MPs, and the responsibilities they would assume once elected.
- Financing was a major challenge for most women, with 40% indicating that they received campaign financing from their political party. Not a single respondent reported receiving any support during the pre-election period specifically targeted to or designed to provide advice and training for female candidates. While this may be unsurprising, it is significant given the major challenges faced by women candidates within Myanmar's nascent democracy.
- Candidates frequently encountered voters who understood little about the elections and the voting process, and who had little

exposure to the limited voter education and outreach efforts. This lack of information, and a general wariness toward the elections process as a whole, was particularly noted by candidates engaging with ethnic communities. Public mistrust of the conduct of the elections and reluctance to engage in the political process contributed to an atmosphere of confusion, misinformation, and fear.

- Many MPs reported accusations and criticisms from other political parties as key difficulties they faced during the campaign. The resulting campaign period was, as a practical matter, highly challenging for candidates to navigate. For example, on the campaign trail, many women candidates found it difficult to even secure lodging because local communities distrusted the electoral process and candidates, fearing reprisals from local authorities.
- These challenges were compounded by the gender of the candidates, and conservative societal expectations of appropriate behaviors of women significantly affected the experience of women while campaigning. Voters, especially other women, often questioned the propriety of women candidates traveling independently and engaging in political behavior. These experiences left an indelible impression on the women MPs once elected, as many ranked the relative lack of support from women voters as the most important obstacle preventing greater numbers of women from successfully entering politics.

#### **Life and Work as Parliamentarians**

- Most women in the survey became parliamentarians without having a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities they would assume as elected representatives.



During interviews it became clear that post-election life changes were in fact quite dramatic for most women parliamentarians. MPs emphasized significant shifts in the way they came to view their responsibilities to their constituents, and their ability to act in response to community needs.

- Representatives reported an increase in trust and respect from their family and social networks, as well as growing appreciation from their constituents for their work as parliamentarians. The changes MPs experienced in their communities and social networks was generally seen as empowering. As one MP said, “No matter how high the position of a person is, if I’m doing the right thing, I dare to present about it in the parliament. I gained more self-confidence.”<sup>1</sup>
- The impact of their work duties on family life and household responsibilities was more pronounced at the national level, but representatives at all levels expressed concern and guilt that work-related demands took a heavy toll on their families.

#### **Capacity Building Support**

- The number of respondents who received capacity building training regarding the roles and responsibilities as MPs was 84% at the national level and 75% at the state/region level. However, only half of the respondents reported receiving capacity building on planning and financial oversight functions, and given the centrality of understanding budgets to influencing public policy, improving training for women MPs in this area is crucial moving forward.
- Women identified a myriad of practical skills which they felt could be strengthened but for

<sup>1</sup> MP28’s response to questionnaire #14.

which they received limited support: constituency engagement; facilitation and communication; research; and planning and financial oversight. A lack of confidence, education, and experience were raised repeatedly throughout the survey responses as posing key obstacles to the entry of women into politics and to them thriving once engaged in politics.

- One-fifth of national level MPs received training on public speaking and communications, compared to more than half of state and regional MPs, and the desire for public speaking training was widely expressed among respondents.

#### **Women MPs’ Participation in Parliament**

- At the national level, all elected women representatives belonged to at least one committee, although very few held leadership positions on such committees. Some respondents identified a lack of confidence and technical skills as significant barriers that prevented them from wanting, or trying to, become committee chairs.
- As individuals, the women in parliament participated in raising both starred (those to be answered publicly) and non-starred questions (those to be answered in writing). But the number of questions submitted by women MPs was much smaller compared to the number of questions submitted by their male colleagues. At the union-level, women MPs generated 409 starred questions out of a total of 6,227 starred questions raised by all parliamentarians (6.6%) and 590 non-starred questions out of 9,454 questions (6.2%). Some respondents felt that women received fewer opportunities to raise questions, although opinions varied regarding possible

explanations, and the questions raised by women MPs steadily increased over the sessions examined.

- Twelve women MPs, or 27% of total women MPs, at the national and state/region level parliaments indicated that they had initiated or introduced legislation during their tenure.
- The women surveyed reported being most active on women's issues (57% very active) and rural development (57% very active). This was followed by education (50% very active), social and community affairs (48% very active), gender equality (45% very active), constitutional affairs (41% very active), and health care (39% very active). There was a notable lack of self-reported engagement in the areas of research and technology (5% very active) and foreign affairs (5% very active.)
- Collaboration between women in parliament occurred most frequently within parties. Very little collaboration with other women across party lines occurred toward developing legislation or awareness raising.

#### **Interactions with Constituents and Access to Information**

- When asked to share the top three concerns of their constituents, more than half of all respondents (51.5%) highlighted poverty, infrastructure development (37.8%), followed by the use and trafficking of illegal drugs (35.6%) and education (35.6%).
- Female representatives overwhelmingly indicated that their information about constituent needs came directly from constituents. State/region MPs reported receiving information about constituent needs more frequently from local township

and village authorities than their colleagues at the national level. Respondents reported varying degrees of engagement with local authorities in efforts to resolve community level problems. Some viewed effective working relationships with local officials as key to conflict resolution, while others tended to view such officials as more of an obstacle than potential collaborator.

- Some respondents, particularly those receiving information from parliamentary offices and international organizations, felt overwhelmed and experienced difficulty in selecting the most useful information from the many reports, data, references, and evidence with which they were presented. The findings suggest that a lack of information may be less of a problem for MPs than figuring out effective study techniques or strategies to synthesize information. The respondents explained that not having skilled office staff or assistance with research were other key challenges. They repeatedly mentioned the utility of a potential staffer with computer literacy skills who could assist them with research and travel with them to constituencies.

#### **Women MPs and Political Parties**

- Although women MPs overwhelmingly indicated that they felt first and foremost obligated to represent the interests of their constituencies, they also often felt constrained by their own party policies or directives, and that their individual views were often unwelcome or irrelevant in the face of party priorities.
- While 71% of respondents agreed strongly, and 11% agreed, with the statement that representatives are free to address issues

regardless of party support, almost half of all respondents (49%) agreed strongly or somewhat that MPs could only address women's issues if the party had developed specific policies to do so.

### **Gender-based Discrimination**

- When asked directly about their experience of gender-based discrimination during their political careers, one-third of respondents indicated that they had faced such discrimination. While this might seem to be a relatively low figure, it needs to be taken in context. Myanmar continues to face widespread entrenched societal bias against women generally, and especially women in positions of leadership. When representatives were later interviewed in depth, it became clear that the MP's faced many challenges that would be categorized as discrimination.
- Many representatives who had not indicated experiencing discrimination in the written surveys described being treated differently than men in their interviews. Women raised specific incidents of disrespect or verbal abuse which they felt their male peers would not have been subjected to, especially from government employees. They also discussed being excluded from male-dominated discussions on policy, whether during party meetings or informal gatherings of male MPs at local restaurants or drinking establishments.

### **Increasing Women's Participation**

- Although the overwhelming victory of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's party in the 2015 elections could lead some to suggest that claims of bias against women in public office are overblown in Myanmar, public opinion polls and qualitative research have shown clearly that

there is strong public bias against women in positions of leadership, and against women's engagement in politics specifically. Women MPs ranked a lack of confidence, a lack of education, and the lack of financing as the biggest obstacles faced by women politicians. Female representatives also noted that increasing men's engagement and support for gender equality was the most effective way to increase the number of women in politics, with 71% stating it would be 'strongly effective,' and an additional 16% believing it would be 'effective.'

- Yet perhaps one of the more surprising findings from the survey was the fact that female parliamentarians felt even less support from other female voters than from male voters. Eighty-two percent of respondents felt "very much" that lack of support from other women prevented women from entering politics, while only 51% of respondents felt that lack of support from male voters was an equally significant obstacle.
- Representatives were somewhat less enthusiastic but still felt strongly about the efficacy of campaigns to raise awareness among the voting public (58% 'strongly effective' and 24% 'effective,') and the oft-discussed use of quotas mandating the number of women in political office (51% 'strongly effective'; 24% 'effective').

### **Reflection on the survey findings and insightful advice from the women MPs of the 2011-2016 parliaments**

This report seeks to provide a more in depth view of the experiences of the first generation of women MPs who were in office between 2011 and 2016 to understand their motivations and



challenges in political life. The research team hopes that insights gained from the study would be useful for the next generation of women MPs as well as for the government, political parties, civil society organizations and the broader development community in providing more targeted support to strengthen women's political participation.

*“Try hard for people to see you as a person they can trust, not only as a woman. You need to be strong. Don't be discouraged when you face difficulties. You will be hearing about many problems from your constituents and solving the problems for them. So, please be patient. You will also need to learn from them and try to explain to them so that they can have better understanding of whatever is the situation. On the technical side, study laws. You need to study a lot.”<sup>2</sup>*

Following the key findings of the research presented above, a summary of some broader reflections of the survey data and what implications they may have for future programs aimed at supporting more women in political life in Myanmar and in parliament in particular is also provided. Some of the women MPs' insights and advice to the next generation of women MPs based on their own hard won experiences is also detailed. The most consistent theme running through their suggestions relate to the importance of self-confidence. Being prepared, persistent, and open to learning and working with others, as well as building trust, were all seen as key elements of success by these trailblazing women MPs. Again and again, however, it was the call for faith in oneself that underscored the advice of one generation of women MPs to the next.

<sup>2</sup> Interview, MP4.

***Women MPs felt strongly that the biggest challenge for them were not their male counterparts or male voters, but other women voters who did not support women in political life.*** This is perhaps one of the more surprising findings from the research. The view came out very clearly from the women MPs' responses to the survey questionnaire, with 82% of the women MPs indicating that the “lack of support from women voters” were their number one obstacle in preventing women from entering politics, much higher than the prevailing cultural norms (58%) or male voters (51%). This issue was not much discussed by the women MPs during in depth interviews or in other forums, but they did specifically raise their sense of discomfort with the disapproval they received when they traveled to campaign, much of which came from other women who viewed their political activities as inappropriate. This may be an uncomfortable truth for the women MPs themselves to recognize and to highlight, but it underscores similar findings from other relevant research on women's political participation and women's empowerment that embedded socio-cultural norms impacting gender equality are as entrenched among women as men in Myanmar. This is an important factor in considering what should be the right strategy for women's empowerment programs. The gender gap is not simply between men and women but also reflects a significant knowledge and awareness gap that exists among women in society, which may hinder their support for legislations, policies, and practices for gender equality and empowerment.

***Self-confidence is arguably the most important factor in the performance of women MPs.*** The issue of self-confidence, or lack thereof, was a consistent theme in the analysis of the survey data. Based on empirical data women MPs were

just as or more educated and often just as active in Parliament as their male counterparts, but they often perceived themselves as lacking in knowledge and skills, less confident and less active than their male peers. This sense of being less than others can make the women MPs less comfortable and less active in pushing forward their own views and assessments, believing that others know more than they do even when the data shows otherwise. When asked about the obstacles preventing women from entering politics, 80% of the women MPs resoundingly pointed to “lack of confidence” as the second most important obstacle.

*“No one is a master since s/he was born. We become knowledgeable and efficient because of nurturing from the environment and communicating with people. Don’t look down on yourself. Your capability in your family is the same as your capability in the outside world. The important thing is to have high confidence. Your will is the key. If you intend to work for the betterment of your family, environment and country, you will be successful. If you can’t do it alone, you can work together with others. That will make you successful.”<sup>3</sup>*

*“Willingness to work and have strong will. Build up your capacity so that you will become qualified. Have self-confidence. Withstand the pressure and sacrifice when needed. Instead of thinking what you can get, think of what you can give. You must always think of how to be successful. Always encourage yourself.”<sup>4</sup>*

*“Don’t be afraid. No need to be that afraid of politics. Please study about the nature of politics.”<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> MP10’s response to questionnaire #41.

<sup>4</sup> MP39’s response to questionnaire #41.

<sup>5</sup> Interview, MP8.

The advice that the women MPs have for the next generation of women MPs shows that they are clearly aware that their sense of confidence, embedded in cultural and social norms, have impacted their development and their work. As such, this is a factor that should be well considered in any programs aimed at supporting women in politics.

***Women MPs need more training and skills in technical areas (such as legislative drafting and budgeting) and public speaking/communication to be more effective in Parliament.*** Parliaments have provided women MPs with more technical skill-based capacity development on issues such as research, legislative drafting, planning, and finance. Political parties have played a critical role in supporting MPs with constituent engagement. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have focused more on gender-inclusive policy development programs for women MPs. With regard to capacity building, the women MPs felt strongly that they needed more technical training in areas such as legislative drafting and budget analysis and oversight to help them engage substantively with these critical topics related to their roles as MPs. Secondly, women MPs also felt strongly about improving their communication skills and public speaking ability to increase their self-confidence, effectiveness when campaigning as candidates and communication with the public as MPs.

***Women MPs faced a wide range of incidents of discrimination, but they are often reluctant to frame such behavior or action as gender-based.***

Only one-third (33%) of women MPs surveyed indicated that they had experienced gender-based discrimination in their political careers, raising specific incidents of disrespect or verbal

abuse which they felt their male peers would not have been subjected to, especially from government employees, then by party leaders and male colleagues in parliament. During in depth interviews however, many women MPs who had not indicated experiencing discrimination in the survey described being excluded from male-dominated discussions on policy, whether during party meetings or informal gatherings of male MPs at local restaurants or drinking establishments; being excluded from learning opportunities such as study tours; and being addressed with patronizing language on the floor of parliament or in party meetings.

*“Read more to become knowledgeable and always work with full confidence. Approach professionals to get their help and try to become proficient with the work that you need to do in the parliament.”<sup>6</sup>*

*“Make sure that you understand the law and politics (read more journals). You should know that in detail. Look at how big parties work.”<sup>7</sup>*

*“You need to know how to search for information. Another important thing is good communication skill and a habit of working together with others. You need to put yourself into other people’s shoes and understand their perspectives. Always improve yourself. Read books, especially study about laws. Keep updated with information.”<sup>8</sup>*

*“You should expect difficulties. You need to learn about budget, public speaking skills and law in advance. Don’t be arrogant. Be persistent.”<sup>9</sup>*

Given the small number of women MPs, their own political activism and the sense of disapproval

<sup>6</sup> MP10’s response to questionnaire #41.

<sup>7</sup> MP14’s response to questionnaire #41.

<sup>8</sup> Interview, MP29.

<sup>9</sup> MP31’s response to questionnaire #41.

they feel from many in the broader society particularly other women, women MPs themselves tend not to define some of the challenges they faced as gender-based. As such, there is little common perspective among the women MPs on the gender dimension of their work and what may be effective solutions that they can pursue whether individually or as a group.

***Political parties are particularly important in providing critical support to MPs in Myanmar, including women MPs, but their general lack of gender-related policies are hindering potential legislative progress on gender equality.*** The research shows the critical role that political parties play in supporting political candidates in their campaigning and then in their roles as MPs. The support MPs get from their political parties is the most consistent in their political life. At the same time, however, given that political parties were suppressed for many years under military rule and have only been able to operate openly in recent years, such support to political candidates and to MPs is minimal but critical. Political party development is nascent and as such, political parties do not yet have a clear gender focus, but MPs are bound to adhere to the policies of their political parties. There is clear tension between the women MPs’ sense of independence, including their commitment to gender issues, and their adherence to party policies. Ninety-one percent of the women MPs surveyed felt very strong commitment to represent the interests of women, with 71% of them stating that they are independent to follow through their own interest without party support. Yet 29% of women MPs surveyed also feel very strongly that they cannot do anything about a particular issue if there is no

supporting party policy. As such, there is a strong need to work with political parties to help define the appropriate gender platform they should have and accompanying policies to assist all MPs, and women MPs in particular, to support gender equality and empowerment in Myanmar.

**Women MPs don't regularly collaborate among themselves.** Collaboration between women in Parliament occurred most frequently among women who shared a party. Respondents most frequently collaborated with women from within their own parties to advocate for the passage of legislation. Committee assignments seemed to provide the primary opportunity for women to work with women from other parties, but

otherwise there is very little collaboration across party lines. In this context, increasing opportunities for women to regularly connect and engage meaningfully with other women, especially across party lines, can facilitate the development of professional support networks and the collective power to advance shared interests – particularly on issues of specific concern to women.

*“Women should cooperate with each other. Women should be involved in the decision-making process. They need to believe that they can do it.”<sup>10</sup>*

<sup>10</sup> Interview, MP14.



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The full report is downloadable at :  
<http://asiafoundation.org/publication/womens-political-participation-myanmar-experiences-women-parliamentarians-2011-2016>