Deconstructing Gender in Myanmar's Climate Change Policy: An Analysis of Gender Equality Language in Myanmar's Climate Change Policy Discourse

Major Research Paper

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November 25, 2019

Table of Contents

Introduction

The 2008 Cyclone Nargis devastated a significant portion of Myanmar's population , the aftermath of which revealed a confirmed 80,000 individuals killed, 53,800 missing and 800,000 displaced (*Post-Nargis Joint Assessment*, 2008). Of this number, female deaths made up an estimated 61% of all those killed in the disaster. An increase in drastic weather variations as a result of a changing climate have gendered impacts and is thus a gendered issue. For example, men's and women's activities in the natural environment are gendered in the division of labor (Dankelman & Jansen, 2012). Different tasks performed by men and women carry different risks and reinforce levels of power. Women are often disadvantaged as such responsibilities as land rights and decision-making are commonly under the purview of men. This forces women to rely on their relationships with men to access power and resources. Therefore, women's limited access to resources and decision-making power results in their limited ability to properly prepare and respond to the effects of climate change (Dankelman & Jansen, 2012). Similarly, it has been well demonstrated that those impoverished, particularly in regions which rely on the natural environment for livelihoods, are the most negatively affected by climate change (UNFCCC, n.d.) . There are also important and related gendered dimensions of poverty that change over a lifetime and come into clear focus after a natural disaster (Sánchez-Páramo & Munoz-Boudet, 2018).

Alam & Collins (2010; CARE, 1991; CARITAS, 1991; Haque and Blair, 1992; Ohiduzzaman, 1993) take note of traditional dress codes as factors in flood deaths of women in Bangladesh. In Myanmar, women's traditional *htamein*, a long skirt, could be linked to the findings of Alan and Collins as a likely factor in the higher death rate of women in Cyclone Nargis. While the men commonly wear the similar *paso*, these are more versatile, in that they allow movement and can be hitched up. *Heamein* on the other hand are distinctly more fitted

and, if sewn, can restrict length in stride. While the Government of Myanmar's official report (*Post-Nargis Joint Assessment*, 2008) did not elaborate on the disproportionate death rate of women in the Cyclone, traditional dress may have played a role by limiting women's mobility to evacuate quickly. Similarly, women in Myanmar are less likely to swim than men, especially given the cultural attitudes towards women's modest dress as well as other cultural components such as a fear of darkening skin tone from sun exposure. This is just one example of the gendered impacts of climate change events. However, it should be stated that many nuances exist in the day to day gendered lives of men and women in Myanmar which could also contribute towards the gendered proportion of deaths in such cases.

German Watch's 2019 Global Climate Risk Index lists Myanmar as one of the top three countries most affected by weather-related loss events between 1998 and 2017. The high risk of climate disaster in Myanmar, combined with the gender-related impacts of climate change reinforce the need for the Government of Myanmar to recognize that "climate change is not simply a gender neutral, scientific problem but one that is framed by deeply gendered discourses" and thus take significant steps towards addressing climate change (MacGregor, 2010, p. 235). More specifically, it is important that measures are established to ensure the gendered effects of climate-related incidences are addressed. This will require a systematic change to the institutions guiding the country's climate change policy, while incorporating objectives of long term environmental and social sustainability.

Currently, Myanmar addresses climate change through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MoNREC). Within the Ministry, the Myanmar Climate Change Alliance (MCCA) was housed as a core technical unit implemented in 2013 by the United Nations and the European Union. Its purpose was to mainstream climate change into the

Myanmar policy development and reform agenda. It also supported all activities on climate change within the national government, local authorities, NGOs, development partners, civil society and the private sector ("About MCCA | Myanmar Climate Change Alliance," n.d.). The unit was supposed to strengthen the institutional practices around climate change policy by working directly with the Ministry. One resulting product of this assistance is the Myanmar Climate Change Strategy (MCCS), representing a roadmap to guide Myanmar's strategic responses to address climate related risks and opportunities over the next 15 years and beyond. Promptly after the release of the Myanmar Climate Change Policy, the technical unit was officially closed in March 2019. Prior to the Policy's release, supportive policy briefs were produced by the MCCA's technical working group in October 2017, with the purpose of providing a guide to the forthcoming policy.

In identifying the major themes coming out of these papers, one might assess for how gender concerns are conveyed. After all, one of the priorities that is central to addressing climate change is to incorporate gender equality in order to address the disadvantages of certain groups and equally to identify opportunities to promote the status of women. The effects of climate change are particularly felt by women in Myanmar as they face significant climate change realities because of their weaker legal status as demonstrated through a gap in law and practice. For example, while the law stipulates that women can register land or co-register for land, actual practice rarely sees women registered on land titles. This puts women in difficult situations and creates particular issues in the case of death of male relatives, divorce, and land seizures ("Women, Land and Property Rights – the Importance of Equality for Peace - Myanmar," 2018, n.p.). Similarly, women are largely absent from national and subnational governance systems as well as absent from ethnic leadership organizations in Myanmar (Faxon, 2015). Thus, women are

often absent from important discussions on topics which impact them and they are unable to raise gender-specific issues to high levels for dialogue and decision. And though the MCCA does not list gender equality as a priority, the briefs produced under its guidance incorporate elements of gender. The present study seeks to investigate how gender issues are conveyed in the briefs, specifically in terms of its use of narratives around women and the impact of climate change on women in Myanmar. I examined these findings in relation to Myanmar's broader commitments and strategies to address gender issues. The policy analysis presented here provides important context for future planning initiatives that will more fully address the needs of diverse groups facing climate change realities in Myanmar.

Literature Review

The research conducted for this MRP is situated within, and investigates, the broader literature regarding gender and climate change, while exclusively focusing on Myanmar: its colonial past, and modern policies and practices. As such, this work seeks to contribute towards broader work on gender and climate change, climate change adaptation policy, and climate change in Myanmar. In the following sections, I outline aspects of women's vulnerability in climate change adaptation, several theoretical contributions to the theme of climate change and gender, and the challenges of incorporating gender into climate change adaptation and mitigation policy. Together, these themes help us understand the conceptualization of women in climate change discourse.

Vulnerability and Understanding Gender and Climate Change

"Gender relations are an integral feature of social transformations associated with climate change" (Pearse, 2017)

Common throughout the literature on gender and climate change is the presentation of women as more adversely affected by the latter's impacts, specifically, natural disasters (Aguilar 2010, MacGregor 2010, Dankelman & Jansen, 2012, Alston, 2013, Alston, 2014, Eastin 2018). While this may be the case, the discussion on gender and power dynamics remain limited or omitted (Arora-Jonsson, 2011). Without tackling underlying factors contributing to the inequalities between men and women, the effects of climate change will continue to reinforce existing structural and cultural barriers facing women. Considering the potential for climate change policy to be a key tool in tackling gender inequality, the extent to which climate-vulnerable countries employ a gender lens in planning for climate change must be further scrutinized.

Marginalized groups suffer more as a consequence of climate change effects because they are the most vulnerable to climate risks (*World Economic and Social Survey 2017: Reflecting on seventy years of development policy analysis*, 2017). This becomes evident, for example, when analyzing the evidence of economic damage and the type of livelihoods that suffer the most in the aftermath of disaster or in the face of changing weather patterns. For example, Myanmar's agriculture sector, comprised of over 61% of employment across the country, was most severely damaged by Typhoon Nargis (*Post-Nargis Joint Assessment*, 2008, "Burma - Agriculture | export.gov," 2018). Alston (2014) found that there is very little attention paid to marginalized groups in climate policies. She also found that while gender mainstreaming was being adopted across the globe in policies around climate, the policies did not result in transformative and measurable change. This assertion relied on Payne's (2011) work which argued that gender remained "outside the norm of institutional thinking", in that, conceptual, political, and pragmatic barriers limit truly inclusive policies (p.290). Women are thus included in this

assertion because any existing vulnerability becomes coupled with unequal access to resources, decision-making processes, and limited mobility (*Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change*, 2011; Alston, 2013). However, it is important to recognize that gender is not only important in discussing marginalization, it is especially concerned with complex patterns of *relations* between men, women and nonbinary individuals, the interactions between individuals, and also the interactions within these groups (Pearse, 2017). While a focus on gender must be comprehensive of the diverse gender identities, the policies that are examined here refer specifically to women and men. The omission of gender variant omissions is an important issue and worthy of further exploration, but beyond the scope of this study. Similarly, it is important to point out that gender is often falsely conflated with women. In doing so, gender relations within and between groups are not addressed, and the roles – and impacts experienced by - men and boys can be overshadowed. The problematic and simplistic use of the term "gender" negates progress towards achieving gender equality since a comprehensive gender focus must also include men and boys and the complex gender relations that exist. Nevertheless, climate change remains a distinctly gendered phenomenon requiring great attention across a range of issues, particularly those issues that affect women who are disproportionately affected (MacGregor, 2010).

Increasingly, throughout international climate change forums, gender has been discussed in relation to adaptation and mitigation measures. However, this was not realized at international climate change negotiations until the 2010s, as Nagel (2015) points out only 5 of 31 chairs, co-chairs and vice-chairs on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the most influential international panel on climate change and a central body within the UN climate change complex, were women in 2007. Nagel also notes the lack of female speakers at the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Conference. A turning point emerged at COP23 in 2017 with the

production of the Gender Action Plan. This was interpreted to be a major achievement due to the fact that the negotiations and processes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) helped determine global, regional, and country-level action on climate change. While the introduction of the Gender Action Plan may lend itself to arguments made by critical scholars like Arora-Jonsson around portrayals of women by those in the North, others might argue that high-level recognition is an important step in addressing the heightened stakes climate change poses for both women and men. As such, some scholars acknowledge the inclusion of gender in UNFCCC negotiations has been a great achievement and is regarded with high importance (Aguilar, 2010). An additional important step in this process is recognition for the different effects climate change has on women and men. Academics have presented the argument that women, as a vulnerable group, require special attention in climate change policy (Alston, 2013, Alston, 2014, Aguilar 2010, 2013, Momtaz & Asaduzzaman, 2018). Indeed, "women's vulnerability" is heavily mentioned throughout gender and climate change literature as well as policies (Alston, 2013, 2014, Aguilar 2010, 2013, Momtaz & Asaduzzaman, 2018).

The emphasis on mitigation and adaptation is important but it is a limited lens through which to understand the relationship between gender inequality and climate change. To more fully examine gender issues in climate change research and policy analysis, we must consider the causes of their vulnerability in the context of climate change-related natural disasters as situated in the attitudes and gendered social roles that disadvantage women disproportionately. To understand these gendered social roles, we can examine stereotypes of the role of women; the sexual division of labour, inequality in access to – and control over – resources, and limited decision-making power. First, stereotypes around women include being timid, caring, submissive, victims, and being the lead on family-related responsibility help frame how they are

incorporated into climate change policy and action. Climate change hardens vulnerabilities as women's rights, assets, and social roles undergo change during natural disasters. According to Momtaz and Asaduzzaman (2019), some of these vulnerabilities include income, household assets, health, food security and water sources, sanitation, shelters and male guardianship, transportation, and education. Through the division of labour, women engage in unpaid activities around domestic and reproductive labour which involve food production and conservation, collecting other resources for family subsistence, and providing childcare. These full-time engagements can restrict women from engaging in opportunities outside the home, or women otherwise secure additional roles in the community or experiencing community disasters or rapid change. Such changes have a compounding effect on time and energy, creating "amplified domestic burdens" that ultimately magnify hardships on women (Eastin, 2018, p. 291). Floods are a simple yet common example of an amplified burden that can have particularly negative effects on women's health, safety, and sanitation. Azad Kalam et al.,'s (2013) work show how women in Northern Bangladesh became particularly susceptible to increased harassment in the aftermath of floods, with 35% of female respondents claiming they had been sexually harassed as a result of social disruption caused by flooding. The same study indicated that the primary cause of women's increased vulnerability derives from their lack of decision-making power, which has ramifications including limited access to resources to mitigate risks as well as limited ability to respond to disaster and to recuperate losses. Dankleman (2018) noted that as resources become scarcer, opportunities for livelihoods are reduced, particularly for women.

Women's increased vulnerability to the effects of climate change is, thus, not a cause of their sex, but by the social attitudes and roles placed upon them. The vulnerability approach fails to take into account that the presumed vulnerability of women is not static, but actually

heightened as a result of natural disaster and social upheaval. Further, women are not the only group that should be considered in vulnerability studies. This frames the issue as a women's-only issue, instead of a gender issue (Arora-Jonsson, 2011). However, any approach that does not address the core causes of vulnerability within gender inequality (ie. sources of power and control) will always lack results for women. Aguilar (2013) understands women to hold the potential to be powerful agents of change, even as inequalities are exacerbated through climate vulnerability. She also claims these vulnerabilities to be countered through empowerment. Similarly, Eastin (2018) argues gender disparities in climate change vulnerability as a result of existing inequalities further reinforced as a result of climate change effects. Here, the author specifically references power dynamics between men and women in the division of labor. Eastin further posits this in his review of climate shocks and natural disasters over the last 30-years. These findings suggest events to have had a negative effect on gender equality, specifically social and economic rights, particularly concentrated in less democratic, agriculture-dependent states. Arora-Jonsson (2011) adds that when the discourse suggests women are "more environmentally conscious", this is in fact based on a false understanding of gender and climate change (p. 745). She posits that this is largely conveyed by women from the global North in the form of an expectation of women in the global South. Dankelman and Jansen (2012) claim that this approach has been perpetuated and defended by ecofeminists and is a pervasive ideology. This means that culture and nature are gendered, where culture (upheld by men) is valued over nature (upheld by women), meaning men are valued over women (Dankelman & Jansen, 2012). Nunan (2015) suggests that in identifying women as saviors, women see an increased burden as they would take on an additional social role, ultimately, contributing to the deeper feminization of poverty.

The impact of social norms and practices that reinforce gender inequality are ultimately felt in the higher rates of death among women as a result of environmental crises. Of significant concern is women's increased morbidity as a result of climate change-related disasters. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men under circumstances of a sudden disaster (WHO, 2003). Similarly, a study from the London School of Economics, which analyzed natural disasters having occurred in 141 countries, concluded that gender differences in deaths were directly linked to women's social and economic rights, finding more equal death rates in more 'equal societies' (Aguilar, 2010; Neumayer and Plümper, 2007). This evidence supports a need for specific gender considerations in climate change policy (Aguilar, 2010). It thus becomes vital to question the extent to which women and their roles are instrumentalized to meet a purpose of climate action and environmental protection. To address these concerns, studies could look beyond vulnerabilities as a problem and instead investigate the lack of governmental and societal attention to addressing gender inequality. While narratives of women and climate change remain centred around victimhood and sainthood, they persistently lack a deeper understanding women's agency. This blurs the true cause of women's increased climate-vulnerability. Although development work facilitates change towards gender equality, including tackling cultural biases, income, and other sources of oppression, government action should be directly challenged.

Criticism is occasionally directed towards the "effects approach" claiming gender and climate change discourse as limited in relation to its conceptualization of women as victims, rarely acknowledging the need for a deeper gender analysis into the causes and perpetuation of unequal climate change effects (Arora-Jonsson, 2011, MacGregor, 2010). Similarly, Djoudi et al., (2016) suggests that in climate change policy, "gender is mostly handled in a men-versus-

women dichotomy and little or no attention has been paid to power and social and political relations… depict[ing] a "feminization of vulnerability" and climate change policies thereby reinforce a "victimization discourse" (p. 248). MacGregor advocates for increased long-term feminist solutions in tackling patriarchal structures instead of policy making to address urgent needs as a result of disasters. Secondly, MacGregor criticizes the focus placed on developing countries within the wider discussion on climate change and gender, as it portrays climate change as a "problem for 'them' and not for 'us'" (p. 227). This critique lends support to a post-colonial analysis which seeks to understand the relationship between the centre and the periphery as it relates to relationships of power. In the section below, I consider the issues of gender inequality, norms and societal discrimination in relation to feminist theories.

Theoretical Approaches to Gender and Climate Change

In this section, I draw on several feminist theoretical lens, namely, post-colonialism and post-colonial feminism, and focus explicitly on the conceptual frames of essentialism and instrumentalism. These are only some of the theoretical frames in which to analyze gender and climate change, however, for the purpose of this work, the most relevant themes as they relate to climate change adaptation and women in Myanmar identify post-colonial feminism and essentialism, and instrumentalism. Seeing as this work analyzes policy papers produced by a UN technical working group within the Myanmar government, it is first worth reflecting on colonial legacies and relationships with the United Nations. The next section addresses post-colonial feminism, and its links to climate change. Following this, the final section addresses essentialism and instrumentalism and the constructions of women's relationship with the natural environment.

These theoretical lenses collectively offer overlapping frames for better addressing gender issues and women's inclusion in policy discourse.

Climate change itself can be considered a colonial legacy as colonial economies have an established history of taking resources from the global South to produce goods (and pollutants) in the global North. Thus, the global South's relationship with the UN or other international bodies =can be considered through a colonial lens. Specific to UN climate negotiations, Rajão and Duarte (2018) suggest that during the formation of the UNFCCC, the global North and South had very different understandings of what the purpose of the body would be. The global North was most interested in a strictly environmental standards approach, whereas, the global South was critical of the direct relationship between environmental standards and economic and social development. They suggested that environmental solutions equate to limiting their right to develop and reinforced the idea that climate is a tool for which colonial powers assert their will. More specifically, climate is as much a philosophical concept as it is a material thing (Mahony & Endfield, 2018; Endfield & Randal, 2014). Rajão and Duarte point out that discourse on climate action is framed a specific way by the global North in COP climate negotiations. Specifically, that the global North attempts to mold pre-colonial identities in a way which highlights the material wealth that existed prior to colonial rule in an attempt to create an equal standing in an era of economic relaitons based on climate change realities. In response, the global South has insisted that such realities do not erase "hundreds of years of economic exploitation and one century of high GHG emission levels in the North" (p. 373). At the same time, the global North is instrumental in creating the dichotomy of realities facing both the North and South by promoting the grouping of 'developing nations' and 'developed nations' in order to, as Rajão and Duarte suggest, legitimize ongoing cultural and economic domination. Livingstone (2015)

summarizes this idea siccinctly; "In its capacity to colonise the deepest recesses of the human mind, climate must surely constitute one of the world's most successful imperial projects" (p. 937).

Thus, a divide between the global North and South is identified in more critical literature surrounding climate change, conveyed through the 'us versus them' dichotomy. This idea centres around the discussion of responsibility and effects. Feminist post-colonial analysis best represents in the claim that pollution as produced by men in the global North, to the detriment of women (more so than men) in the global South (Arora-Jonsson, 2011 & MacGregor, 2010). These power dynamics spark the discussion around the intersection of the north-south divide as well as gender relations. Furthermore, a gendered aspect to emissions has been identified in the literature where the findings generally point to men emitting more than women (Pearse, 2016; Raty & Carlsson-Kanyama 2010, Cohenm 2014, Clancy, 2003, Carlsson-Kanyama, Linden & Thelander, 1999). And while such findings have primarily been found through studying the global North including Sweden, Spain, Canada and the United States, they could point to a trans-national theme of gendered work and are therefore relevant findings for the global South.

Post-colonial feminist theory takes the findings above to support the assertion that women in the global South are simultaneously impacted by both colonialism and patriarchy (Tyagi, 2014). And while post-colonial theory "problematizes the key relationship between centre and periphery", this can be seen another way, identifying men as the centre and women as the periphery (Mishra & Hodge, 1993, p. 276). Post-colonial feminist theory is thus interested in understanding the position of women in the South by taking into account male dominance, colonialism, and western bias. This approach fundamentally rests on Mohanty's (1986)

scholarship on the Western conceptualization of 'Third World Women' and the West's plainly incorrect understanding of women in the global South.

In climate change discourse, post-colonial feminist theory might articulate a linkage between the treatment of women and the environment, suggesting that it is a natural, but also problematic, relationship. It is problematic because the assumption that women's relationship with the natural environment is based on a natural inclination of care and compassion (ecofeminism), is ignorant to the reality of social structures and necessity (Jabeen, 2016). Building off of Mohanty's work, Pearse (2017) suggests another problematic piece is that gender and climate research has historically been led by Northern researchers documenting gender inequalities in the South. This suggests that because such research is often conducted by the North, it often does not go far enough in challenging the "privileged status of gender theory" deriving from Northern scholars (p. 3). Indeed, this major critique exists within postcolonial feminism which warns of Northern scholars' representation of women in the global South as one-dimensional, dependent figures, instead of multidimensional actors with full capabilities, opinions, and rights, regardless of their social position (Mohanty, 1986). As such, literature on women in the global South from northern scholars has historically relied on a false interpretation of these women which only serves to reinforce western bias and patriarchal structures (Parpart et al., 2000; Lazreg, 1988, Ong 1988, Minh-ha, 1989, Sangari and Vaid, 1989). In light of this understanding, post-colonial feminism and its critiques help us to understand how gender is framed in climate change adaptation policy with attention to both overarching structures which guide policy and hold power, to that of roles and meanings applied to gender in this area. Such a theory would also likely support the assertion that women are worthy subjects in their own right and do not need to be justifiably studied by being paired with or compared to climate change.

Essentialists may argue that women are the ultimate victims of climate change because of their inherent 'soft' characteristics (Resurrección, 2013). This is in line with the ecofeminist assumption that women are more synonymous with the natural environment and its natural protectors and stewards as well as the assumption that men assert dominance over women similar to how they assert dominance over the environment, and thus degrade it (Resurrección, 2013). This gives women a vulnerable, yet, strategic position in the discourse. However, this might be seen as absolving men of responsibility (Jerneck, 2018). Arora-Jonsson similarly suggests that women are portrayed as deeply virtuous, thus delegitimizing any role in decision-making power. The persistent essentialization of women as either leaders or victims within the larger framework of climate change plays well in selling a vision for action, as it pairs women's struggles with environmental problems. However, it fails to account for the nuances which exist in the relationship between women and the environment and varying dependencies on it (Jerneck, 2018). Similarly, it is extremely unhelpful towards creating policy, as the essentialized role of and discourse on women produce one-dimensional interpretations of women and thus "do not provide policy-makers with the mileage with which to design concrete policies" (Makina & Moyo, 2016).

Through this one-dimensional understanding of women and their roles, particularly as leaders, it can also effectively reinforce the conceptualization of women as tools towards a solution, and/or the solution themselves. Here, women are instrumentalized to serve a certain purpose, however, effectively absolving men of responsibility. Thus, the structural inequalities between men and women remain unchanged. Women's perceived leadership in climate action places them on a pedestal, and also assumes that women "possess an essential orientation towards nature or resource conservation" (Jerneck, 2018, p. 11) and can thus be wielded as a

tool. This relates to a growing body of literature on the instrumentalization of women in development frameworks, arguing that development discourse and policy is becoming more heavily weighted with assumptions around women as 'good investments' (Chant & Sweetman, 2012, Wilson, 2015, Moeller, 2018). In this case, women become an instrument to achieve development and a focus on women's rights becomes a concern only in order to achieve Western-conceived development goals (Chant & Sweetman, 2012). Such an approach can't take women's empowerment seriously, as the struggle for women's fundamental right to develop is not required to be paired with other motives in order to attain legitimacy. Women's empowerment ought to stand on its own.

The Relationship between Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation and Gender

In this section, I address the literature on gendering climate change adaptation policy and mitigation and reflect on women's roles in these activities. In understanding adaptation and mitigation policies inclusion (or exclusion) of gender dimensions, we can come to understand the common approaches and gaps. Climate change adaptation involves adjusting systems in response to, or in light of, imminent climate events. The adaptive activities of signatory states to the UNFCCC include producing National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA), which promise to carry out adaptation activities. Members of the LDCs group (of which Myanmar graduated in 2018) are given particular support in developing plans to address country-level adaptation. The MCCA is a component of the UN's assistance to Myanmar. Specific activities under the umbrella of adaptation could include altering or introducing new infrastructure and technologies, changes to economic sectors such as agriculture, and awareness raising amongst particularly vulnerable populations and regions.

Governments are widely in agreement on the importance of addressing gender in environmental policy and action (Alston, 2013). However, it is difficult to integrate what can be often understood as a conceptual, and sometimes highly academic, topic into government policy. Arora-Jonsson calls this "the transposition of feminist research into a non-feminist governmental machinery" (2014). And while it can be widely recognized that gender research needs to be incorporated into government-led climate change policy, gender research has to be presentable to policymakers (Arora-Jonsson, 2014). When done so, institutions can better use adaptation as a transformative tool in addressing fundamental systems changes. The purpose of adaptation is to reduce vulnerability while simultaneously building adaptive capacity. Adaptation itself implies uprooting the normal, challenging social and cultural foundations of a society (Djoudi, et al., 2016). Indeed, uprooting communities or altering their surroundings and forcing them to adapt undoubtedly leads to changes in social relations and what could be, transformation. However, Djoudi et al., (2016) note that adaptation can create different pathways or maintain hierarchies. Meaning, adaptation can lead to altering the system to inadvertently benefit women, or, it can further reinforce existing patriarchal and other social hierarchies. A significant notion that remains is that adaptation can involve beneficial outcomes for women such as increased access to work and new leadership roles, where the dial cannot be turned back over time.

Similar to producing NAPAs, developing countries produce Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) to convey their country's emissions targets. Mitigation identifies how countries will reduce the production of emissions and "increase resilience" or undertake actions. Such actions include 'climate-friendly' agriculture practices, increasing carbon sinks, and increasing clean energy production ("Introduction to Mitigation | UNFCCC," n.d.). Of course, adaptation addresses the other side, that is, how countries will cope with or plan around

climate incidences. At first sight, the latter conveys a social aspect, while the former seems high-level or technical. Climate change is often presented "as best resolved through technical and economic solutions" (Makina & Moyo, 2016) which begs the questions: Where do the social aspects come in? Djoudi et al.,'s (2016) study that compared 56 climate change and gender articles found that gender was addressed more often in adaptation studies and less so in mitigation studies. This analysis suggests a "common notion" that mitigation strategies are purely "scientific and technological", and are therefore, "generally considered to be a male domain" (Djoudi, et al., 2016; MacGregor 2010). However, as Aguilar (2010) points out, women are essential actors in mitigation by their participation in reducing emissions through household energy and natural resource management.

This notion of gendered mitigation and adaptation is echoed by Nagel (2015) who claims that the framing of climate change has been primarily conveyed as an environmental issue with little attention being paid to the gendered and social aspects of climate change. Nagel further claims, "the mainstream framing is stereotypically "masculine" in its discourse of technological innovation, large-scale economic instruments, and climate modeling… such discourses [are] inherently gender-inequitable: for example, women's restricted access to resources such as land, credit, and information hinders them from playing an equitable role in climate-mitigation market instruments" (p. 196; O'Neill, et al., 2010).

On that note, Aguilar (2010) points out that women and men have different strategies when coping with climate change, specifically pointing out that women have shown themselves to be leaders in resource management in revitalization projects. This is especially so in communities which rely on traditional knowledge of the natural environment where one woman's familiarity with plant life can be what saves her family from hunger in a time of

environmental crisis. However, as environmental conditions worsen, Aguilar is careful to point out that women's adaptive and coping strategies become strained.

The scholarly literature examined in this section provides insights into the challenges and considerations for addressing gender inequality and climate change. This literature serves as a backdrop for the examination and analysis in this MRP and serves to frame the research involving policy discourse analysis.

Methodology

This research for this study applies a distinct critical feminist lens. Initially, this MRP focused on a feminist post-colonial framework, however, throughout the research process, essentialism and instrumentalism became central analytical tools in the analysis and were also prominent themes throughout the literature review. As a result, these elements were incorporated alongside feminist post-colonial analysis. Thus, this MRP employs a theoretical framework which incorporates both a strong emphasis on power and the effects of colonialism, as well as the essentialization and instrumentalization of women for the purpose of conceptualizing women a certain way, rather than incorporating them into climate change policy in Myanmar. These theoretical and analytical lenses shaped the methodology by guiding the document review process. The scholarship helped with the identification of keywords and frames of analysis used to examine the policy documents.

The Briefs

This MRP investigates how 'gender' and 'women' are conveyed in six policy briefs created under the MCCA to inform the Myanmar Climate Change Strategy. To achieve this, a

content analysis and discourse analysis was conducted on the six briefs. The policy papers are

organized by six economic sectors, with all six themes being pillars of the Myanmar economy.

These briefs were chosen to be analyzed in this work because they are the cornerstone of the

subsequent official policy; the Myanmar Climate Change Strategy. More so, the briefs were

chosen because they include references to 'gender' and 'women' throughout, and because

climate change and adaptation can't be achieved without addressing gender inequalities. The

examples used in this study are important to an analysis of gender equality because they inform

the most important climate change policy in Myanmar. Similarly, these briefs offer some insight

as to how gender equality is conveyed by the Myanmar state. The briefs were first produced in

English in October 2017 and later produced in Burmese in July 2019. Since they were first

produced in English and subsequently translated into Burmese, there is a risk that the translated

version (regardless of its quality) may have altered words, and thus altered meanings. This may

pose a challenge, as a discourse and content analyses rely on the analysis of written words.

Methods: Discourse and Content Analysis

The six policy briefs were analyzed using qualitative methods, as they have a strong presence

in feminist research and because qualitative methods can be applied to address power and

representation (Iniesta-Arandia et al., 2016). Qualitative research is, however, criticized for being

highly subjective (Horsburgh & Ba, 2003). Therefore, this MRP used a qualitative approach in

the discourse analysis and a quantitative component in the content analysis. Discourse analysis is

used to analyze the contextual meaning behind communications. This is a common tool for

exploring topics related to power and identity (Thompson, Rickett, & Day, 2018; Parker, 2013).

This research was conducted through a content analysis and a discourse analysis on six policy briefs. The content analysis focused on the quantification of language used where frequency of key phrases around 'gender' and 'women' were noted. From this, a discourse analysis was applied, in which the narratives and larger themes surrounding the use of these terms was analyzed in order to understand how it fits within the narrative of gender equality and the empowerment of women in sight of overarching relationships of power and language. As a result, this work was able to argue that the references to gender and women were in fact problematic overall with ineffective focus on the gender-specific factors pertaining to climate change. Academic literature on gender and climate change, different theoretical perspectives on climate change and gender, and important contextual information on democratization, women's status, and colonial history of Myanmar, were consulted to aid the investigation. This MRP utilized an inductive, or "bottom up", approach, meaning the research was exploratory and a hypothesis was not expressed (Eun Woo et al., 2016).

The document analysis began with a coding of the six policy documents. The key terms used to initially perform this coding included 'gender' and 'women'. To understand the meaning in which these terms were used, a discourse analysis was carried out. The sentences around these words and several themes were identified around their use, notably, the essentialization and instrumentalization of women. The relationship between uses of certain themes became evident and are identified in the findings and explained in the analysis. The discourse analysis employed key insights from the scholarship to analyse the findings, specifically focussing on constructs and frames of analysis such as colonialism, essentialism and instrumentalism. The findings were organized into several themes and ranked from most significant findings to least significant findings.

Methodological Limitations

Policy discourse and content analyses provide rich insight into the guiding documents that shape programs and practice. However, as policies they tell us little about the actual implementation process. Several factors shape the way policy translates into practice including the commitment of dedicated program and project staff, the availability of resources to translate policy into action, and sustained commitments over time. Strong policies can translate into effective or ineffective practice. Similarly, weak policies can lead to weak program implementation. The limitations of the policy discourse and content analysis then are in relation to how well these policies reflect actual practice in the country. Additional research is needed to document how policies translate into practice, a focus that is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, policies are important guiding frameworks and can serve as a catalyst for effective action. Careful attention to the language used in policy documents can shed light on some of the potential gaps that can easily manifest in poor program and project implementation.

Ethics

This MRP is comprised of a desk-based research without the involvement of human subjects, and therefore, did not require approval by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board. It is also worth mentioning that while my experience of living and working in Myanmar in 2017 offers some insight into the country's situation, I do not fully realize the gendered experiences within this society, nor do I fully understand the immediate and compounding effects of climate change on my personal well-being and prosperity as others might. Further, I realize the potential critique, which may accompany my utilization of a post-colonial lens as a female from the West.

Therefore, I am aware and conscious of my privilege, and my 'outsider' lens, which I attempted to mitigate through an open mind, competing arguments, and consultation of diverse literature. In the following section, I outline the context for which this analysis situates itself, addressing Myanmar's colonial history, political-military apparatus, and the status of women, particularly analyzing legislation affecting women that has been passed since the semi-civilian government took office in 2011.

The Myanmar Context

"The son is the Master, the husband is the God" – Myanmar-Buddhist proverb

First and foremost, it is important to point out that a colonial legacy persists in Myanmar. This is evident when considering arrangements made in the state's post-colonial period including land laws, ethnic relations, and national identity politics (Cheesman, 2016, Ferguson, 2014, Akins, 2018). Prior to colonial rule, Myanmar was comprised of kingdoms spanning across contemporary borders. Each had characteristics of both distinct and shared cultures, rule of law, and other customs. After decades of struggle during the Anglo-Burmese Wars, the Myanmar people succumbed to foreign occupation of the British empire in 1886. A colonial territory was established by collecting the independent kingdoms across the region, establishing separate and unequal administrative systems, and unequal rights and services. "This was the beginning of the ethnic-based nationalism that lingers to this day as a legacy of British rule." ("A nation cursed by the legacy of colonialism," 2018). This colonial rule exacerbated and created new tensions among ethnic and religious groups and outsiders that remain permeated into the modern society ("History Since Colonisation," n.d.).

The Bamar-Buddhist-centric approach to Myanmar's policies come as a legacy of colonial rule. This legacy is confounded by the military's strategy to rid the country of colonial reminders starting in the late 1980s with changes such as moving the nation's capital (with several unclear motives behind this decision), altering names of cities, and for some time, prohibiting use of the term "Burma". Similarly, Myanmar's disdain for the Rohingya, referred to as the "Bengali" locally, can also be relayed back to colonial rule. Myanmar's and Bangladesh's inability to maintain the land border for centuries has built up over time, peaking in late 2017. Myanmar's recent history has been littered with colonial occupation, first by the British, and later by the Japanese. For instance, in response to growing tensions and riots across Myanmar in the 1930s, the British brought in thousands of Indian loyalists to serve under the administration and army, resulting in massacres of local Indian migrants. Soon after, the Japanese occupied the country during World War II, resulting in further oppression, division, and resistance. Perhaps expected then, that the first Burmese-led government be brutally authoritarian, given its memory of the previous century.

Between 1962 and 2011, Myanmar hosted the longest single authoritarian government in history. This could be contentious of course, given the military maintains significant power in the current government. While the military was constantly involved in skirmishes and insurgencies from internal and external groups, the regime was perhaps most seriously challenged in the late 1980s with cross-country unrest over an economic crisis. The 1988 demonstrations and subsequent political unrest created a longstanding movement favoring democratization within the country. At that time, the military government 'dissolved' but maintained significant power, rebranding itself as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). In 1989 Burma underwent a name change, along with many of its cities, altering the English-given names such

as Rangoon, supposedly to free the country of its colonial influences. Institutions were tightly controlled by the military. It was noted at this time that the judiciary lacked impartiality and independence and police were yielded as a weapon on the people (Turnell, 2011).The International Commission of Jurists notes that political and military influence over the judiciary remains prevalent (2014). Low economic growth and tight control over so many years prevented any kind of middle class from developing and challenging the regime (Bertrand, 2013).

        The military has effectively permeated into all institutions of government and governance and maintained complete control over the population for the last 50 years. And while the 2008 Constitution introduced brand-new regional legislatures, there lacks any kind of democratic governance knowledge and no historical framework to draw from. Decision-making still remains tightly held in the capital (Nay Pyi Taw) and the population maintains a deep lack of trust in the system. (Bertrand, 2019). Capacity of the legislatures themselves is limited. In 2015 many new MPs took on their first session. In early 2016, they underwent a 5-day legislative boot camp with the UN. MPs reported they did not find the sessions helpful and claimed they remained aloof to the specifics of the Constitution (Holland, 2017). Adding to the challenge, Chan et al., (2018) note the general attitude held amongst policymakers in Myanmar were any issues effecting women are automatically dealt with under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, creating a situation where women's issues are not taken seriously by a majority of policy makers. Equally concerning is one particular statement in the Constitution that outlines that certain positions in the leadership disqualify women completely; "nothing in this section shall prevent appointment of men to positions that are naturally suitable for men only" (Section 352). In Section 59, 'he' is used when referring to the role of President and Vice-President

exclusively. Lastly, the Constitution's reference to women consistently employs the language of 'mothers', a discriminatory and exclusionary language.

The 2008 Constitution also signalled a move towards a market economy and other administrative reforms. By 2011, a semi-civilian-led government was established, save for one quarter of the national legislature seats and one third of regional government seats, which remain designated to military officers. This was part of the 'roadmap to democracy', a 2003 policy which stipulated restoring democracy including holding elections to populate the national legislature and to create a new constitution. A general election was held in 2015 which saw the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, collect a majority of the national seats allocated to elected parties. However, even under the NLD, the military remains stationed over major government departments including: defence, border, and homeland affairs. Additionally, a clause in the 2008 Constitution allows for the head of the military to effectively take complete control of the government by declaring a state of emergency. Meanwhile, the government of Myanmar maintains the message that it continues to democratize; however, many do not agree (Myanmar, Once a Hope for Democracy, Is Now a Study in How It Fails, 2017).

It has been noted that the people of Myanmar themselves possess contradictory opinions on democratization. The Asian Barometer Survey, conducted through National Taiwan University, showed that citizens recorded one of the highest preferences for democracy in South East Asia. However, citizens "did not support many of the processes of accountability that are necessary for a functioning democracy" (Welsh & Huang, 2016, p. xiii). Citizens also indicated that non-elected religious authorities should be involved in law-making. Interestingly, citizens demonstrated a "broad understanding" of democracy, bringing the survey to note the "superficial" support for democracy within the country. This suggests that while Myanmar

understands the characteristics of democracy, they are unwilling to adopt the western democratic characteristics. Democratic principals have never been integrated into Myanmar's politics or culture prior to the 1989 uprising. This is perhaps not surprising given Myanmar's colonial, then authoritarian, history.

Meanwhile, the geographic location of Myanmar puts it directly in the path of severe weather storms. Ortiz-Ferrara *et al.* (2008) indicate that by 2050, as much as 51% of the area might be reclassified as a heat-stressed, irrigated, short-season environment, which would result in significant reductions in crop yields. Myanmar relies on crop exports (particularly rice) for approximately 24% of its total exports. Similarly, the Myanmar agriculture sector comprises of nearly 30% of the country's GDP and 61% of total employment ("Burma - Agriculture | export.gov," 2018). This sector is highly vulnerable to natural disasters. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), it ranks 42 of 171 countries, noting Myanmar's limited response and adaptive capacity, even given its seasonal exposure to natural hazards. As a significant portion of the population are employed in agriculture, the ILO documents a steady decrease in employment in this sector since 1990 (*Myanmar: Employment and environmental sustainability fact sheet*, 2018). Myanmar's limited capacity to tackle climate change is exemplified in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in 2008 which saw over 80,000 deaths and $4 billion USD worth of damage. As climate change advances, we can expect similar instances as the region will experience changing and erratic weather.

Furthermore, there are major capacity barriers facing policy makers. Outsiders note a continuation of an overly centralized government with personalistic governance styles (Bertrand, 2019). However, despite these issues, the national parliament manages to pass bills. The Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Law was passed in 2015. Rumored to have been produced

under pressure from prominent Buddhist monks (as part of a larger Buddhist-nationalism movement), the law essentially regulates marriage between Buddhist women and men outside the religion. The law places significant restrictions on women marrying outside of her religion including having to register and make the intent to marry public. If there are objections, the marriage will not take place. It also brings any future legal grievances amongst the couple under the jurisdiction of Burmese Buddhist law, or, common family law, which was originally intended to apply to Buddhist-only couples. A similar law was passed which limited the number of pregnancies a woman could have, consequentially effecting Muslim women who, on average, have more children than Buddhist women. Such has been a sequence of laws to place restrictions on women's rights. The impact of these restrictions includes reducing mingling between Burmese women and Hindu and Muslim men and seclude religious minorities in the Buddhist majority country.

Simultaneously, the Law for Protection from Violence against Women, first conceived in 2015, is yet to pass even though the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement announced its likely passing in early 2019 (Mizzima, "Protection from Violence Against Women Bill likely to be passed next year, 2018). However, a copy has not been made available for the public and there has been no mention of its passing as of the date of this MRP. This law was celebrated as having had significant consolation for women's civil society organizations, however, it has also likely gone through rigorous edits by military law makers and Buddhist monk representatives (as is common practice). This might be perceived as an effort to maintain the discriminatory laws and customs affecting women in the country. Indeed, women in Myanmar (especially non-Buddhist women) are at a significant disadvantage when coming into contact with these systems and women routinely face discriminatory laws and practices. This

idea is further reinforced, as one report indicates, in the general attitude held amongst policymakers in Myanmar were that any issues effecting women should automatically dealt with under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement ("Women, Land and Property Rights – the Importance of Equality for Peace - Myanmar," 2018, n.p.).

Similarly, land seizures have plagued the country, particularly since the military crackdowns after 1988. Arbitrary land seizures were estimated at 2 million acres in 2016 by parliament's Farmer's Affairs Committee (Yeung & Dotto, 2019). Women's right to own land remains a major challenge, particularly in cases of inheritance and claims. While new legislation has been introduced in 2012, 2016, and 2019, critics easily identify gaps in how these policies contradict existing laws and actually erode women's existing land claims (Faxon, 2015). With legal changes every few years, finally allowing joint ownership and women's claims, culture remains a major barrier in land ownership. As a report from one women's organization in Mon State put it, "as women are rarely head of households, they are relegated to a secondary role in land issues" ("Women, Land and Property Rights – the Importance of Equality for Peace - Myanmar," 2018, n.p.). Historically, the military has been the primary perpetrator in land seizure, however, in more recent years, the government has allowed more foreign firms to operate within the country. Land seizures have historically plagued the country, particularly since the military crackdowns after 1988. Arbitrary land seizures were estimated at 2 million acres in 2016 by parliament's Farmer's Affairs Committee (Yeung & Dotto, 2019). Simultaneously, women's land ownership remains a major challenge, particularly in cases of inheritance and claims. While new legislation has been introduced in 2012, 2016, and 2019, to ease women's ownership, there are still significant gaps in how these policies contradict existing laws and actually erode women's existing land claims (Faxon, 2015). With legal changes

allowing joint ownership and women's claims, culture remains a major barrier. As a report from one women's organization in Mon State put it, "as women are rarely head of households, they are relegated to a secondary role in land issues" ("Women, Land and Property Rights – the Importance of Equality for Peace - Myanmar," 2018, n.p.).

Historically, the military has been the primary perpetrator in land seizure, however, in more recent years, the government has allowed more foreign firms to operate within the country, resulting in new tensions, for example, human rights violations in mining areas have been recorded by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. These tensions are difficult to tackle, as these firms are often aided by powerful elites (Yeung & Dotto, 2019). Meanwhile, Myanmar continues to open its economy to the world more and more. Without a significant reduction in corruption, instances of exploitation could become more common. According to Arora-Jonsson (2014; Folbre, 1994), women face "intersecting structural constraints" when markets start to govern the environment. Given Myanmar's proximity to major economic players such as India and China, paired with its limited experience governing foreign firms, there remains much to be done on ensuring protection of resources for rural populations, particularly, women's equal treatment in land access and ownership.

During CEDAW's 64th session in June 2016, the Committee wrote a report requesting Myanmar provide a written response to questions on Myanmar's efforts towards achieving CEDAW commitments. Such questions included themes on access to justice, violence against women, political and public life, health, measures taken to advance NSPAW, and the situation of women in Rakhine (*Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Sixty-fourth session: List of issues and questions in relation to the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Myanmar*, 2016). At the follow-up session in 2019, Myanmar denied condoning human rights

violations including geocide and ethnic cleansing against Rohingya men and women. They also

denied cases of security forces systematically raping Rohingya women and girls, calling them

"wild claims" in the response report (*Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against*

Women Seventy-second session: Report submitted by Myanmar under the exceptional reporting

procedure, 2019). What the report lacked was a response the other questions posed by the

committee. Myanmar's superficial response only responds to questions related to women in

Rakhine. Therefore, there is a gap in the state's official position on its advancements on

CEDAW, NSPAW, and similar commitments.

Additionally, Myanmar does not collect significant amount of gender-specific data

outside of basic economic outputs. The most recent nation-wide collection was for the 2014

census. The collection of sex-disaggregated data would allow researchers and policy makers to

better track and plan towards achieving gender equality goals as well as bring light to the very

different aspects and patterns of not only being a woman or man in Myanmar, but also how they

interact. The Housing Census indicated that the Myanmar government has been making efforts

towards taking gender issues into consideration, citing the first and only female to be appointed

to the President's cabinet in the country's history. Similarly, it cites membership to international

forums including ASEAN, and signatures to international agreements such as CEDAW.

However, the extent to which these high-level commitments are followed through by action is

limited. In a positive move, Myanmar has promised to start collecting sex-specific data and as a

commitment within the MCCS.

The lack of data in Myanmar has "cemented a culturally held view that Myanmar culture

does not exhibit any gender discrimination" (*The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing*

Census: Thematic Report on Gender Dimensions, Census Report Volume 4-J, 2017; Asian

Development Bank et al., 2016). Indeed, within Myanmar, without evidence to the contrary, it is commonly claimed that gender equality already exists (Ikeya, 2005). As a result, there has been significant work to undermine efforts to raise the profile of gender inequality (Faxon, 2015; Ikeya, 2005; Belak, 2002). Ikeya's (2005) work traces this simplistic stereotype of the 'high status' of women in gendered discourses to the colonial period in an attempt to raise the status of South East Asians in light of the devaluation amongst neighboring India and China (favored for their technological prowess). Western visitors conjured up the stereotype based on a selective understanding of Burmese culture and further shaped by the country's incorporation into the British Empire. However, Ikeya points out that scholars still know very little of the status of women in Myanmar prior to colonial rule, explaining, "what little scholars do know about the history of gender relations in Burma indicate that practices favorable to women have existed side by side with sexist and even misogynistic ideas and customs concerning women" (p. 55). Ikeya similarly points out that (as of 2005), very little work had been done to understand the modern status of Burmese women without looking past this rather simplistic understanding (Ikeya, 2005; Mills, 2000). This section has served to demonstrate the Myanmar context and highlight that Myanmar is not on track to meet its international commitments to gender equality and improving the position of women in society. To better understand the nature of Myanmar's commitment to gender equality in its climate change policies, this research explores the discourse and language used to address climate change in six policy briefs.

Findings

The MCCA policy briefs include a strategy to guide investments in six development sectors; agriculture, fisheries and livestock; environment and natural resources; energy, transport

and industry; urban development; health and disaster risk reduction; and education, public awareness and technology (referred to as briefs 1 through 6). These pieces are meant to provide high-level policy guidance and "raise awareness of various stakeholders" on Myanmar's climate change priorities and provide understanding on the specific sectoral challenges facing Myanmar (Myanmar Climate Alliance, 2017). This includes an overview of the current challenges facing the sectors, aims, and expected results. Through the content analysis, it was determined that the term 'gender' is mentioned a total of thirty-nine times across all six policy briefs and 'women' was mentioned thirty-five times. Both were used more in briefs 1 and 2 than the remainder of the briefs combined. The next paragraphs outline the main findings of the content and discourse analysis by quantitatively analyzing the briefs for key words and phrases, and subsequently identifying themes raised as a result of where the key words were mentioned, in what context. Following this, the MCCS will be reflected on.

The topic of brief 1 is "climate-smart agriculture, fisheries and livestock for food security". The Myanmar economy is significantly comprised of agriculture is 61% of total employment with women comprising of 36.5% of the formal agriculture, forestry and fishing economy ("Burma - Agriculture | export.gov," 2018, *The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Gender Dimensions, Census Report Volume 4-J*, 2017). Brief 1 mentions 'gender' 16 times and 'women' 13 times; more than any other brief. Uses of 'gender' in this brief were conveyed most often when listing the required activities to meet the larger objectives. This includes terms such as "gender considerations", "gender analysis", and "gender-sensitive approaches". One section states: "climate change and migration of men are already forcing women to take central roles in agriculture and household food security. In the future, rural women will play a critical role in building resilience to climate change in the

agriculture sector" (Brief 1, pg. 6). This statement is illusive, as it fails to mention *how* women will play the critical role in building resilience in this sector. It also suggests that women are not already central figures in agriculture and, astonishingly, household food security. The expected results in the MCCS perhaps seeks to provide an answer when it notes that this will be achieved by "taking into account gender considerations" and "including gender-sensitive approaches". Seeing as this sector heavily relied on by so much of the population, it would have been significant to incorporate specific gender considerations including outlining a plan to reduce barriers to women trying to access or thrive in this sector.

Brief 2 is titled: "Sustainable management of natural resources for healthy ecosystems". Myanmar is rich in natural resources and has, due to economic growth and limited resource management, seen its environment heavily degraded. The brief points out that more than 70% of the population depends directly or indirectly on the forest, especially in rural areas. The brief reflects on natural resource extraction, resource management, GHG emissions, and water. 'Women' is mentioned 9 times and 'gender' is mentioned 13 times. 'Gender' is used most prominently in the sectoral action plan with reference to applying a 'gender perspective' and "integrating gender considerations" under "key policy frameworks" and "energy efficiency plans" (p. 12 - 13). References to women are concentrated around references to community-level resilience, pointing out, "although women are the main users of natural resources and play an important role in achieving community resilience to climate change, they have limited power in decision-making. Therefore, the climate change actions within the environment and natural resource sector need to be gender responsive and promote women's leadership and participation" (p. 9). The first part of this quote is prefaced somewhat in a statement earlier in the brief where one woman located in a village provided on the topic of access to water; "It takes about 20

minutes to get to the nearest source of water. It takes about four to five trips to get water by myself and sometimes 10 trips if needed" (p. 5; Horton et al, 2017). And since fetching water is primarily under the purview of women's work and in light of the resource depleting, this can create a situation where women have to travel further to retrieve it, opening her up to other risks such as risk of violence or harassment, health, childcare concerns, and time lost to conduct other activities.

Brief 3 does, in part, suggest this when conveying: "the climate change actions within the environment and natural resources sector need to be gender responsive and promote women's leadership and participation." Brief 3 titled "Resilient and low-carbon energy, transport and industrial systems for sustainable growth" considers 'gender' and 'women' the least of the briefs, mentioning 'gender' twice, and 'women' once. Brief 3 does very little to include any references to gender considerations, only to suggest that a "gender sensitive approach" be applied in identifying and promoting energy-efficient technologies and practices. It claims that it is appropriate to include a gendered perspective because women are the primary users of stoves. The little mention of women or gender points to the findings of Makina and Moyo (2016) and Djoudi et al., (2016) who agree that the primary industries involved in climate change mitigation policy were thought to be highly technical (energy, transport, and industrial systems) and therefore, outside the realm of women. This is problematic because, among other things, it points to a lack of awareness of women already in this sector and the future role of women in these sectors' mitigation efforts. These issues can also be applied to brief 4, titled "Building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable cities and towns in Myanmar". It also identifies highly technical solutions around adopting technologies and urban planning to mitigate the effects of climate change. The brief only mentions 'gender' once and 'women' twice.

Brief 5 is titled: "Managing climate risks for people's health and well-being", mentioning 'gender' six times and 'women' five times. Hygiene and sanitation are highlighted several times in reference to concerns around health risks, yet, do not mention how women face very specific sanitation and hygiene needs. Instead, women are mentioned several times when pointing out their vulnerability more generally. Eastin (2018) suggests that not only do women face health challenges, but they would equally have to maintain the health and wellbeing of their immediate family, given the division of labor. Similarly, women are often in charge of other health-related responsibilities of the household including providing water and nutrition. Therefore, women face the substantial burden of both her health and sanitation and the immediate needs of her family, particularly her children. The literature documents women's increased submission to strict social hierarchies and norms during natural disasters. This includes evidence that women in Kenya decreased their food consumption during droughts in order to supplement food consumption for the rest of the family (Eastin, 2018; Serna, 2011). Similarly, women in Namibia will exhaust every option before bringing the issue of food security to their husbands. It is noted that they will "act submissively" towards their husbands during these times in order to avoid aggravating their "increased physical and psychological stress" (Eastin, 2018, p. 291; Angula, 2010). This also serves to demonstrate that men's and women's roles are magnified during times of crisis.

Brief 6 is titled: "Building a resilient Myanmar society through education, science and technology". The brief outlines how incorporating climate change education will increase public awareness and improved response to extreme weather patterns. Cyclone Nargis is referenced throughout this section. The Cyclone's destruction caused significant damage and migration, particularly in the Ayeyarwady Delta, a densely populated region which also happens to be the

most susceptible to climate change impacts. Myanmar's objective is to integrate climate change education into school curriculums, increase technical knowledge on climate change amongst the population (and government institutions), and build knowledge capacities through international partnerships. Several factors will limit the ability to implement this goal. As outlined in the brief, the national education system faces significant challenges without introducing climate change education. Rural regions have significant attendance issues, as well as teacher capacity issues. Attendance is another issue. The boys' attendance is higher in secondary school while girls had a higher rate of attendance during elementary and post-secondary school. There are no significant differences between males and females attendance rates overall, however, the attendance rate for both boys and girls at all levels of elementary and secondary was approximately 73% in the 2014 (*The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census Thematic Report on Education*, 2017). This means that 27% of school-age children will not receive any curriculum knowledge on climate change. The brief tries to mitigate this by undertaking public awareness activities.

As mentioned, the MCCS is the instrument for which Myanmar's climate change policy is delivered. The MCCS is mostly comprised of the content held within the briefs. It also outlines the national circumstances such as economic and social development challenges, and long-term plans. Inclusive development, along with resource-efficient development, integrated development, and results-oriented development are stated as the principles of which the strategy is built. The strategy also specifically relies on other national-level commitments such as the 12-Point Economic Policy of Myanmar (2017), the Myanmar Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Strategy (2014), the National Environment Policy (2018), the 2009 National Sustainable Development Strategy, the 2015 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), and the National Water Policy (2014).

The "Gender Considerations" section of MCCS outlines the gendered challenges facing women in light of climate change such as unequal access to resources, shelter, and health services. It also points out women's lower wages and undervalued roles in major economic sectors such as fishing. It claims that, "climate change-related actions would benefit from the insights, knowledge and other resources that women bring in crafting effective and sustainable solutions for adapting to and mitigating climate change impacts" (*Myanmar Climate Change Strategy (2018 - 2030)*, 2019, p. 104). Similarly, the strategy claims that women will be considered target beneficiaries and quotas will be a tool used to obtain participation in committees and women-only meetings whereby transportation and childcare will be provided. While these commitments might be seen as a positive signal towards women's participation in determining community-level objectives, the reality is, trust of the national government actors entering communities are likely to be received with suspicion and even fear, particularly for ethnic minorities (Bertrand, 2019). Popular distrust has been a foundational belief held amongst the population. In one study, citizens identified that this is a particular belief held considering military personnel hold the same leadership positions within the government from before the quasi-civilian government was established (Sang & Thang, 2013).

The most prominent connection articulated through the discourse analysis highlight the use of 'gender' and 'women' most prominently when referring to women's elevated risk, vulnerability, and reliance on the natural environment. However, where it was appropriate to articulate exactly how to tackle these inequalities, the response was often, "sector-specific policies… should focus on vulnerable groups". Through the content analysis, it became obvious that the use of 'gender' and 'women' were used more often in some briefs than others. But more pressingly, while each brief outlined the different effects climate change would or has had on

each major economic sector, the use of 'gender' and 'women' remained somewhat static and predictable through all the briefs. This points to terms such as 'gender considerations', and 'gender sensitive approaches' being included to meet a standard, rather than an effective tool for change. In the next section, I attempt to analyze these findings to understand how they are problematic and point to larger themes in Myanmar, and gender and climate change discourse.

<u>Analysis</u>

The review of the six policy briefs sheds light on the government of Myanmar's commitments (or lack thereof) to gender equality in climate change policies. Several themes emerge from the review and analysis of these policy briefs. Those themes include the essentialization and instrumentalization of women, and the failure to consider the root causes of gender inequality. I elaborate on each of those themes in this section and provide analysis of the implications of these themes.

Essentialism and Instrumentalism

The briefs largely incorporate blanket statements essentializing women as marginalized and impoverished figures while in other places, positing women's potential for leadership roles. And at the rear of larger sections, the briefs suggest that gender-sensitive approaches should be applied in any given strategy. My findings of this analysis are that the latent content of the briefs follow an 'add women and stir' approach, in that, there lacks any kind of focus on actual structural constraints which maintain gender inequality. Instead, women's vulnerability and virtuousness are being conveyed to justify their participation in climate change adaptation measures. As Arora-Jonsson succinctly suggests, "this focus can lead to an increase in women's

responsibility without corresponding rewards" (2011, p. 745). This can be compared to a larger theme being portrayed by Myanmar through such actions as the Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Law which places total responsibility on women in inter-faith marriages, effectively discouraging the practice. The law legislates that women are susceptible to losing their Bamar status through marriage, while men's interfaith marriages have no such burden.

And while the language used in the briefs may satisfy international audiences, it seems to demonstrate a superficial commitment to incorporating gender by portraying women as one-dimensional while simultaneously conveying women's essentialist orientation to the environment as an instrument which can be used towards adaptation measures. As such, the briefs convey a sense of the widely held belief that women are 'good investments', conveying the idea that women's stereotypical roles are being used to fit the narrative of the policy. This is exemplified in brief 2 which mentions men's migration having a negative effect on women, combined with their limited decision-making power, and women being the primary users of natural resources "play an important role in achieving community resilience" (p. 9). This paints women as saintly; they are simultaneously disadvantaged yet the leaders of community resilience efforts.

Further, how well equipped the country is to actually meet the standards it has set for itself on climate change adaptation's gender considerations. The goals are in the short term (2030) and particularly ambitious, given there is no evidence to suggest that Myanmar is making moves to tackle gender inequality or deeply patriarchal structures. These findings echo those of the critical literature which suggests that climate change policy has paid little or no attention to power and social and political relations within the societies for which policy is being applied.

Failure to Consider Root Causes to Address Gender Inequality

Policy can be a tool in which to undermine power structures and authority, but, it can also reinforce these hierarchies. The discourse of the policy briefs demonstrates the action of ticking the boxes rather than feasible and measurable change to tackle the root power inequalities between men and women. The briefs lack any mention of institutional reform or tackling larger patriarchal structures. However, recognizing that institutions are responsible for distribution of resources and power, they can in turn be a major tool to wield change not only policy but wider discourse (Makina & Moyo, 2016). This is thought to be particularly challenging in 'traditional institutions' which, given Myanmar's militarized institutional structure, suggests that such institutions produce and reproduce the standard of "the way things are done" (Makina & Moyo, 2016; Taylor, 2004). Therefore, its institutions are deeply gendered to reflect a continuation of policies which are discriminatory or non-inclusive to women.

With this in mind, the approach outlined in the briefs are limiting and highlight a missed opportunity to focus more explicitly on gender issues and climate change outcomes. Tackling climate change effectively for all is not simply applying a "gender sensitive" approach to programming, it must also tackle gender inequality within and outside the realm of climate change, towards more just outcomes. There could be a more meaningful focus placed on how to address the inherently patriarchal institutions which govern the current approach to climate change adaptation. Rather, the briefs do very little to convey their commitment to a gender equality approach, and instead, sprinkle in such phrases as "apply a gender-sensitive approach" in some appropriate places while completely missing the mark in others.

Compared to the briefs, the MCCS does provide additional input on gender considerations in its own section. However, it spends more effort pointing out existing gender

inequalities than it does identifying or promising to address such inequalities. Also, it claims to include mainstreaming gender into its commitments. However, there is no way to analyze evidence of this claim, given the Strategy has only been adopted recently. Gender mainstreaming is holding both women and men's experiences as "integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres" (Caglar, 2013; Council of Europe 1998, 15; UN ECOSOC 1997). The MCSS likely does not yet meet this standard in policy, though it would have been a good opportunity to do so, given the government promised to mainstream gender into sectoral plans and policies as a signatory to CEDAW. To successfully mainstream gender, MCCS would have to assess the gender relations implications of its commitments more carefully. Perhaps the lack of commitment can be explained, given some scholars argue that while there is not much political resistance to its adoption, there is a lack of clarity around its meaning (Caglar, 2013; Daly 2005; Lombardo and Meier 2006; Meier and Celis 2011; Subrahmanian 2004). Also, the MCCS makes reference to the NSPAW once, yet it does not mention NSPAW's environment-specific commitments. This is concerning, especially because some of NSPAW's commitments are transformational for gender equality, namely, the second objective: "women's participation in departments, agencies, and committees related to the management of natural resources, environmental conservation, and adaptation and responding to climate change" (NSPAW, 2013, p. 31). While this is a positive inclination within the NSPAW, the MCCS will not go as far as to suggest advancing the state of women in decision-making institutions.

In summary, from the analysis, we can reason that the briefs and the MCCS provide no significant advancement towards gender equality. The major themes drawn from the analysis including essentialism, instrumentalism, and the failure to address root causes of gender

inequality. These themes individually, and together, help us to understand the limitations of the policy briefs. Notably, the essentialization and instrumentalization of women for the purpose of conveying a commitment to incorporating women merely highlights their vulnerabilities. A second missed opportunity can be observed through the briefs' failure to address root inequalities which preserve women's vulnerability. Without being directly challenged, its institutions are more likely to preserve gender inequality and patriarchal structures. The Constitution itself maintains a deeply patriarchal hierarchy in its explicit assertion that some positions in government are only suitable for men. This statement is in the same Constitution which guarantees equal rights for all and protects against discrimination on the basis of, among other determinants, sex. In an attempt to demonstrate a commitment to incorporating gender equality, the broader government lacks any identifiable movement towards achieving such goals. Implementation of the CEDAW and the NSPAW seems to only be symbolic in its commitments to gender equality. It is further demonstrated with the dismemberment and eventual disappearance of the Law for Protection from Violence against Women and the passing of the Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Law in 2015.

Conclusion

This MRP sought to investigate how gender issues were conveyed in six policy briefs produced under the MCCA, specifically in terms of their use of narratives around gender, women and the impact of climate change on women and gender relations in Myanmar. These findings were examined in relation to Myanmar's broader commitments and strategies to address gender issues with particular attention paid to how women were conveyed given the larger themes in gender and climate change literature and the context of the Myanmar state. The result of this

analysis showed that while the MCCS showed some positive intentions such as including women as primary beneficiaries and applying gender sensitive approaches in adaptation programs, there was very little being done to address larger imbalances between men and women, and the essentialist framing of women's roles in climate change adaptation, primarily through the lens of vulnerability yet idolized in their perceived ability to adapt to change. One particularly obvious finding from the research was that the briefs fail to address the root causes of gender inequality in Myanmar. This notion clearly supported through analyzing modern policies on women, particularly after the 2008 Constitution was introduced.

Until gender equality is addressed more comprehensively, climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts cannot be fully achieved. Djoudi et al,, (2016) paint this plainly when she says, "different impacts of climate change shape and are shaped by, the complex power dynamics of existing social and political relations" (p. 249). Therefore, Jafry explains, "embedding gender issues at the heart of climate change dialogues, debates, discussions and decision-making processes is a vital step to moving forward" (2016). So long as women's decision-making remains structurally unattainable, promises made to advance equality will be empty. This review analyzed the different ways in which women are viewed in the context of climate change, given the different theoretical lenses applied to gender and climate change research. In reviewing these differing approaches and examining the broader landscape of the literature on gender and climate change, the underlying factor of gender inequality is marginally addressed. Furthermore, while gender considerations are present in the context of climate change discourse, this review finds that there is still much to be understood, not only on practice and policy, but in how the literature does or does not identify components of vulnerability, feminist solutions, and larger patriarchal

structures. The only way to drastically improve the outcome for women in light of climate change, is to drastically alter the system for which climate change adaptation policy is formed.

Future Research

Future research might focus on better understanding the gendered effects of climate change in Myanmar, as there is little primary research available thus far. Such research should take care to identify the ways in which women enact their agency and resourcefulness in everyday adaptive measures. A second consideration for future research is to analyze the implementation of the MCCS, given it recent release. While it is appropriate to analyze what MoNREC says it will do, it is equally and perhaps more prudent to address the outcome.

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