



Occasional Paper – Annotated Bibliography

Rebuilding Prospects for Peace in Post-Coup Myanmar

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Women play an important role in peacebuilding in Myanmar. Over the years, women have led and contributed to civil society processes advocating for comprehensive peace. In a state marked with inter-ethnic tensions, women have been fostering back-channel negotiations, and leveraging traditional roles to build peace locally. They also engaged in capacity-building for women leaders, advised negotiators and advocated for the inclusion of women representatives, aiming for a 30% participation rate in official political dialogues. Finally, women's "insider" and diasporic organizations leveraged international frameworks such as CEDAW or UNSCR 1325 to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Nevertheless, numerous cultural and structural barriers persistently hinder most women from participating meaningfully in formal peace processes and political arenas.

Since the military coup that unfolded on 1 February 2021, the humanitarian and political crisis in Myanmar has intensified. Ethnic armed organizations (EAOs)/Ethnic resistance organizations (EROs) as well as new actors such as the People's Defense Force have responded to the crisis through new political dynamics and practices. Amidst the ongoing and worsening conflict, (in)formal dialogue, grassroots establishment of multi-ethnic alliances, and ongoing peacebuilding efforts from women-led civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations, have gained renewed urgency for the country's future.

This annotated bibliography is set to improve the scholarly understanding of women's involvement in peace processes in Myanmar since 2021 and to investigate any research gap to this extent.

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Gender Identity in Myanmar

Several authors explored constructions of gender identity and the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and religion in Myanmar as a way to frame Women, Peace, and Security discussions of Myanmar's peace processes. These analyses range from looking at polarizing women leadership figures like Aung San Suu Kyi (Kolås 2019), thilashin[1] and their paradoxical relationship to the gender equality movement in Myanmar (McKay & Win 2018), to examining how gender has fit into the wider Burmese nationalist movement in Myanmar (Schobel 2017).

Kolås, Å. (2019). Introduction: Women, peace and security in Myanmar: the map and the terrain. In *Women, Peace and Security in Myanmar*, 1st ed., 1–17. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429286605-1>

In the introduction to this edited volume, the author begins by addressing the controversial figure of Aung San Suu Kyi, emphasizing the importance of including this atypical woman leader in the study of Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) and Myanmar's peace process. The author notes that Aung San Suu Kyi did not focus on women's rights in her political platform in Myanmar and has faced criticism, particularly following violence and the Rohingya exodus. However, the author also acknowledges Aung San Suu Kyi's advocacy for women's involvement in Myanmar politics, as demonstrated at the 1995 World Conference on Women. The author continues by citing statistics on women's involvement in Myanmar, with 24.1% of parliamentarians being female, with lower levels of women's involvement in lower-level administrations in Myanmar. The author then chronicles the strong civil society work of the Women's Inclusion groups, many of which have joined the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP). The author also mentions a 30% quote for women's inclusion in the formal Peace Process in 2015, which has never been met. The barriers to this inclusion are complex, and the author offers a four-factor explanation: (1) social norms that "sustain the view that women are inferior to men," (2) socio-cultural norms that put the burden of childcare, care of parents and in-laws and household maintenance on women, (3) intersectional identities and women being held "responsible for cultural continuity" including ethnicity, class, and gender identities, and (4) norms that see men as "natural leaders."

McKay, M., & Win, K. C. (2018). Myanmar's gender paradox. *Anthropology Today*, 34(1), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12401>

The authors seek to examine women's perspectives from Buddhism nationalist movements/anti-Muslim sentiments. They find that Buddhist women's fears of Muslim men echo wider fears over the place of Buddhism in Myanmar and that many Buddhist nationalist organizations, such as *Ma Ba Tha*,[2] are opening their doors to women's engagement, serving as a venue for voicing women's concerns and thereby enhancing their membership.

[1] A female renunciant of Burmese Buddhism

[2] A hardline Buddhist organization established in 2014 and based in Burma. The organization sees itself as a protector of race and Buddhist religion in the country and advocated for what became the Race and Religion Protection Laws on religious conversion, interfaith marriage and population-control measures.

The authors highlight that many of Ma Ba Tha's policies occupy a difficult space wherein they often address the plights and safety concerns of Buddhist women, while also furthering anti-Muslim sentiment (for example, banning polygamy with the underlying assumption that this is a Muslim practice that endangers Buddhist women).

They also flag that while the Rohingya crisis is certainly illustrative of anti-Muslim sentiment in Myanmar (and globally), it is not the only marker of anti-Muslim sentiment in Myanmar, and, conversely, anti-Rohingya sentiment is not only due to anti-Muslim sentiment, but rather a result of other migratory, ethnic, and cultural divides. They highlight this to reiterate the need to examine the distinct plights of non-Rohingya Muslim populations. They conclude by reiterating that perceiving Buddhist women in Myanmar as benefiting from gender parity, when the reality does not reflect this, leads to an overlooking of Buddhist Nationalist recruitment strategies and fuels division further. They also note that many Western non-governmental organizations (NGOs) speak the language of the West, failing to connect to Buddhist women in the way groups like *Ma Ba Tha* do.

Schobel, J. (2017). *Belonging in a New Myanmar: Identity, Law, and Gender in the Anthropology of Contemporary Buddhism*. In *Religion and Society*, 8(1), 158. New York, N.Y. <https://doi.org/10.3167/arrs.2017.080110>

The author examines how current constructions of Buddhism, religion, ethnicity, and gender shape the identity of the "New Myanmar" (written in 2017), highlighting the role of violence against Muslims, particularly the Rohingya, as a significant barrier to social and political reforms. This violence is often preceded by speeches from Buddhist monks and Buddhist Nationalist Organizations (like *Ma Ba Tha*), largely under the guise of "protecting Buddhism," hinting to a "dark force" of a growing Islam ("the Muslim other" in Schobel). The approach also cuts through class divides, with educated elites also often sharing anti-Muslim sentiments.

Beyond religion, the anti-Rohingya sentiment is rooted in early separatist movements in Rakhine state following Burma's independence. The author emphasizes the fluidity of ethnicity, with persistent narratives framing the Burmese as the "originals" in Myanmar, leading to the othering of different ethnicities, intersecting with Buddhist nationalist movements (e.g., "We Burmese are Buddhist").

The author proceeds with a discussion on gender, highlighting how the authority of women has often been linked to their ability to influence others according to various community interests. Women are held accountable for disseminating a "proper" image of the nation and are easily criticized for perceived "unpatriotic" behavior. Marriage is also politicized in this context. These sentiments echo much of the findings of McKay and Win, who found that women often join Buddhist nationalist movements to gain some degree of autonomy and validation. The article concludes with an overview of the ways in which digital spaces fuel these divides, with both national and international actors (like the Dalai Lama) joining the discourse.

Women's Involvement in Formal Peace Processes

The following group of articles addresses the lack of engagement and inclusion of women in formal peace processes in Myanmar. Specific challenges include gender norms and stereotypes, security, and safety considerations; economic challenges; religious and ethnic divides; capacity building and training. Buranajaroenkij (2020) provides an overview of the exclusion of Myanmar's women's groups by looking at the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP), Women's League of Burma (WLB), and Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW) in Myanmar's formal peace process. Kolås and Meitei criticize the low representation and very limited decision-making power of women in Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) in Myanmar. Additionally, Muehlenbeck and Palmiano Federer (2016) reveal that while women's formal participation increased over time, it remained limited to the three key modes of participation: negotiators, observers, and participants in mass action campaigns. Upreti and Adhikari (2019) take a critical examination of the 30-percent gender quota that was proposed in the negotiations leading up to the 2015 ceasefire agreement. Yamahata and Poine (2021) highlight how women were able to influence peace processes indirectly as technical advisors and negotiation observers and examine tools to further promote women's involvement in the formal peace process.

Buranajaroenkij, D. (2020). Challenges to women's inclusion in peace processes in Thailand and Myanmar. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 22(3), 403–422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2019.1698973>

The author chronicles women's lack of involvement in Myanmar's peace process and analyzes the shortcomings of existing advocacy networks - the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP) and Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW). While both organizations have established strong networks for women's advocacy, the PAOW's primary focus is on public safety for women, whereas AGIPP advocates for women's involvement in the peace process. The strategies employed by each network thus vary. The author further notes the tension between advocating for a gender-inclusive peacebuilding process, avoiding disruption to the point of ineffectiveness, and preserving the safety of women advocates.

Moreover, the author finds that not all women in Myanmar feel represented by the existing women's groups, with some interviewees expressing a desire for additional consultation, participatory decision-making, and capacity-building for more junior members. Some also felt that the PAOW, being predominantly composed of Muslim women, does not adequately represent enough Buddhist women. The AGIPP was criticized for representing mostly the well-educated elite and turning a blind eye to the plight of Rohingya women. Finally, the author finds that male support for women's peace movements often occurs at a personal level rather than at an organizational level. They conclude that the diverse and critical opinions within and against women's advocacy groups, combined with a lack of gender mainstreaming within Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and widespread gender stereotyping, have all inhibited women's inclusion in formal peace processes in Myanmar.

Kolås, Å & Umakanta Meitei, L. (2019). Women in Ethnic Armed Organizations in Myanmar: Numbers and narratives. *GPS Policy Brief, 1*. Peace Research Institute of Oslo.

This report presents the results of surveys and interviews with Burmese women on women's representation and their decision-making powers within Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs). The authors find that women's roles are minimal and subordinate in armed groups, receiving little respect from their male colleagues in both EAOs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). They also find that EAOs have outperformed the Burmese military in terms of women's involvement but also note that it can be difficult to verify information on EAOs which tend to exaggerate. Three EAOs were assessed: *Lahu Democratic Union, the United Wa State Army and Wa National Organization*. The Burmese military has gradually increased female representation, but the authors criticize the limited scope of peace talks, which have focused on ceasefire negotiations involving only the Burmese military and EAOs. The report concludes by emphasizing the undervaluing of women's participation in these processes.

Muehlenbeck, A. & Palmiano Federer, J. (2016). *Women's Inclusion in Myanmar's Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement*. Report. Inclusive Security.

The report examines women's "entry points and possible influence" in ceasefire negotiations between 2011-2015, which culminated in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). It finds that women's formal participation increased over time but remained limited. Three modalities of participation are particularly relevant to the Myanmar context according to the authors. First, women's involvement as negotiators at the Track One level, allowed them to provide technical expertise but also mandated a degree of impartiality and what one interviewee called "the burden of conservative traditions." Secondly, women participated as observers. While observer roles included logistics or cooking for the negotiators, they allowed women to report back to their CSOs and conduct "sidebar" meetings with participants in the hallways. This opportunity, however, was granted largely to representatives of civil society organizations. The third modality includes women's involvement in "mass action campaigns related to the peace process" via civil society groups. The authors conclude by noting the ambiguous language of the gender stipulations in the NCA, the persisting underrepresentation of women, and the lack of women's involvement in ceasefire monitoring that could negatively impact reporting on human security in Myanmar.

Upreti, B. R., Upreti, D., & D. P. (2019). Women in the Myanmar peace process: The 30-percent target. In *Women, Peace and Security in Myanmar* (1st ed., 33–43). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429286605-3>

The authors analyze the 30% women's representation quota and subsequent measures to include women in political dialogues. They note unanimous Ethnic Armed Organizations' (EAOs) support for women's inclusion in the peace process, as reflected in the 2015 partially signed National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), which explicitly mentions a commitment to non-discrimination based on gender. They echo other authors in their chronicling of women's underrepresentation in Myanmar (including in economic policies like land ownership) and the international pressures in favour of women's inclusion in peace processes via UNSCR 1325.

According to the article, traditional gender norms, subsequent lack of skills and experience (ex. military background), bargaining power, and confidence have additionally contributed to women's underrepresentation in Myanmar politics. While civil society organizations and grassroots politics have created space for women's involvement in wider peace conversations, the partial signing of the NCA, combined with oppressive gender norms and disagreements on how to implement gender quotas, have all inhibited women's inclusion.

Yamahata, C., Poine, S.Y. (2021). Women in Myanmar: Marginalisation, Peacebuilding and Participation. In Yamahata, C., Seekins, D. M., & Takeda, M. *Social Transformations in India, Myanmar, and Thailand: Volume 1*, 137–164. Springer Singapore Pte. Limited. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-9616-2_9

This chapter discusses the importance of women's active participation in peace, security and social transformation and highlights the disparity across different levels of political processes. The authors underscore that women have demonstrated considerable involvement in informal, community-based peacebuilding, and reconciliation endeavors. However, women have predominantly been excluded from formal and high-level peace-making initiatives, such as bilateral negotiations and nationwide ceasefire talks. Some reasons in favour of women inclusion are listed. Among them, international obligations to ensure women's participation in peacebuilding processes that Myanmar holds as a UN member. Additionally, authors mention the possibility of more durable peace and state stability, post-conflict rebuilding grounded in equality, and proliferation of novel approaches to conflict resolution. Finally, authors emphasize the need for capacity-building programs; research and advocacy; and resources to increase women's active participation in politics.

“Local” Peace Actors and Insider-Led Peacebuilding

Several authors sought to examine how women's gendered roles as caretakers and their community leadership contributed to local peace and stability. Blomqvist and Olivius (2021) and Hedström (2021) look at women's roles in “everyday peace” in Myanmar as caregivers. Hedström and Olivius (2020) look at burnout and depletion among Myanmar women in Kayah state. Finally, Htun and Jensenius (2020) study public opinion on the role of women and their marginalization in the informal sector.

Blomqvist, L., Olivius, E., & Hedström, J. (2021). Care and silence in women's everyday peacebuilding in Myanmar. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 21(3), 223–244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2021.1933031>

This study examines the "local turn" in peace studies in Myanmar, focusing on gendered aspects of "everyday peace" in Kayah state, on the border with Thailand. The authors explore women's peacebuilding practices, defined as actions to sustain peace and reduce violence. They highlight how women employ caregiving roles during conflict and post-war periods for conflict management, violence prevention, and community trust-building.

However, these roles often force women into silence, limiting their participation in political processes and professional recognition. The authors argue that understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending gendered insecurity and should inform studies on “everyday peace.”

Hedström, J. (2021) “Myanmar” in *Women in Conflict and Peace*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

https://www.academia.edu/Care_and_silence_in_womens_everyday_peacebuilding_in_Myanmar

The report demonstrates that practices of care and silence are key avenues through which women sustain peace, ensure survival, and minimize violence in their families and wider communities. At the same time, these practices are conditioned by and may contribute to gendered insecurity and marginalization. Through this focus, the analysis shows how women's positioning in gendered relations of power may both enable their agency in peacebuilding and reinforce their gendered inequality and marginalization in the postwar period.

Hedström, J., Olivius, E. (2020). Insecurity, Dispossession, Depletion: Women’s Experiences of Post-War Development in Myanmar. *Eur J Dev Res* 32, 379–403.

<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-020-00255-2>

The authors look at post-war economic reforms in Kayah state and their gendered dynamics. Through a series of interviews, they find that post-war land legislations and development projects have disproportionately impacted women in conflict-affected border areas, contributing to a wider trend of a gendered political economy that categorizes women as responsible for unpaid informal and social reproductive labour and “results in physical, material and emotional depletion.” In addition, the concept of “depletion” is also used to describe the state of women in Kayah state, which occurs “when there is a critical gap between domestic, affective, and reproductive outflows and inflows aimed as sustaining the wellbeing of people engaged in social reproduction” (387). The authors argue for the importance of understanding gendered relations of power and their intersections to post-war economic developments in Myanmar.

Htun, M., & Jensenius, F. R. (2020). Political Change, Women’s Rights, and Public Opinion on Gender Equality in Myanmar. *European Journal of Development Research*, 32(2), 457–481. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-020-00266-z>

The authors draw from surveys, interviews, and existing studies to examine public opinion on gender equality in Myanmar. They find that most people, of all ages, believe that men are better leaders and more deserving for higher education. Also, policies violating women’s rights, when framed as a part of a wider scheme to protect the Burmese “race” and Buddhism also receive widespread support.

Interethnic Cooperation & Community Advocacy

Several authors highlight the intersectional nature of women's advocacy in Myanmar, largely emphasizing the role of inter-ethnic cooperation, ethnic divisions within women's groups, and the relationship between gender and other identity factors. Cárdenas and Olivius (2021) look at bridge-building efforts between women and women's groups as a diplomatic practice that has contributed to peace in Myanmar for decades. Chua's findings reinforce the view that LGBT communities are accepting or rejecting international human rights frameworks according to local customs and values. Olivius and Hedstrom look at the role of international actors in potentially hindering women's joint ownership of feminist peace in Myanmar. Finally, both Pepper (2018) and Takeda (2022) look at the roles and relationships between ethnic minority women in CSOs and advocacy initiatives.



Cárdenas, M. L., & Olivius, E. (2021). Building Peace in the Shadow of War: Women-to-Women Diplomacy as Alternative Peacebuilding Practice in Myanmar. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 15(3), 347–366.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2021.1917254>

The authors posit that women's inter-ethnic cooperation, referred to as "women-to-women diplomacy," has played a significant role in conflict transformation in Myanmar since the 1990s. They classify peace "as a process of social transformation" (as per Lederach 1997 and MacGinty 2014) and assert that women's dialogue at the grassroots level has had a significant positive and ongoing impact on this transformation. Moreover, the authors argue that women-to-women diplomacy aligns inherently with feminist arguments that advocate for women's inclusion as peace agents, emphasizing that gender justice cannot be dissociated from sustainable peace. The primary example given is the Women's League of Burma (WLB).

Chua, L. J. (2020). *The Politics of Love in Myanmar: LGBT Mobilization and Human Rights as a Way of Life*. Stanford University Press. Stanford, CA.

Chua's findings overlap with much of the existing literature on women's mobilization strategies, in that LGBT communities are accepting or rejecting international human rights frameworks according to local customs and values, and relying on human rights frameworks centred in Myanmar's histories and cultures - *lu akwint ayay*. Chua also reiterates the overlap of LGBT mobilizations with other human rights movements – including women's rights.

Olivius, E., Hedström, J., & Mar Phyo, Z. (2022). Feminist peace or state co-optation? The Women, Peace and Security agenda in Myanmar, *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 5(1), 25-43. <https://doi.org/10.1332/251510821X16359327302509>

Drawing from interviews with women's rights activists, gender advisors, and government personnel involved in Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) mechanisms, the authors highlight various dynamics that impede the ability of generic practices to make substantial contributions to the achievement of feminist peace. These dynamics include: 1) the exclusion of critical actors from state-led WPS structures, 2) the organization of international aid in partnership with the state, and 3) the lack of women's access to support due to the bureaucratic and administrative nature of international funding. Consequently, women most affected by war are least likely to benefit from such types of the WPS initiatives. The authors call for new or adapted strategies guided by localized knowledge and women's needs.

Pepper, M. (2018). Ethnic Minority Women, Diversity, and Informal Participation in Peacebuilding in Myanmar. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 13(2), 61–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2018.1472030>

With women's involvement in community-level peace activism being high, women in Myanmar being historically "remarkably empowered," domestic commitments to women's inclusion and international pressure for the same, the author asks "how are women participating if they are not at the peace table itself?" The article maps out the ongoing contributions of women's civil society activism and informal dialogues in influencing the peace processes in Myanmar. It argues in favour of a "shifted perspective" that includes these community-level contributions in overall assessments of the peace process, even if women are excluded from the formal level.

The author finds (1) a tension between "rhetoric and action" in the peace process when it comes to UNSCR 1325, (2) divisions on aims and policies on women's inclusion at the national level, (3) women's participation being primarily at the grassroots level, and (4) the possibility of creating an intersectional peace process through the participation and work of ethnic women's organisations. Pepper argues that ethnic minority women are of particular importance in these processes, given the armed ethnic divisions in Myanmar.

Takeda, M. (2022). Chapter 12 in Yamahata, C. *Transforming Differences Through Women's Initiatives in Myanmar: Forging an Inter-ethnic Alliance for Grassroots Peace*. In *Social Transformations in India, Myanmar, and Thailand: Volume II*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-7110-4_12

This chapter examines the potential of women's civil society organizations (WCOSOs) for resolving social division and creating grassroots peace in Myanmar. The author introduces an alternative strategy employed by women to promote a gender perspective in the peace process. This strategy is rooted in dialogue and negotiation approaches, which the author sees as conducive to establishing the foundations for sustainable development, peace, and unity in the long term.

Although marginalized in formal spaces, women sought to influence the peace process indirectly through two main avenues. First, by serving as technical advisors, some women (e.g., Shalom Foundation) provided guidance on critical issues. They earned the trust of negotiating parties due to their knowledge and expertise related to ceasefire agreements and their implementation, as well as their strong connections to one of the Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs). While these women played a crucial role in offering guidance at the Track One level, their roles were limited to representing the overarching interests of the negotiating teams and did not ensure the inclusion of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. Second, women participated as negotiation observers, enabling them to engage in sidebar mediation with delegates in hallways or through 'tea break diplomacy.' Additionally, women submitted contributions to thematic working committees and organized public campaigns. The author argues that to comprehend women's roles in peace processes in Myanmar, one should explore informal and grassroots peacebuilding, often termed "women-to-women diplomacy." This alternative strategy devised by women aimed at promoting social interaction among women, sharing experiences of struggles in conflicts, and establishing a collective goal of gender equality. Some techniques that women Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) employed included grassroots leadership training, seminars, and conferences to promote interethnic and interfaith dialogues. These efforts helped women overcome suspicions related to potential hidden political agendas and resulted in the formation of an alliance known as the Women's League of Burma (WLB) that transcended religious and political positions. An overview of the WCSOs' activities follows.

Strategies and Factors Behind Women's Mobilization in Post-Coup Myanmar

Women have been at the forefront of protests after the 2021 coup in Myanmar, and long before that. The following articles address various forms of women mobilization. Cardenas discusses the use of transversal politics to describe the process of a dialogue aimed at building relationships between differently positioned women who work in concert to advance their vision of the feminist peace locally (2022). Nilsen (2019) finds that women engaged in peacebuilding raise concrete challenges in their communities to push the boundaries for political space. These findings complement Cardenas's (2022) observations, who highlights that in the context of Myanmar, dialogue is also based on pragmatic considerations (shared goals) rather than emotional choices.

Cárdenas, M. L. (2022). *Rooting, shifting and mobilizing: Women's peacebuilding across differences in Georgia and Myanmar*. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 91, 102572. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2022.102572>

This article addresses motivations and pathways to female peace activism by focusing on individual experiences of armed conflict as a driver. Employing narrative analysis, it explores how women engage with other parties to establish common ground. The author uses transversal politics (Yuval-Davis, 1999), and the concepts of 'rooting' and 'shifting' to describe the process of a dialogue aimed at building relationships between differently positioned individuals that transcends the identity politics.

The process of rooting connects the experience of armed conflict with women's decisions to become activists, while shifting addresses how women approach other parties and build a common ground for activism. It is noted that in the context of Myanmar, dialogue is also based on pragmatic considerations (shared goals) rather than emotional choices.

Cárdenas, M. L. (2022). Exploring women's vision(s) of peace: towards feminist peace in Myanmar and Georgia?, *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 5(1), 7-23. <https://doi.org/10.1332/251510821X16334463779354>

The article explores a diversity in the conceptualization of feminist peace by analyzing the work of women's organizations in Georgia and Myanmar. While gender equality is at the core of sustainable peace, the means by which a vision of peace can be materialized and the relationships for this purpose are grounded in specific contexts. In the context of Myanmar, the analysis is focused on the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT) and AGIPP. KWAT's vision of peace indicates both the aspiration for Kachin self-determination and the creation of a political environment where women actively engage and contribute. To attain that goal, KWAT focuses on condemning Tatmadaw abuses. Concurrently, the organizations train women on negotiation and politics to consolidate a strong platform within the structure of Kachin leadership. Protection of women in conflict-affected areas is prioritized over gender equality as a precondition to peace. On the other hand, AGIPP views gender equality as a precondition for peace, which necessitates influencing narratives and transforming political and institutional structures. AGIPP recognizes the government of Myanmar and the Parliament as strategic actors and focuses on promoting the inclusion of gender-related discussions in the negotiations. Concurrently, its lack of affiliation with EAOs, and the "lack of personal experiences of war on the part of most AGIPP activists" allows the group to criticize gendered power relations more vividly. The comparison between the two organizations illustrates that women's organizations with less direct affiliation to conflict actors are more inclined to adopt a conflict transformation approach, aiming to redefine and address issues and divisions within the conflict context. On the other hand, organizations closely linked to warring factions tend to focus on influencing the political settlement to advance the objectives of the associated conflict parties, aligning their visions of feminist peace with those goals.

Nilsen, M. (2019) No Peace in a Ceasefire: Women's Agency in the Kachin Conflict, in Åshild Kolås, ed., *Women Peace and Security in Myanmar: Between Feminism and Ethnopolitics*. London: Routledge, 58–73. <https://www.prio.org/publications/11393>

This paper analyses the motivations, convictions and strategies of Kachin women engaged in peacebuilding and political mobilization. Given local gender dynamics, women engaged in Myanmar peace process raise concrete challenges in their communities to push the boundaries for political space. Locally, they also appeal to the Kachin national identity, to the nationalist struggle and to Christian values to reform local practices and social dynamics. The paper, however, devotes more attention to lawsuits, civic education, political engagement of certain activists rather than dialogues.

ReliefWeb. (2022). Women-Led Organizations are Key to Ensure the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Report. <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/women-led-organizations-are-key-ensure-women-peace-and-security-agenda>

This report notes how the ongoing and worsening conflict in Myanmar has heightened the vulnerabilities and suppression of women and girls to sexual violence, sex trafficking and labour trafficking, and forced marriages, in addition to increase poverty and food insecurity. Women's organizations are a key force in highlighting these vulnerabilities and ensuring humanitarian responses address these concerns, with a documented increase in the involvement of women-led organizations in humanitarian planning between 2020-2021.

Diasporic Activities and Influencing Peace from Exile

Several scholars focus on researching the experiences of women organizations in the Myanmar diaspora (often in exile), such as Hansen, 2016; Olivius and Hedstrom 2019; Snyder, 2020. These articles highlight the potential of women and women's refugee organizations outside of Myanmar to contribute to peacebuilding in Myanmar through economic, social, and political community-building and advocacy activities (Hansen, 2016). Olivius and Hedström (2019) focus on how women in Myanmar have successfully utilized militarized nationalist projects for feminist mobilization and transformation transnational links and insider positions.

Hansen, J. M. (2016). *Women building peace in displacement: the transnational peacebuilding potential of Myanmar women in Norway* (Master's thesis, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Ås).

https://nmbu.brage.unit.no/2384020/Hansen202015_MDS.pdf

The case study finds that the women in the Norwegian-Myanmar diaspora demonstrate considerable potential to contribute to peacebuilding through their various transnational activities in the economic, social and political spheres, which are particularly relevant to sustainable development and peacebuilding in Myanmar. The author asserts that, in the study, ethnicity, not just gender, may play a role in influencing the varied levels and types of political involvement among women. This is illustrated through the example of the Chin and Burman ethnic groups. Provided interview data from primary and secondary informants illustrates a decline in political involvement among the diaspora in political activities.

Hansen, J. M. (2016). *Women Building Peace after Forced Migration: The Case of the Myanmar Diaspora in Norway*. GPS Policy Brief, 2. Oslo: PRIO.

The case study reveals that women from the Burman and Chin ethnic groups, residing in the Norwegian-Myanmar diaspora, actively participate in economic and social remittances to bolster education and contribute to peacebuilding efforts in Myanmar.

Olivius, E., & Hedström, J. (2019, September). Militarized nationalism as a platform for feminist mobilization? The case of the exiled Burmese women's movement. In *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 76, p. 102263. Pergamon.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2019.102263>

This article presents an in-depth case study of the emergence and evolution of an exiled Burmese women's movement from within armed ethno-nationalist struggles in the borderlands of Myanmar. It questions the traditional assumptions that feminism and militarism exist in conflict with one another and demonstrates that militarized nationalism does not only have the potential to mobilize women's participation but can provide a platform for feminist organization and activism that transcends, challenges, and eventually reshapes militarized nationalist projects in ways that advance women's rights and equality (2019). The authors suggest that women in Myanmar have successfully utilized militarized nationalist projects for feminist mobilization and transformation using transnational links and insider positions. First, the diaspora spaces outside of Myanmar – characterized by larger political openness – provide a suitable environment for women to mobilize as change agents, interacts with humanitarian aid organizations, develop networks, and agendas independently of the EAOs. The article uses the example of the WLB in Thailand, and the actions women took to expand their outreach and carve out a space for political action. Despite tensions at the outset, women united across ethnic lines in pursuit of gender justice. Second, women become insiders to ethno-nationalist armed struggles by playing supportive roles. Authors conclude that women influenced and transformed militarized nation-building projects from within, challenging conventional gender roles and shaping new visions for political structures by combining networks and resources from international advocacy. As a result, women's organizations have been successful in promoting their critique of inequality and oppression within their communities.

Snyder, A. (2020). Third-Level Peacebuilding: Exiled Activists Fill The Void In The Women's Peace Movement In Myanmar. *The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies Volume 52, No. 1 and 2*: 187-212. <https://www.peaceresearch.ca/pdf/52/PRJ-52-1-2-2020-Snyder-Full.pdf>

This study shows that women's refugee organizations can develop the capacity to make unique contributions to third-level peacebuilding (diaspora). It focuses on the Women's League of Burma, which grew and developed in refugee camps on the Thai-Myanmar border, to illustrate how diaspora peacebuilding can fill a political leadership gap. WLB is known for raising political issues beyond women's rights and a feminist agenda that women's organizations based in Myanmar focus on. It also condemned military dictatorship and strongly criticized the constitution in the past. The organization has a unique position as WLB's ethnic member organizations are linked to the EAOs. The article also draws attention to the difficulties encountered by this diasporic organization, including scrutiny from the military and special police, internal divisions within the movement, and a lack of trust from local communities due to its heightened visibility.

Stalled Peace Process, Mediation, Criticisms

Lahtaw, J. N. (2020). Unsticking stalled peace processes: insider mediator perspectives from Myanmar. *Conciliation Resources. Accord. Issue 29.* <https://www.c-r.org/accord/pioneering-peace-pathways/unsticking-stalled-peace-processes-insider-mediator-perspectives>

The article emphasizes that the central obstacle in peacebuilding efforts in Myanmar revolves around a fundamental lack of trust and profound skepticism regarding the purpose and beneficiaries of the peace process. The author talks about her experience in dialogue facilitation, pointing to the impasse in the process (the article is written prior to the coup, and 2018 and 2019 talks). She also uncovers mediator's challenges briefly, stating that the willingness to shift to the resolution rather than the management of conflicts is slow and dependent on individual will and capacities. The article is critical of the international actors and their activities – study tours to build relationships with government or EAOs whose objectives are rarely achieved or trying to 'lead' the talks without localized knowledge.



Ongoing work on peace in Myanmar has created a rich body of literature that has documented the turbulent relationship between gender and peace in the region. In recent years, this literature has, of course, focused on post-coup realities in Myanmar, and has integrated new issues like digital diplomacy, activism, positionality and intersectionality in peace processes in Myanmar. In doing this review, we have identified some gaps, however, in current literature.

Firstly, several articles explore the complex dynamics of various forms of women mobilization. This work is valuable, but limited research exists on renewed unity, schisms, or shifted relationships between women-led CSOs and gender-focussed actors after the 2021 coup. These dimensions within the new reality of peace prospects in Myanmar would be valuable to explore.

Given the increasing reliance of population on local media or online community media for information and the increased proliferation of technology, there is a need to explore the role of technology in enabling women's participation in peace processes and opportunities and risks associated with digital spaces in promoting peace.

Throughout our review, we note that majority of researchers are from the geographic West. While this signals the interest in peacebuilding in the region, there is a gap in local voices and diasporic communities. This leads to three recommendations. First, researchers can explore effective collaboration and partnerships between civil society organizations, women's groups, and international actors in advancing the women, peace, and security agenda in Myanmar. Also, the ways in which Western & international mediation practices and/or gender norms have influenced, hindered, or helped Myanmar's peace processes and women led CSOs. In both cases, the local authors should be meaningfully empowered to contribute to this discourse. Similarly, intersectionality is a gap too. Researchers can explore ways in which ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status intersect with gender in shaping women's experiences in conflict and peacebuilding contexts in Myanmar. While there are some preliminary articles on LGBTQ+ issues in Myanmar, there is definitely room for more and updated work, and work on how queerness and queer communities interact with peace processes in Myanmar.

