



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
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**Information provided in follow-up to the concluding
observations of the Committee**

Myanmar

**Response by Myanmar to the recommendations contained
in the concluding observations of the Committee following
the examination of the combined second and third periodic
reports of Myanmar on 3 November 2008**

Progress report submitted by Myanmar in relation to paragraphs 29 and 43 of the concluding observations of the Committee

Participation of women in political and public affairs

1. Chapter 8 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (2008), on the fundamental rights and duties of citizens, provides for women's rights. According to Section 120 of the Constitution, women are entitled to be elected as a *Pyithu Hluttaw* (People's Assembly) representative. This provision grants women the right to make decisions in the area of political, public and professional affairs. Women representatives attended the National Convention like the men and participated in drafting the State Constitution.

2. Nowadays, women are serving on an equal basis with men in public affairs at decision-making levels, according to their ability. Women are carrying out state duties in various professional fields as directors-general, managing directors, rectors, professors, doctors, engineers and lawyers. Moreover, women perform as counsellors and deputy heads of mission in the diplomatic sector.

3. According to 2009-2010 statistics, in the education sector, 75.2 per cent of lecturers and assistant directors and 77.45 per cent of township education officers are women. In the private sector, there are also women managing directors who manage business successfully. Women representatives from various ministries, as well as from non-governmental organizations, are actively participating in international meetings, seminars and workshops.

4. To promote women's role and performance, the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation has been addressing the life development of women by carrying out awareness-raising programmes and holding talks and workshops at schools in the States, divisions, districts, townships, and by giving priority to the participation of women in capacity-building programmes and international training.

5. Without discrimination between women and men and according to the law which provides for the fundamental rights of workers, women's right to work is equal to that of men, and they have the right to the same salary if their work is equal, to hold office, to leisure time, to receive compensation in respect of injury sustained at work, to benefit from the work and to obtain, for every worker who is insured under the social security scheme, the benefits of social security.

6. Moreover, protection in respect of violence against women and trafficking, especially of women and children, is provided by the Penal Code and the Anti-trafficking in Persons Law, 2005, as special law. Section 358 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar also prohibits enslavement of and trafficking in persons.

7. In addition to the protection of women in accordance with existing laws, the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation formed a violence against women sub-group which, from the central level to village grass-roots level, provides educational talks about violence against women as a preventative measure.

8. For the protection of women who are victims of violence, the Department of Social Welfare established women centres to care for them by providing household training, vocational training, cash assistance that enables them to do business,

counselling services to avoid a recurrence of the violence and protection of the victims from being sued.

9. The gender and health project of the Department of Health has been conducting a small-scale survey on gender-based domestic violence in two townships. Depending on the results, a project for the dissemination of knowledge and information to the Ministry of Health, concerned ministries and non-governmental organizations regarding measures for the prevention of violence against women will be implemented in 2010.

Activities for women in northern Rakhine State

10. Section 347 of Chapter 8 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (2008) provides that the Union shall guarantee any person the enjoyment of equal rights before the Law and shall equally provide legal protection. Section 348 of the Constitution provides that the Union shall not discriminate against any citizen of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, based on race, religion, official position, status, culture, sex and wealth.

11. The travel of persons who reside in all States and divisions of Myanmar is administered equally, in accordance with the Registration of Persons Residing in Myanmar Act, 1951.

12. Myanmar Customary Law is based on *Damathats* prepared in the era of ancient Myanmar kings and in accordance with Myanmar custom. It is applied in the areas of marriage, succession and inheritance by Buddhists. In addition, Mohammedan Law, Hindu Law and Christian Law are allowed to be applied by the respective communities in respect of marriage, succession and inheritance. According to Section 3 of the Majority Act, the age of majority to make a contract is 18 years. Those who attained 18 years of age may legally marry at the court by signing the affidavit of marriage. The right of females under 18 years of age to marry with the consent of their parents or guardian is accorded protection by the relevant religious law.

13. The Government is addressing the development of northern Rakhine, as with other States and the divisions. Due to the geographical location of the State and the density of its population, the level of development in the educational, economic, social and health sectors is low. Bengali tribes mostly reside in that area and, according to their traditional custom, they are not monogamous and can marry up to four wives, and the population growth is rapid. Therefore, in order to alleviate economic and social hardships and enhance basic educational and living standards, the relevant ministries and non-governmental organizations have been collaborating and cooperating in the implementation of projects.

14. In Rakhine State, an arts and science university, a university of technology and a computer university have been opened in Sittwe. Moreover, a college of education was opened in Kyauk Phyu, in central Rakhine State. All girls and women residing in Rakhine State have the right of access to basic education and higher education. Moreover, the Ministry of Education is implementing early childhood care, quality basic education, development, and life skills and HIV/AIDS prevention education projects in Bengali villages, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund. A literacy campaign is also being carried out to improve literacy skills, focusing on the Bengali community, especially women. The Office of the United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, has been carrying out activities in basic and non-formal education in the region, with particular attention to community development, literacy and vocational training.

15. The Ministry of Education has opened 145 primary schools, 6 middle schools and 3 high schools in Butheetaung Township; 146 primary schools, 8 middle schools and 5 high schools in Maungdaw Township; and 157 primary schools, 6 middle schools and 4 high schools in Yathaetaung Township. According to 2008-2009 data, the primary school enrolment rate is 98.63 per cent for girls and 85.73 per cent for boys, the secondary school enrolment rate is 26.85 per cent for girls and 31.51 per cent for boys, and the high school enrolment rate is 18.57 per cent for girls and 22.12 per cent for boys. The adult literacy rate in Rakhine State is 87 per cent for men and 80.96 per cent for women.

16. In the townships in northern Rakhine State, health-care services in such areas as maternal and child health, immunization, nutritional education and care, environmental sanitation, school health, communicable disease control and surveillance, health education, medical treatment and access to essential medicines, have been provided through the primary health-care approach of the rural health centres, headed by a health assistant with a team of 13 basic health staff midwives and auxiliary midwives and community health workers. As regards access to primary health-care services, local non-governmental organizations are also involved in promotion and prevention activities for health.

17. The reproductive health programme has been implemented in Butheetaung and Maungdaw townships since 2005 by the Maternal and Child Health Section of the Department of Health with the assistance of the United Nations Population Fund. The programme delivers services in the areas of safe motherhood, birth spacing, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, post-abortion care, and provision of medicines and medical supplies.

18. Moreover, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, many international non-governmental organizations, such as Action contre la faim, Malteser International, AZG and Care Myanmar, have been providing nutritional care to the women and children of northern Rakhine State. For instance, ACF has been distributing food packets to the malnourished children identified by the midwives from the Maternal and Child Health Centre with a view to managing severe protein-energy malnutrition. Similarly, the World Food Programme has, together with primary health workers, identified schoolgirls with malnutrition in order to distribute rice bags.

19. In 2007, the Women and Child Health Development Programme of the Ministry of Health implemented a project in Butheetaung and Maungdaw townships. Primary health workers were provided with training concerning newborn babies, children, adolescents and women. Moreover, the provision of supplies and equipment, such as clean-delivery kits, auxiliary midwife (AMW) kits, tube and mask devices, essential obstetric care equipment and essential drugs, has been supported annually in these areas up to the present. AMW training was also conducted, with AMW providing helpful hands for the midwives in delivering services for the women and children in northern Rakhine State.