

# BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEVELS IN TANINTHARYI REGION

Research Report

Tavoyan Women's Union, Dawei, Myanmar

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Sincerely,

Tavoyan Women's Union (TWU)

## Report Summary

In synoptic brief of this report, it is an analytical study paper on potential programmes of how women in Dawei Region can play in a leadership role in socio-economic governance in community politics administration by gathering people's views and comments through public consultation with focus on a statement that says "To reach a level of women leadership in Myanmar society, potential opportunities are still lacking in their family sphere and societies and thus more capacity building that enables women participation in administration sector is still required"; Although it is a prioritized programme that unleashes more women engagement in political and administration sectors as essential human resources whereas Myanmar has been transforming to be a 'Democratic Nation'.

In developing this research paper, a working framework was laid and designed that allowed not just research experts who were privately involved in the study but also getting members of Tavoyan Women's Union on board who were imparted on basic research knowledge through learning experiences of research data collection. There, therefore, were some limitations in debriefing initial research data in terms of data collection. Such margins, however, were fixed in terms of the survey conducted on the sample-registered population. The effort of the members of Tavoyan Women's Union in conducting research data was truly promising.

According to the findings in the research, the answers in brief to the questions of why women are not given the roles of leadership, not on board, are: \_ women themselves are not interested enough, politics and administrative work is considered as just-men's business, women are not considered as capable as men, men are not willing to work under women's leadership; since Tanintharyi Region is a coastal area thus it is widely acknowledged that marine fisheries and other night security issues are difficult to be managed by women; there are threats when women take a village administrator's role, not enough support from their own family and the community for women who want to run for a village administrator's seat, women are traditionally thought to be doing household domestic chores and thus it is considered impossible to take administrative responsibilities; lack of awareness of the fact that women can also run for election as men; and such societal outlooks are learned.

It is also realized that although multi-party democracy system is in progress: \_ most political parties do not seem to have laid their policies related to women's leadership empowerment; and the ones which have adopted such policies are still weak at implementation; and they are rather in the position of prioritizing their parties' affairs; and most parties and committees include women only in the role of supporters; and there are very few civil societies and development agencies whose interventions with focus on women leadership empowerment programmes; the percentage of women who are aware of women's rights, protection of violence against women and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), is only 3 % and thus relatively low; and there are very few resource persons who can help build women's leadership in the region.

In educational component of these research findings, though the percentage of women exceeds that of men's in literacy rate from primary to post-graduate education, yet percentage of women who cannot access to education is higher. While women outnumber men in higher education, only half of that of the number of men are employed in administration and management positions. Laws and policies that are developed on 'Ward or Village Tract Administration Law' have the role of women in limited chapters, and limited efforts in raising awareness on administrative laws for women and strategic women's leadership empowerment; very few organizations are found to have regarded that women's participation in their vocational training and development programmes, as women's inclusion.

In conclusion, the fundamental finding of this research paper is authentic and it is crucial to enhance the development of policies that support the role of women, create society that encourages opportunities for women empowerment and capacity building to help uplift the role of women's leadership in administration and societal roles.



## Background of Research Study

The role of women in politics and their sustainable political status has become essential in the time of Myanmar democratization. Lasting women participation in political activities and bearing state responsibilities ought to be one of the prioritized programmes in democratic transition. Women's participation in political leadership has reached its peak in 2015; it nevertheless declined in 2017 by-elections. Especially women's participation in political leadership is found to have much declined. 6% of women participation in Union Parliament in 2011-2016 and 3.8 % in Regional Parliament, and 13.7 % of women's participation in Union Parliament after 2015 elections, and increased up to 12.5% of women's participation in Regional Parliament. However, women's participation and winning in the elections has been much on the wane after 2017 by-elections. Women participation in ward/village tract administrators' elections that are held due to political reforms is weakening. It is found that women who previously won in the elections are no longer running again or not reelected.

Tavoyan Women's Union firmly believe that it is important to identify the issues and constraints that are challenging in women's participation and lasting involvement in political leadership role. Unless current constraints and potential complications are thoroughly comprehended, it is difficult to understand the challenges to women. Currently, there are very few research documents related to such challenges, the only research paper that can be taken reference to is 'Women's Political Participation in Myanmar' issued by Asia Foundation in April 2017. Moreover, Tavoyan Women's Union, which was born in the 1300 Anti-colonialism Revolution and thus it, emphasizes the role of women's participation and lasting involvement in politics, a research study has been conducted in order to analyse the constraints, restrictions in identify ways to improve the role of women's participation. It is generally understood that there are a lot of constraints for women's participation in political leadership role in Myanmar. However, Tavoyan Women's Union has conducted the study on social, religious and educational barriers and the role of women's participation in politics within the compass of its comprehension.

## Brief History of the Union

Before 1995, the Tavoyan Women's Union operated under the name of the Tavoy District Women's Union. On 5 May, 1995, the Tavoy District Women's Union changed its name to Tavoyan Women's Union, which held its first congress from May 5 to 9, 1998. The congress reorganized and replenished the Union with a new generation of women who had taken part in the mass uprising of 1988.

### Vision

Our vision is to build a society of peace, justice, freedom and equality in Burma (Myanmar).

### Mission

- To achieve equality in accordance with integral rights of every woman
- To expand and improve women's participation and capacity in our society
- To achieve security, peace and development of women's live

## Programs

- Program to combat violence against women through education, advocating and providing services
- Women leadership (political) Empowerment program
- Program to enrich the role of women in peace and development process ‘involved

## Context and Rationale of the Research Study

Women’s social, economic and political capacity can not only contribute the transparency and accountability of the State’s social, economic and political sectors, but also brings advantages to the executive and other sectors of the State in more sustainable manners. (Peltomäki, 2002 cited UN, 1995). Women’s views and perspectives are crucial to party politics sector. From political point of view, if women in government and administrative body are reluctant to expose their views and perspectives, the inclusion of women in the government and administrative body will be only just. (Ferguson 2013, Women’s voice and agency in PNG governance: The key to change). Women’s participation in local government, administration and regional parliament is critical to the rise of good governance owing to (the strength of) women’s leadership capacity, knowledge and beliefs. However women might face a lot of challenges and difficulties in leading and decision-making process. For example – Serving her duties in a long distance from her family (or) has to frequently travel to places away from her family; less time for the family as to spend so much time for administrative and management tasks; uncertain source of income (or) earn a low salary; lack of opportunities for self-empowerment (skill-development); lack of political experiences; fail to perform family and social duties; \_ most women experience such challenges. (UNDP\_Women\_and\_ Local\_Leadership, 2015). The existing factors in political and social spheres such as allocation of rights and responsibilities, resource sharing, cultural values and social norms are required to be considered as the needs for women’s participation in leadership and politics. Regarding these, Quay has stated a remark in ‘Pacific Women’s Leadership Scoping Study’ as follows;

*“Women leaders are typically assigned to various responsibilities and have taken role of leadership in different areas, such role conflicts resemble similar yet different and complicate the role of women’s leadership.”*

Women’s participation in leadership role and politics in Pacific and South East Asia regions is still a fundamental challenge to the development. Research data shows that women’s participation in Union parliaments and State/Regional Parliaments in countries in the region is dramatically declining. Due to the decreased women’s participation, there are negative impacts in State’s politics and development. (Domingo et al. 2015). Women’s participation in state-building parliamentary politics of every democratic nation, from political scope, is too little even not to cover the representation of half the population (women’s population). In laying down the development policies in parliaments, if women representatives are on board, considerations are made from all aspects (For example- Gender equality) and more chances for policies selection. However, women’s participation has been found significantly less improved within the last decade. (Improving the Electoral Chances of Pacific Women, Julien Barbara Kerryn Baker, 2016)

In 2010 general elections, a landmark transition from military administration to civilian administration, among the total 466 members of parliament (both Union Parliament and Amyothar Parliament), there were 28 female MPs ranking (nearly 6%) and as military representatives, 2 female MPs were assigned for Amyothar Parliament only in 2014. Among the total 695 members of parliament in all 14 State/ regional Parliaments, there were 25 female representatives, ranking (4%) and no female representative was selected in Kayah, Karan, Chin, Mon, Sagaing and Tanintharyi Regional Parliaments. Amongst those, up to 8 female representatives were elected in Shan State Parliament, the highest ranking of female representation in parliament, 6 female MPs in Yangon, 1 female MP in Mandalay and Magwe Regions were elected respectively.

In 2015 general elections, women's participation and number of female candidates being elected had improved. The number of elected female MPs in both Union Parliament and Amyothar Parliament boosted up to 151. 23 female MPs in Amyothar Parliament and 44 female MPs in Union Parliament were elected. By percentage, previous female MPs percentage (6%) in Union Parliament has doubled up to 13.7 % (more than double). On military side, only 2 female MPs assigned for Union Parliament. If include 2 military MPs, there is only 10.5% women's participation in the Union Parliament.

In State/Regional Parliaments, up to 84 female representatives were elected, three times as many as that of the previous elections. It would be 3.8% to 12.7 % by percentage. Military has assigned only 2 female MPs, (1 in Yangon Region and 1 in Shan State). In total, women's participation in State and Regional Parliaments can be assumed 9.7%. 2 female Chief Ministers have been appointed in 14 States and regions (Tanintharyi and Karan State) and as ministers, there are only 4 ministers appointed in all 14 States and Regions, two in Yangon Region and the other two in Ayeyarwaddy Region. Only one female minister is appointed in the Union Government. Moreover, amongst 16785 ward/ village tract administrators, there are only 42 female administrators. No female is appointed among all 330-township administrators. (UNDP Myanmar (2015). Women and Local Leadership. Leadership Journeys of Myanmar's Female Village Tract/Award Administrators)

It shows, in comparative analysis of these two elections, such women's representation and participation in politics is progressing yet it still lagged behind, comparing to other countries in the region. If compare the inclusion of women in Union Parliament with that of other countries, it is found respectively that: 6% in Thailand, 10.4% in Malaysia, 27.2% in the Philippines, 25% in Laos, 25.3% in Vietnam, 23.9% in Singapore, 20.3% in Cambodia, 17.1% in Indonesia, 23.6% in China, 20% in Bangladesh. In total as the whole world, average women inclusion in the highest state level parliaments, is 22.9%. (Inter-parliamentary Union. (2015). Women in National Parliament. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> [Accessed on November 21, 2015])

In other conditions, policies and practices of nearly 100 political parties in Myanmar are still a challenge to women's inclusion in Myanmar politics. Amongst them, only a few parties have laid out concrete policies that allow women's participation in politics and in elections. One significant fact is that most parties have men controlled the seats of central executive committees. In district/State/Regional level decision-making executive committees and departments of the parties, women's inclusion is found only 6%. Women's inclusion or representation is relatively low in decision-making roles of the departments such as the positions of government ministers, deputy ministers, director generals, and judges. In analysing above status, it is found that the role of women's participation is not well considered in leadership or decision-making roles, women themselves do not have much experience (in politics) and not very skilled, being caught in well-rooted cultural norms; and women themselves are not well aware of their rights to participation, their roles, capacity, and are still being oppressed.

If we generally observe the level of women's inclusion in the roles of leadership and politics in Myanmar, the main causes are found as: \_lack of the required skill and experiences; lack of confidence in family, the surroundings and oneself; restrictions that prevent women's participation; it is still commonly asserted that it is dangerous for women to be involved in politics, but only for men; there are still social norms that power and decision-making roles are traditionally made only for men; concepts that prevent to accept women leadership not only creeps in men, but in some women. Moreover, Myanmar is still in the stage of struggling for gender equality in social, cultural and religious views.

It, likewise, ought to be emphasized that what Dawei Women Union and other women associations have been performing on women empowerment programmes should have certain influence in various kinds of politics, party



activities and executive actions. Additionally, it is presumed that better strategic approaches ought to be sought to women's inclusion through considerations of potential threats, constraints that female candidates and voters often experienced, views related to gender discrimination that affect on their family matters, education, health, businesses and culture. Will the role of women's participation and their leadership roles in government and its administration, commercial businesses, social activities be promoted only if all-angle-well-considered-broader approaches are sought.

Hence a research study on 'Restrictions that Women in Tanintharyi Region are being confronted in politics' was conducted by 'Research and Development Department' of 'Dawei Women Union' based on which, it was aimed to uncover 'Opportunities for women's participation in political and administrative fields'. This research paper is carefully conducted and it uncovers current constraints, challenges and restrictions on women's inclusion that women leaders have encountered and experienced in their office, party, at present parliament through conducting interviews with woman candidates who ran for 2015 and 2017 By-elections, women who were not elected in their own party, woman candidates who were not elected in the elections though they participated in the elections, those who were re-elected and woman voters who had a huge influence in the election results, plus other relevant women and men. Based on these findings, Tavoyan Women's Union firmly believes that the Union is capable of continuing its support to female members of parliament and woman leaders by unleashing potential opportunities and encouragements through awareness raising and mobilization.

#### Steps taken in this Research Methodology

This research paper is developed through research questionnaires, survey questions, studies based on a draft proposal 'There are constraints that prevent long-term participation in Politics, Administration and Leadership'. There are three steps in developing this research paper, developed by Tavoyan Women's Union. Basic research concepts, preparation for survey questionnaires, allocation of research areas and pilot groups, pilot interviews with survey questionnaires and confirmation are all carried out as the Step I. In the Step II, interviews with people from 3 districts in Tanintharyi Region, members of central executive committees of the political parties, civil societies, members of parliament, religious leaders, departmental staff, and Tanintharyi Region Chief Minister, were conducted and their comments and experiences were well noted. Research Department packaged the data collected and assessing, reviewing, verifying of the data were carried out through discussion with the Secretariat Team. As the Step III, a draft report was produced with the outcomes of the review and discussion and consultation was sought with the responsible persons of Tavoyan Women's Union and the final version will be printed in both Myanmar and English.

A 3-day training workshop was organized in Dawei in August 2018 at which basic research concepts, preparation for survey questionnaires, allocation of research areas and pilot groups, pilot interviews with survey questionnaires and confirmation were practised. Purposes of the training and detailed basic research concepts are mentioned in annex (xxx). According to the outcomes of the discussion, 9 focus groups were identified. These focus groups included people, members of parliaments, members of central executive committee of the political parties, members of political parties, ward/ village tract administrators, senior administrative and departmental officers, civil society organizations, religious leaders, female members of parliament, administrators, leaders of civil societies, and government officers. Literal survey questionnaires for these 9 focus groups were also prepared based on books and secondary sources in assessing constraints to women's participation in politics. The questionnaires can be found in annex (xx). The formula mentioned below is used to calculate the 9 pilot focus groups.

$\frac{\text{Pilot Size} \times \text{Size of the whole class}}{\text{Total target number}}$
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According to the decisions of the workshop, confirmation of the survey team, pilot interviews, confirmation and rounding off, applying for regional permits, and field surveys were all started in September 2018. Though initial plans were to cover 8 townships in 3 districts in order to meet the pilot number of people, only 7 townships were covered due to the fact that Dawei Women Union office in Kalinaung Township is located in quite far remote area, the survey was already overdue and limited crews. The detailed survey results are stated in the table (xx) below;

Sr.No	Interviewees	Male	Female	Non-respondents and third gender	Total	Percent age
1	Community	372	813	15	1199	77.57%
2	Member of Parliaments	3	1	0	4	0.26%
3	Ward/village administrators	170	10	0	180	11.64%
4	Members of Executive Committee of the Parties	5	2	0	7	0.45%
5	Civil Society Organization	4	5	0	9	0.58%
6	Government administration/Departments	4	1	0	5	0.32%
7	Members of political parties	11	13	0	24	1.55%
8	Religious leaders	88	5	0	93	6.01%
9	Woman leaders	0	25	0	25	1.62%
	<b>Total interviewees</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1547</b>	

The data collected are documented by the Research and Development Department of the Union, and reviewed and verified by Dawei Women Union in collaboration with the Secretariat Team, starting from June 2019 and extracted the review outcomes and ratified. Subsequently, the development of the report, as in the Step III, was finalized in August 2019.

This section explains basic data related to (different) races, religions, education status, and ages in the townships where the survey was conducted, according to the data and information collected;

Total 1547 answers were aggregated as the interviews were carried out engaging interested individuals from different classes. Amongst them; 12.99% from Township (1), 14.74% from Township (2), 10.73% from Township (4), 17.45% from Township (5), 15.06% from Township (6), 12.48% from Township (7), 12.35% from Township (8), 3.94% from Township (9) and 0.26% from township (10), have responded respectively. The table below can be observed for more detail;

**Table (xx) the townships where data amassed and the sexes;**

Township	Male	Female	Non-respondents and third gender	Total	Percentage
Longlon	86	112	3	201	12.99%
Thatyetchaung	80	148	0	228	14.74%
Palaw	69	97	0	166	10.73%
Kyunsu	103	162	5	270	17.45%
Tanitharyi	103	128	2	233	15.06%
Bokepyin	89	101	3	193	12.48%
Kawthoung	97	92	2	191	12.35%
Dawei	27	34	0	61	3.94%
Myeik	3	1	0	4	0.26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1547</b>	

According to the survey, age differences of the respondents are found as; 20.94% respondents between 18 to 30, 24.63% respondents between 31 to 40, 28.51% respondents between 41 to 50, 23.27% respondents between 51 to 60 and 1.29% respondents are 60 and above respectively. More details are presented in the table (xx).

**Table (xx) age differences of the respondents**

Age differences	Male	Female	Non-respondents and Others	Total	Percentage
18-30	107	216	1	324	20.94%
31-40	146	228	7	381	24.63%

41-50	187	249	5	441	28.51%
51-60	196	162	2	360	23.27%
60-above	12	8	0	20	1.29%
Non-respondent	1	3	0	4	0.26%
Unaware	8	9	0	17	1.10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1547</b>	

The study also covered the educational status of the respondents. According to the findings; 2.39% have non-schooling, 30.06% have completed primary education, 27.47% have completed middle-school education, 19.07% have completed high-school education, 0.84% have monastic-education, 3.94% are still joining universities, 9.83% are graduates, 0.13% have accomplished master degrees and PhD 0.06% respectively. Nevertheless, the education levels of religious leaders were not counted in the survey. One significant finding in this research is the number of graduates and master-graduates. The number of female graduates exceeded twice as many as that of male graduates and both respondents who have got a master degree are women. The PhD holder is a government officer. The table no. (xx) below shows more details;

**Table (xx) the education status of the respondents**

Education	Male	Female	Non Respondent and others	Total	Percentage
No Schooling	15	22	0	37	2.39%
Primary Level	159	304	2	465	30.06%
Middle School	181	238	6	425	27.47%
High School	125	165	5	295	19.07%
Still in University	22	38	1	61	3.94%
Graduate	53	98	1	152	9.83%
Master's Degree	0	2	0	2	0.13%
Doctor of Philosophy	1	0	0	1	0.06%
Monastic Education	12	1	0	13	0.84%
Religious leaders' education levels are not counted in	88	5	0	93	6.01%
Non Respondents	1	2	0	3	0.19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1547</b>	

As Dawei district in Tanintharyi Region is strategically situated with rich commercial routes and transportation networks, settlers who do for a living are multiracial. The research team, therefore, also found out the races of the respondents. As the data collected; 25.34% Dawei, 2% Mon, 9.50% Karan, 58.95% Bamar, 0.84% Rakhine, 0.32% Moken(Salon), 0.13% Chinese and 2.84% Pashu and others are found respectively. Only one person couldn't mention the race he belongs to. Details can be seen in the table below;

**Table (xx) the races respondents belong to;**

<b>Race</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Non-respondents and others</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Dawei	142	244	6	392	25.34%
Mon	15	15	1	31	2.00%
Karan	64	82	1	147	9.50%
Bamar	390	515	7	912	58.95%
Rakhine	13	0	0	13	0.84%
Moken	3	2	0	5	0.32%
Chinese	2	0	0	2	0.13%
Others	27	17	0	44	2.84%
Non-respondents	1	0	0	1	0.06%
<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1547</b>	

As the respondents' religions were studied, 89.08% Buddhists, Christians 6.40%, Hindus 0.26%, Muslims 3.75% and 0.32% traditional believers who worship deities were found respectively. The table below (xx) mentions male/female respondents and their religions in details;

**Table(xx) Religions of the respondents;**

<b>Religion</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Non-respondents and others</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Buddhists	588	779	11	1378	89.08%
Christians	36	61	2	99	6.40%
Hindus	4	0	0	4	0.26%
Islam (Muslims)	26	30	2	58	3.75%
Others	1	4	0	5	0.32%
Non-respondents	2	1	0	3	0.19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1547</b>	

## Constraints and Requirements of Data and Information

Applying for official permits to conducting the survey was also one of the constraints. The Union had to go through several steps from regional level to ward/village level and thus it took a long time. As is mentioned above, some townships were excepted due to their remote locations, limited men power and time constraint for the issue of permit. Furthermore, there might be some data and information accidentally left out to be mentioned in details in individual interviews. In some areas, people refused to answer or just gave incomplete answers once it was mentioned as a research study related to politics, and thus such results turned to be some limitations to the report as a whole.

## Ethics for Research Interviews

In order to avoid controversial issues in terms of ethics for research interviews, the research team and its crews unquestionably followed the fundamental ethics in collecting data and information. The basic principles and objectives, in conducting the survey, were thoroughly written and made clear to the interviewees and reached their consents. The interviewees were requested in advance just to answer the questions that they were willing to and unconditionally say 'No' or 'Stop' to the questions unless they were willing to. In an agreement making with the s, it includes the purpose of survey, important role of the respondents, the respondents' rights and free to say 'no' or refuse to answer (any certain questions) . It also includes the code of conduct for confidentiality that any data and information of the interviewees will not be allowed to circulate again or shared with any other organizations without their consent and shall be kept confidential. It also includes as a basic ethic that all enumerators shall fully respect, sympathize and empathize with the interviewees. All the data and information shall be kept at the Dawei Women Union after conducting the survey and only those who provide data and analysts shall be allowed to study. The whole research team has agreed upon the fact that the data and information shall not be shared with any other individuals of organizations. The report on the results of this research will be shared with relevant donor organizations, partner organizations, and other individuals concerned.

## Findings

This study is analysed by mainly categorizing into 3 sections. Myanmar is a less developed Asian country and home to 135 ethnic groups. The Dawei is one of the ethnic groups and majority in Southern Region where this research was conducted. Majority of the Daweis are Buddhists and have a society that is inclined to follow customs and adages of their ancestors. There, however, exists 'men domination culture' in social, political and economic sectors just like the social norms and customs of other Myanmar societies. However, since late 20<sup>th</sup> century, women's participation in politics had been seen when political parties were formed even before 2010 general elections, the beginning of Myanmar democratization, during which time, a few women administrators were elected at the ward/village level administrator elections. It is found that women's participation, however, still needs to be promoted as predominantly men are elected. Therefore, the findings are presented as follows; to be well aware of what are the limitations to women's participation in leadership role in the region, which sectors can be strengthened to promote women's participation based on the consultations with (representatives) from relevant development agencies, departments, administrators, communities, religious leaders, committee members and members of political parties, members of parliament, senior and current ward/village tract administrators.

If the number of village administrators is observed, the gap ratio between man and women is apparently found to be 94:6. The same ratio is found amongst those recognized as religious leaders in the communities. Number of those

who are endorsed to meet with government officials is relatively low and only the heads are permitted. The heads are also men and thus men are majority among those who are assigned in higher departmental positions. One significant thing that happened during the research was in progress, was that the regional level female Chief Minister was terminated from duties and being filed with corruption charges.

### (1) Social

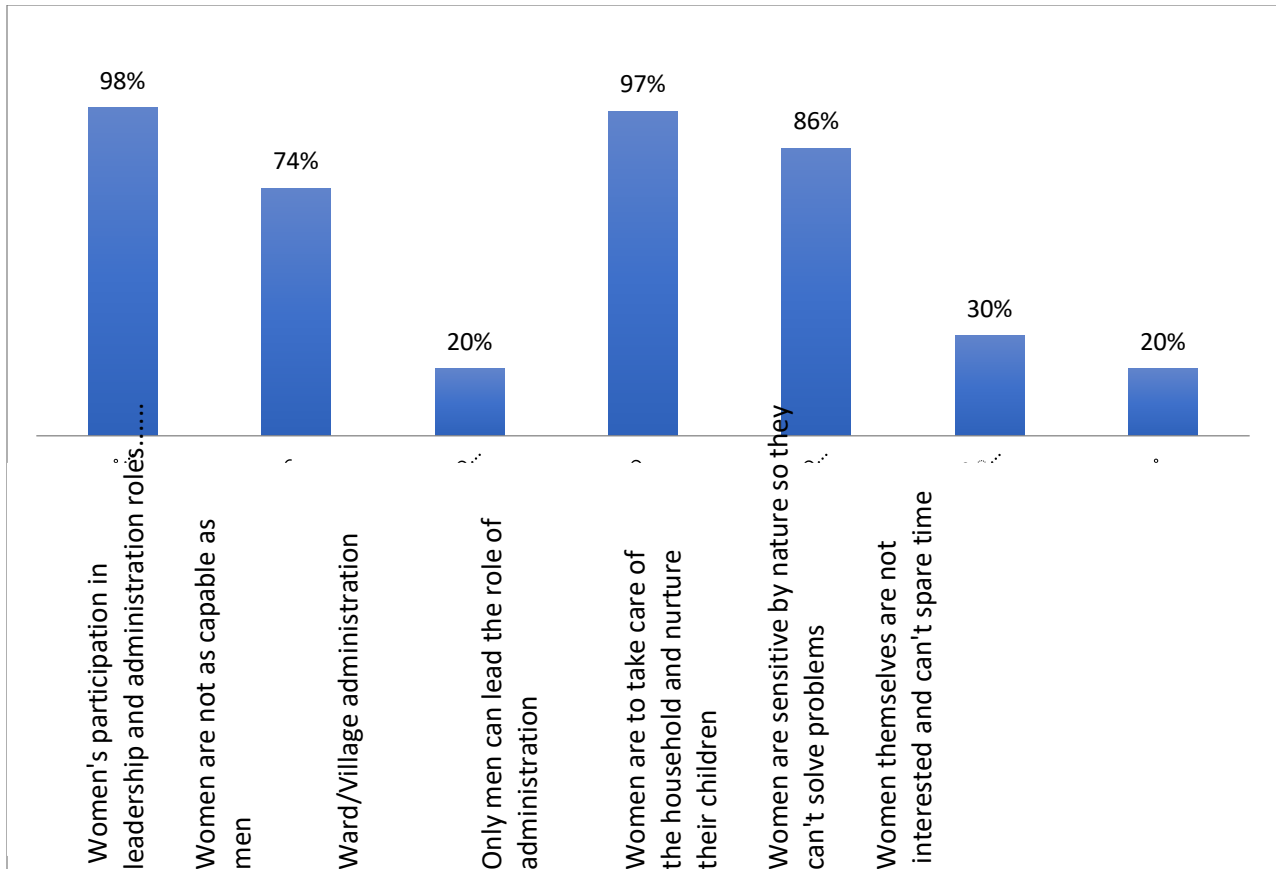
When social conception was studied in this research, it covered the concepts that include the convictions of the community on their traditional customs, the social norms and standards that are set to promote women leadership in politics and their own concepts and beliefs.

97% of all of the respondents believe that only men can take the role of leadership in men dominated society (this belief is expressed by women themselves). There still limited surroundings that encourage women to run for leadership roles. Most participants in this research answered that there still are hindrances for women to step up to leadership roles although women have got involved in political parties after 2010 elections. Sayings among the community that say; 'No daybreak with a hen's crow!', 'The country gets ruined if a woman does!' are still common in societies and the answers of 74% of the respondents proved that even the women themselves believe that women are not as capable as men. 86% said, in their answers, that women have difficulties to participate in politics and community affairs, as it is important to take care of the household and their family. In discharging duties of the community and when it needs to travel, it is not appropriate for them to stay overnight on the way due to the conditions of the transportation, most women in the community stay supporting from behind and women who are bold enough to speak out is still quite few.

98% of the answers given by the senior ward/village female administrators who had served their duties for a 5-year term after the 2010 elections and some current administrators show that men are not happy to be followers or supporters under women's leadership. Moreover 20% of the community answered that men would be elected if men and women run election campaigns although they were seen equally qualified as the tasks like night duties are inappropriate for women.

One of the difficult issues that 30% of the answers showed\_ since they are just women, it is difficult to deal with the cases such as brawls, taking actions against drug dealers, and it is out of the question to manage fishing vessels as in the coastal region, and they wouldn't be strong enough to face such challenges. Another 20% of the answers indicate that women themselves are not interested in political issues and ward/village affairs and are unable to spare their time for such and thus they refrained from being involved in politics and ward/village administration.

**Fig (xx) Social point of views**



## (2) Religion

In an analysis of women's inclusion in religious affairs in the region, it shows, according to the religious figures, 89.8% practice in Buddhism, 6.4% profess in Christianity, 3.75 % in Islam and 0.32% in other sects. So Buddhists are majority in the region and Lounglone Township is found to be entirely Buddhists. In terms of religion, it just focused on religious teachings and the spouses of the religious leaders and their roles in leadership and how they support (the concepts) rather than which religion they practise in.

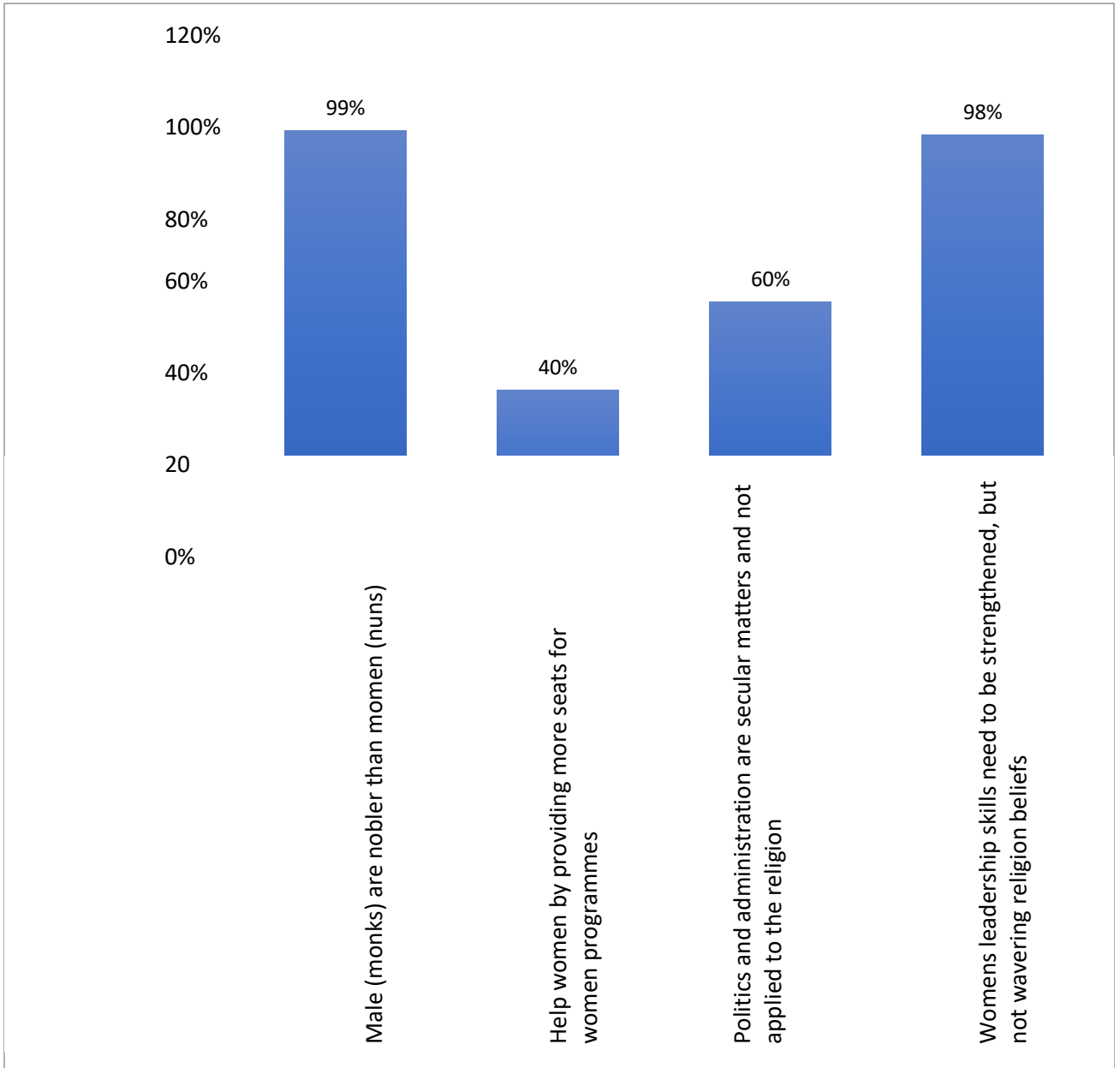
Among the 93 religious leaders who were interviewed in this study were 5 women religious leaders, 1 Hindu leader, 5 Islamic leaders, 17 Christian leaders and 78 Buddhist leaders. 90% of them answered that there is religious freedom and women are not discriminated, but allowed to participate in religious activities. However, 99% of the answers showed that male Buddhist monks are more nobler than celestial beings, let alone women; and women can only become ordained only when they are allowed by male Buddhist monks, although a novice is much younger than the nuns they have to pay respects to him; the number of precepts in the Buddhist principles which were laid out by the Buddha that Buddhist monks have to follow is much more (than that of women's) (For example-a Buddhist monk has to practice 117 precepts and nuns (women) have only 8 precepts). Men are nobler therefore they can take leadership roles. Religious leaders gave most of these answers and the views to women's participation as ward/village administrators, 40% answered that activities such as women empowerment, reduction of (domestic) violence are in progress, if necessary, they are given more seats in awareness-raising events, and education talks held in religious buildings. 60% of religious leaders' views showed that they are not involved in politics and administration matters as such are not appropriate to religious affairs. 98%, nonetheless, answered that women are encouraged for their



participation in politics and administration matters, keeping abreast of men and (for doing so) it is also necessary to build capacity, promote reading, get involved in politics in subdued manners, and not weaving away from religions

**Women themselves are lack of self-confidence. Men has high intelligent quotient, but women only consider the short-term.**  
**A religious leader**

Fig (xx) Religious points of views



The study, between the number of male Buddhist monks and nuns, shows only 5 % are nuns while 90 % are monks and it is found that Buddhist monks are in the position to be much more influential to the people. Though there is certain level of women’s participation in community events, they roles are often in entertainment (welcoming guests, ushering) preparing foods, cleaning and in community, and they are mainly assigned as accountants, members..etc.

### (3) Education

According to the 2014 census of Immigration Department, in 10 townships in Tanintharyi Region, as the table in education component that shows the status of number of children under 15 who have access to schooling, 12.1% of girls cannot access to schooling while boys rank 9.6%. The table below, however, shows 55.56% girls out of 100% in primary level education, 43.23% middle level education, 43.73% at higher level, 55.85 % at diploma level and 55.24% are acquiring university level education and 62.16% post graduate level are found respectively through analytical studies.

**Table (xx) Schooling access**

Township	Never attend School %		Primary School		Middle School		High School		Diploma		University		Post Graduate and above	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Bokepyin	11.6	15.5	4951	4601	3234	1906	1202	743	51	10	557	362	33	12
Dawei	5.3	7.5	12044	18092	8271	6664	5610	4517	155	78	3716	4964	170	411
Kawthoung	6.5	10.6	12508	14414	8990	6105	4182	3036	96	47	1874	1829	74	63
Kyunsu	11.5	14.3	24476	20892	8482	5600	2826	2287	50	17	984	1084	22	26
Longlon	11.1	12.2	15815	22768	4761	3986	1776	1293	70	15	871	1422	55	148
Myeik	4.6	6.7	26728	33280	10847	9593	186	83	5535	7635	228	410	70	41
Palaw	7.5	7.4	9970	12780	5013	4693	2022	2014	67	36	916	1606	27	103
Tanintharyi	10.5	13.1	12054	12581	5694	4017	2539	2189	65	34	879	935	37	41
Thatyetchaung	5.9	8.0	14531	19514	5382	4385	1892	1725	66	25	815	1421	48	110
Yebyu	21.5	26.1	10615	13644	4608	2771	2200	1109	98	14	1350	1015	58	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>143692</b>	<b>172566</b>	<b>65282</b>	<b>49720</b>	<b>24435</b>	<b>18996</b>	<b>6253</b>	<b>7911</b>	<b>12190</b>	<b>15048</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>976</b>

Source: Tsp Profile\_Census\_2014

According to the data shown in the table, it can be assumed that women are not only equal to man in education access but number of women educated exceeded in this Region as women who have accomplished primary to post graduate level is between 43% to 63%. However, regarding non-formal education such as vocational training and other leadership capacity building training, according to the interviewees' answers, UNICEF, World Vision and PSI are the only international organizations in the region that work on child education, health care and other sectors. There are 50 regional and local development agencies in total and most are working on health, land issues, natural environment and community development activities, while 'Maternal and Children Associations' which are established with the government's guidelines and based in all townships as gender focus organizations and as independent non-governmental organizations, there are only 5 associations including Dawei Women Union. There are merely some programmes being led by a woman lawyer who has been providing consultancy on prevention on violence against individual woman and, if necessary, delivers assistance on judiciary matters. Although there are other development organizations in the Region with considerations for women's inclusion in development activities, yet it is still lacking in implementation and awareness-raising. As said by the answers of 4 out of 9 CSO representatives, they are not involved in gender issues, and the rest of 5 also answered that their organizations have members who have taken gender training and women's rights, but only internal dissemination is the only follow-up they happened to do.

According to the answers of half the CSO groups, although programmes and awareness raising on prevention of violence against women are often organized, yet only 12% of village level respondents and others are aware of the organizations and programmes that support education and the rest said 'No'. Likewise only 3% are found to have been familiar with the word 'women's rights' while 18% have not answered and 79% have never heard of that. If this outcome is analysed, it can be assumed that women's rights and women's empowerment programmes still are not reaching to the community level. In terms of the answers given by the members of political parties, the term 'women's empowerment training' means programmes that only provide vocational training such as hairdressing,

There is gender equality in activities carrying out as a development agency. But there are very few woman experts in the region.

A leader of local development agency

beauty making..etc; and women's participation in politics and administration as part of implementation of women's participation policy in the party has not been reached yet due to the regard that the party building efforts is a priority. As departmental and administrative officials, party leaders have occasionally discussed 'the needs for empowerment of women's participation in leadership and women's rights' the facts stated in CEDAW and its implementation at internal meetings of the party and often attend the events when they are invited by the departmental agencies.

#### (4) Reaching Political Configuration

When this analysis was being carried out, the Chief Minister of Tanintharyi Region was then the female Chief Minister. As for her, she was fully supported by her own family, her family members are even in high ranking positions of the party; had taken the opportunity to join the political leadership training even when she was a member of the party, got privileged of joining exposure trips, originally a well-educated person and she was the one who had been well-supported and had good surrounds.

Although it said that whoever initially interested in politics and administration can take part in ward/village administrators elections, since the time the levels identified to reach the post of administrator such as 10-household head, 100-household head, people in the communities view and regard that such posts are only suitable for men and thus it is still very difficult to attain even to reach to the post of a 10-household head for women.

If the role of women and women's participation status in 10 township election committees in Tanintharyi Region is analysed, it is seen as follows;

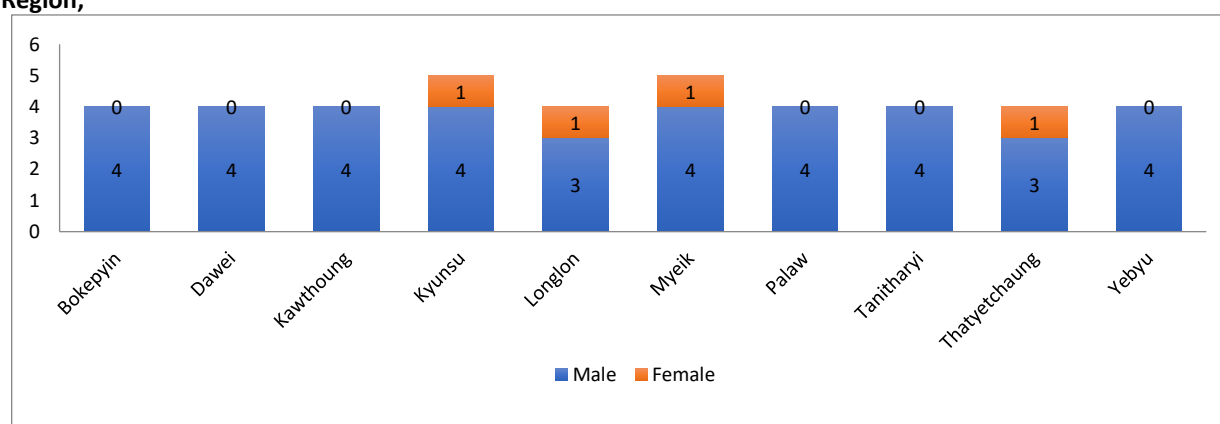
**Table (xx) Township election committees**

Member	Bokepyin	Dawei	Kawthaung	Kyunsu	Longlon	Myeik	Palaw	Tanitharyi	Thatyetchaung	Yephyu
Total	16	15	14	15	15	15	16	15	15	15
Male	14	12	10	14	12	13	13	13	11	11
Female	2	3	4	1	3	2	3	2	4	4

Source: MIMU- Tsp Profile

Similarly, women’s participation status among township election candidates after 2015 elections are seen as the figure below;

**Fig (3) Women participation among election candidates 2015 elections in respective townships in Tanintharyi Region;**



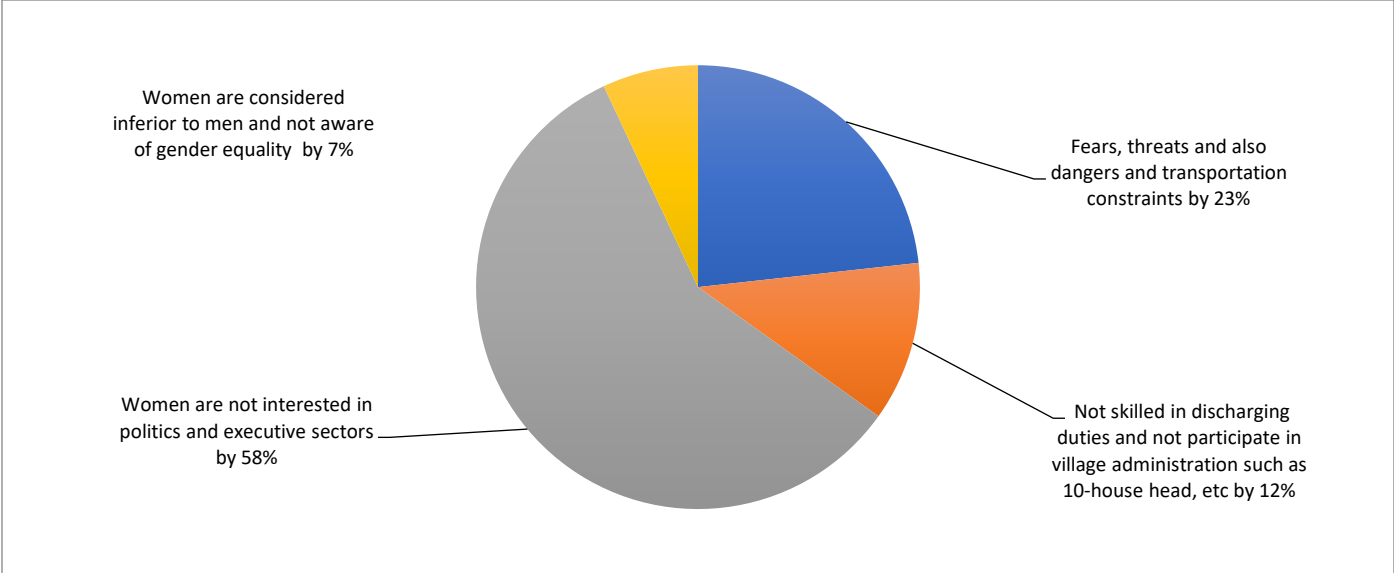
Source: MIMU- Tsp Profile

In evaluating the answers given by the interviewees on potential restrictions of women’s participation in politics and administration, by 93% of the answers, it is learnt that the community leaders, executive committees of the parties respectively regard that allowing women to apply for staff positions and committee member seats are interpreted as a means of promoting women’s role. 46% of the answers indicate that, among the political parties, only large parties have developed women’s policies while some parties only have it as a principle, but have not developed as a policy or a strategy to implement that principle.

The figure below shows the main reasons why very few woman candidates took part in the ward/village administrators’ elections. 58% of the answers specify that women themselves are not interested in politics and it is still not traditionally asserted as women’s business. 12% shows that women are not skilled, 23% suggests that women still shy away due to fears, threats and dangers of transportation and 7% regards that women are inferior to men and not aware that women and men can be equal in competition. (Fig-5)

Administrative laws, information related to women’s rights have not been made well aware. Only 10% of the interviewees have ever learnt that and joined related training and the rest of them are very least informed. Social associations mainly work on education, health and free-funeral service but not much focusing on women empowerment in the region to participate in politics and administration and still limitations in providing awareness raising on laws and leadership skill building.

**Fig (xx) Causes that prevent women from their participation in administration**



## Recommendations:

- Programmes, training and workshops on women empowerment in leadership capacity building need to be constantly organized.
- In building women' leadership capacity not only the required attitudinal and social skills but strategic leadership with broad visions, management decisions, public organizing skills, problem solving skills ...etc. need to be strengthened;
- If women are provided with an environment in which they can constantly engage and discuss in laws and policy issues related to regional development, their self-confidence and leadership skills could be developed.
- Traditional self-dejection of women can be removed by enhancing the role of women's leadership in media such as benefits of women's participation in leadership roles, knowledge programmes for woman's leadership, articles, distribution of films/plays/music,
- To implement women's affair policies of the parties, it can be enhanced by including more gender experts, organizing workshops, recommendation on developing programmes, engaging local civil society organizations, women associations; by doing so the role of Dawei Women can be strengthened to participate in future political administration.
- As Dawei Women Union, since it already has a high profile, by adopting gender experts and instructors who can provide women's leadership capacity building, it can lead regional socio-economic sector, and administrative politics by uplifting the role of women's leadership.
- There ought to be more awareness raising, helping them gain family support and incentives in the communities that encourage more women's participation in parliamentary affairs, political and administrative elections.
- To increase the concepts of appreciation of women's capacity in the communities, women ought to be strengthened to raise their capacity in collaboration and coordination in community development, security, rule of law, policy analysis, and engaging with relevant agencies, line departments and experts.
- It is also required to include the 'Do No Harm' Concepts in enhancing woman's leadership skills. Women can show their proven abilities such as standing neutral in engaging local networks and peace, and cautious of potential disintegration due to a self-made decision in taking a leadership role.

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