

# Study on Gender, Age and Disability Inclusion

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Monghsat & Mongton Township  
Eastern Shan State  
Myanmar  
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## List of Abbreviations

<b>ADB:</b>	Asian Development Bank	<b>NCA:</b>	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
<b>BGF:</b>	Border Guard Forces	<b>NCD:</b>	Non-communicable Disease
<b>CBO:</b>	Community-Based Organization	<b>NGO:</b>	Non-Government Organization
<b>CDNH:</b>	Center for Diversity and National Harmony	<b>NSAG:</b>	Non-State Armed Group
<b>CEDAW:</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	<b>P-FIM:</b>	People First Impact Method
<b>CPCS:</b>	Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies	<b>PwD:</b>	People with Disabilities
<b>CRC:</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child	<b>RCSS:</b>	Restoration Council of Shan State
<b>CRPD:</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	<b>SAZ:</b>	Self-Administered Zones
<b>CSO:</b>	Civil Society Organization	<b>SBCC:</b>	Social Behavior Change Communication
<b>DoPH:</b>	Department of Public Health	<b>SDGs:</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>DRR:</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction	<b>SLCA:</b>	Shan Literature and Cultural Association
<b>DSW:</b>	Department of Social Welfare	<b>SSA:</b>	Shan State Army (Armed wing of the RCSS)
<b>EAG, EAO:</b>	Ethnic Armed Group/Organization	<b>SUN CSA:</b>	Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance (Myanmar)
<b>EMR-eF:</b>	Enlightenment Myanmar Research Foundation	<b>TBAs:</b>	Traditional birth attendants
<b>eSS:</b>	Eastern Shan State	<b>TDSC:</b>	Township Development Support Committee
<b>FGD:</b>	Focus Group Discussion	<b>UN Women:</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender, Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>GAD:</b>	General Administration Department	<b>UNDP:</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>GADI:</b>	Gender, Age and Disability Inclusion	<b>UNPF:</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>GEN:</b>	Gender Equality Network - Myanmar	<b>UWSA:</b>	United Wa State Army
<b>GoUM:</b>	Government of the Union of Myanmar	<b>UWSP:</b>	United Wa State Party
<b>HH:</b>	Household	<b>VTDC:</b>	Village Tract Development Support Committee
<b>KII:</b>	Key Informant Interview	<b>W/VTAs:</b>	Ward and Village Tract Administrators
<b>MIGS:</b>	Myanmar Institute for Gender Studies	<b>WA SAD II:</b>	Wa Self-Administered Division II
<b>MIID:</b>	Myanmar Institute for Integrated Development	<b>WWR:</b>	Women Workload Reduction
<b>MMK:</b>	Myanmar Kyat		
<b>MS-NPAN:</b>	Multi-sectoral National Plan of Action on Nutrition		

## DISCLAIMER

The contents of this Gender, Age and Disability Inclusion study represent the opinions of the authors and are not necessarily representative of the position of Malteser International.

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of this Gender, Age and Disability Inclusion (GADI) study conducted in Monghsat and Mongton districts of eastern-Shan State is to provide nuanced insights into current gender roles and -relations and into current patterns of inclusion, engagement and care of elderly, people with disabilities and the youth in families and communities. Several commonalities in understandings of gender roles and relations and attitudes towards elderly and people with disabilities among ethnic Shan, Lahu and Akha groups were identified and repeatedly confirmed by key informant voices throughout this research.

Gender concepts are socially constructed and derived from traditional beliefs and customary practices that remained intact and relevant for the people over many generations. Traditionally, men are customarily taking up productive roles while women first and foremost occupy the realm of reproductive and domestic work force, including voluntary community involvement. Although men are not described as dominant rulers anymore, men still hold the position of “the head of the HH” and making family decisions with concern to communal affairs is the domain of men. The female domain requires women to provide ‘passive’ support in political community participation and to function as active supporters in all domestic responsibilities.

Elderly people who are generally not supported by children or family members do encounter elderly care shortages. Generally, it can also be said that elderly people often perceive age as meaningless, particularly when they are not part of traditional customs and festivals anymore. Religious institutions try to compensate for some elderly care shortcomings by “paying homage” and providing occasional attention (home visits) to elderly people. However, the existence of elderly is often far from a life that enjoys adequate social inclusion.

The key research data on disability and people with special needs revealed that the understanding of ‘impairment’ and ‘disability’ and the ability to distinguish between the two is considerably low. As long as people with special needs are able to participate in productive lives and to contribute to the

economics of their families, they remain integrated. However, as soon as they don’t comply anymore to cultural expectations in terms of productive contribution to the community, they are treated by the ‘charity approach’, which means that people with disabilities become passive recipients of care or occasional gifts from outside.

### KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS – PROJECT COMMUNITIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

#### Gender Roles and Relationships

Cultural practice and traditional beliefs are closely intertwined with research participants’ perceptions and attitudes towards gender roles and relations. The field research data provides sufficient evidence that gender inclusion in Monghsat and Mongton districts does not mean that women (and vulnerable community members) should be entitled to hold active and political leadership roles in the family and/or community. But gender (women) inclusion is understood in terms of women’s ‘freedom’ to participate in productive (paid) roles and in culturally/religiously organized women groups while continuing to function in ascribed reproductive - and community/agriculture work roles. In the respondents’ systemic world view, only men are entitled to be the head of the household and active decision-making participants in community leadership while women are meant to be ‘passive’ supporters without a political voice. Still, women believe that they are not gender-discriminated. These findings seem to explain why roles and responsibilities of men and women are per se not negotiated or contested. Gender roles had been culturally and socially constructed and are generally not drawn into question.

Varying findings on lived gender in communities included strict gendered division of labor and more fluid arrangements with men who are engaged in domestic chores and child caretaking. Nevertheless, men and women hold on to traditional gender views. Divorce appears to Monghsat and Mongton women (according to perceptions of research respondents) as a threat because it would deteriorate their cul-

tural view of “healthy” family lives. And although drug use by men and disagreements over household expenditure often lead women into female-headed HH leadership, poor village women don’t voluntarily go for female leadership because they perceive themselves as dependents of male leadership. Research respondents also reported that some men were able to adjust to more fluid forms of gender roles. However, other examples show that ethnic men tend to reject doing work that has been culturally labeled as ‘light’ or ‘women’ work. This strongly confirms that culture, deeply ingrained in people’s world views, matters. Another example for deeply ingrained culture is that Akha women’s self-confidence coming by doing physically demanding, “male-like” work should by no means be interpreted as ‘traditional gender roles have been overcome’. On the contrary, in Akha tradition, ‘true’ womanhood comes with hard work service and goes hand in hand with full dependence on men’s leadership roles in the family and community.<sup>1</sup>

In a nutshell, the field research data revealed that cultural and social construction of women’s inferiority and men’s superiority in eastern Shan State doesn’t appear to people as gender inequality. What matters to couples’ lived gender roles is that women’s agency and decision power remains confined within HHs and that the appearance of men’s male decision power in the public square remains intact. Women and men obviously subscribe themselves to the common practice and understanding that men are entitled to enjoy paid labor and excessive leisure times while women try to compensate economic and social insecurity by constant labor involvement. However, “gender expectations vary between culture and can change over time.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, MI project staff is advised to embrace the challenge of paying respect to people’s cultural worldview while simultaneously encouraging women and men to embark on the journey of inter-relational bargaining and negotiation towards social behavior change.

## Older People and People with Disabilities

People with physical and mental disabilities live in the villages and townships of the project target area as anywhere else in Myanmar. According to WHO data, an estimated 15% of the world’s population have a disability of some kind.<sup>3</sup> Political unrest and oppression over decades, lack of knowledge on human rights, and strong traditional practices so far didn’t create an opportunity to think beyond traditional rule for assuring survival. However, relevant needs of younger generations, which thus includes youth with disabilities, are mostly defined by economic and educational terms. In this context, research key informants tend to be clueless about a better future outlook for people with disabilities and the aged. Familiar tradition frameworks prioritize the young- and middle aged over the aged, due to their potential productivity, education, and employment opportunities. However, the children of elderly also fall out of this narrow definition of economic productivity and causes Elderly people to become more concerned about their care options in the future.

Myanmar has now a window of opportunity to develop and expand creative approaches to address the pervasive poverty and poor health that characterizes the older population through initiatives by the government, empowered communities and civil society. The predictability of the demographic changes that lie ahead and the information provided by the ‘Survey of Older Persons in Myanmar’ highlight the need for a social protection system that embraces older persons, their families and communities.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pale, Than. Gender Identity and Female Education of Akha National Living in Kengtung Township, Shan State (East), Myanmar.

<sup>2</sup> CBM: Disability and Gender Analysis Toolkit, 39.

<sup>3</sup> IASC 2019, Guidelines – Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.

<sup>4</sup> Knodel, John (2014) The Situation of older persons in Myanmar – an overview, in BOLD, Vol.24, No.3, May 2014, 9-13.

## Youths in Rural Communities – eastern Shan State

The strong hierarchical culture between generations and age is well intact. Youth are culturally perceived as not being capable for holding decision-making positions and therefore tend to be ignored by the elders who dominate youth by the idea that people of age have all the knowledge. In order to address the needs of the youths more seriously, the Myanmar State Counsellor stressed the importance of narrowing the gap between older and younger generations by sharing experiences, knowledge and passing down of good heritage from the aged to younger generations.

In terms of intergenerational relationships between young and old, older people believe that generations co-exist without problems or serious disagreements. Research data confirms that the youths need to accept the decisions of the elderly. The youths themselves commented on this issue and indicated that negotiations between the generations do not happen and traditional hierarchy wins. Chapter 4 of this study provides more thorough reflections on the issue of intergenerational dialogue.

The major gap identified by youths themselves is the lack of educational and vocational training settings that provide opportunity to enhance youths' skill portfolio, including life skills. Youths are very uncertain about their future. This significant stress factor often leads them into drug use. The problematic fact is that, in comparison to previous years, drugs are readily available and even cheaper and easier to access in the project area. Overall, youths see little prospects for personal and professional development. In the research, youths commented that factors like the remoteness of the area, low levels of education and vocational training opportunities often lead some of them into early marriage.

## POTENTIAL IMPACT OF RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE PROJECT FRAMEWORK

The research findings provide valuable insights into the current situation of the target communities as well as in their pressing issues and aspirations. The MI project plans to work with a number of tools and approaches which have been reflected in each of the four sections: (a) gender roles and inclusion, (b) inclusion of people with disabilities and older people, (c) the inclusion of youth, and (d) Intersectionality. The practice-oriented recommendation clusters derive from the reflective analysis of research findings and aim to enhance the engagement of women, elderly, youth and people with disabilities in project activities. At the core of the recommendations lies the SBCC (Social Behavior Change Communication) approach which aims for facilitating dialogue, participation and engagement with targeted audiences towards positive and social behavior change. SBCC also deals with people's beliefs, attitudes and perceptions in order to enable and empower project participants to confidently adopt optimal nutrition-, health-, and agriculture practices.

Intentional and deliberate inclusion of vulnerable groups (women, young children, people with disabilities, elderly, and youths) are at the core of the successful project implementation. The availability of services and training opportunities in the target areas is currently limited or non-existing. Because rural communities greatly emphasize development interventions that directly benefit their lives, the project implementation requires the application of tools and approaches that bring positive change to the lives of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. Chapter 6 describes such tools and approaches in more detail and provides suggestions for how to uptake and to incorporate those into project activities.

At the center of people's receptiveness for project interventions are people's perceptions, belief systems and cultural practices that shape communal life, interactions within the community, power relations, and the ability to dialogue and engage with the outside world. In this context, some prevailing power dynamics between men and women, between



older people and youths, between people with disabilities and their caretakers, and power dynamics between the community and the larger society essentially shape development prospects but also barriers for people to prosper.

Within the context of **gender roles and relations**, the research identified six potential areas of impact that largely shape women's lives as well as their aspirations for participation in project activities.

- › The underlying causes of chronic malnutrition also need to be addressed from a cultural perspective. Field data and findings indicate that ultimate causative factors of malnutrition are rooted in cultural practices and correlate with intergenerational nutrition behaviors and taboos, women's triple role responsibilities in ethnic HHs, and the lack of access to health services. The design of technical training units needs to be informed by cultural beliefs and existing nutrition behaviors and practices.
- › The gender-balanced selection processes of agriculture extension workers will ensure that the needs, ideas, and experiences of the 45% of women who work in the agriculture sector are incorporated in extension services.
- › The identification of role model mothers and -fathers as positive deviants in nutrition education without an integrated ongoing gender analysis component carries the risk that men are not willing to become publicly visible as 'hero father'. Currently, ethnic men tend to avoid social stigma by doing 'light' work and 'women' work. The SBCC approach (as ongoing gender analysis) will gradually lead men and women into gender role bargaining and social behavior change communication.
- › The increased participation of women in decision-making (incl. WASH) is regularly opposed by cultural norms and bias against female leadership. A collaboration with GEN and the Shan Women Organization Network in doing leadership- and research training for women will further capacitate and encourage rural and ethnic women to take up leadership roles.
- › Gender inequalities in female-headed households can become reinforced when other male relatives (older male persons, cousins, etc.) live in the premises of women HH leadership, attempting to control household affairs. Project activities that aim for strengthening female-headed HHs need to ensure that poor women are empowered rather than confronted by greater gender inequality.
- › The gender mainstreaming of operational procedures of CSOs carries the potential of empowering organizational dynamics for conducting transformative gender work effectively. CSOs need to be empowered to confidently conduct community-based gender analysis to enable women and men at the local level to discover and appreciate the benefits of balanced gender relations.

The inclusion of people with disabilities and elderly is an important aspect of successful project implementation. This requires the application of tools and approaches that bring positive change into the lives of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. In regard to the needs of people with disabilities/ special needs, caretakers are often the ultimate decision-makers and need to be included in the planning and conduction of activities. Community support is very limited and the perception that disability is a self-induced problem that brings disgrace to families is widespread. In order to work towards higher inclusion and new perceptions of disability, advocacy and information sharing will be useful. As the project evolves, case studies can be utilized to share what has been achieved so that new views within communities can emerge. New convictions about existing capacities of people with disabilities are needed in order to foster the sustainable development of community-based social support networks and to let inclusion of people with disabilities become 'natural'.

The inclusion of older people in project activities opens new avenues for utilizing experience and context knowledge effectively. However, research findings reveal the existence of at least three categories of elderly. The first group consists of powerful and honored male elderly who enjoy full social integration since they are power holders, cultural advisors,

and political decision-makers on the village level. A second group includes all other male elderly without social responsibility in their communities. They occasionally receive attention during cultural/religious events. The third group of elderly are women who live within family settings or who live on their own. Elderly without children as caretakers face more difficulties than others. A good start-off best practice for the inclusion of vulnerable elderly are household visitations. It is recommended to conduct rapid need assessments during elderly home visits in order to gather information for feasible and immediate support (glasses, walking aids, etc.) that would significantly improve the persons' situations and reduce barriers to social inclusion.

The inclusion of youths in project activities, especially in training settings, will contribute to youths' capacity development. Currently, many youths are demotivated because they do not see much future prospects within rural living environments. The risk for drug use is a given. The research findings also indicate the existence of intergenerational issues and youths do not see chances for negotiating their needs. Appropriate and constructive means for intergenerational discussions about youths' potential roles in decision-making and political participation do not exist to date. While youths perceive having no political voice, older generations expect youths' full compliance to local rules and customs. The low educational prospects of youths provide little means for creative contributions to livelihoods or community development. Constructive ways forward may include facilitated intergenerational dialogue sessions between youth groups and powerful elderly. Such a discussion platform opens ways to learn and practice expressing of needs and to identify open windows for constructive collaboration and 'true' participation.

Technical vocational training and life skills training will be beneficial for youths. However, it is suggested to design trainings with a sufficient timeframe of at least two months in order to sufficiently cover technical- and life skill learning needs.

The establishment or utilization of existing youth clubs at the community level (either formal or informal) can be used

as a platform for vocational training/life skills trainings as well as for an opportunity to practice life skills learned. The youth club is an ideal training platform for expanding youths' knowledge on e.g. nutrition, health, hygiene and WASH, but also for acquiring advanced understanding of gender relations and negotiation practices. Such learning platform assists youths to become engaged and motivated to learn new things. Last but not least, youth clubs may support the youths in abstaining from drug use by engagement in meaningful group activities, including outreach activities that support vulnerable HHs.

## REGIONAL CONTEXT – EASTERN SHAN STATE

With its location next to the economically important Yunnan province in the eastern part of northern Myanmar, the Shan State has always been a strategically important area. Shan has for long been a strategic buffer area that several times enjoyed the dubious privilege of being caught in the middle, which some claim, has emboldened the political resolve of its people. Shan State is amongst the areas in Myanmar with the great ethnic diversity. On the list of the 135 officially recognized ethnic groups in Myanmar, Shan, - with 33 different groups, ranks second after Chin with 55 ethnic groups. Linked to its ethnic diversity, Shan State is the only state that has several Self-Administered Zones (SAZ)<sup>5</sup> which are constitutionally<sup>6</sup> embedded in self-administrative areas, such as the Wa Self-Administered Zones (SAZ) in the north-east of Shan State. For many government departments, the State level director is seated in Taunggyi while deputy directors are being stationed in Lashio and Kengtung respectively.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The legislative body of the SAZ has the right to enact laws related to urban and rural projects, public health, development, and construction and maintenance of roads and bridges (CDNH, p. 24).

<sup>6</sup> Shan State has four 'Zones' and one 'Division' which were established by the 2008 Constitution.

<sup>7</sup> UNDP (2015), Local Governance Mapping, The State of Local Governance: Trends in Shan, United Nations Development Programme, Yangon, Myanmar, p.7.

At the township- and ward/village tract level, development support committees (TDSCs and W/VTDC) serve as a consultative forum bringing together various interest groups to support the township administration on development issues. The role of the ward/tract administrator (W/VT) is generally perceived in the responsibility of resolving development challenges, security and mediation in conflicts.<sup>8</sup>

It should also be mentioned that research on gender, age, and disability (in)equalities in the region of eastern Shan State needs to be seen in the context of the longest and most protracted civil war in Asia. Security concerns remain high because Shan State represents the areas with the highest presence of militias – either related with the government or ethnic armed groups of the country. The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) further clearly describes, “the complexity of the more than six decades of conflict is rooted mainly in the multiplicity of actors involved; the Myanmar conflict involves fighting between the Tatmadaw, and over fifteen active non-state armed groups (NSAGs), including Shan and Wa, fighting in different locations all over the country.”<sup>9</sup>

In regard to ethnic tension between the Shan and both the Lahu and Akha, historical grievances between the different communities in Eastern Shan State can be found. Eastern Shan State has several ethnic armed groups (EAG/EO), such as Shan EAO, Lahu EAO, Akha EAO, Wa EAO, and the Myanmar Army. The influence of armed groups on Mongton and Monghsat township communities is considerably strong. The project area remains to be politically very sensitive, in many ways and forms. Also, drug smuggling and logging influence the critical social and economic challenges by carrying the risk to escalate to ‘drivers’ of conflict in these areas. The Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) which also signed the NCA is since the early 2000s one of the strongest EAOs in Myanmar. The RCSS maintains strongholds along the Shan

State border with Thailand and its operational area includes the Mongton- and Monghsat township area.<sup>10</sup>

Drugs are also widespread and a grave issue also in eastern Shan State. The regular occurrence of armed conflicts in eastern Shan State and its strategic importance in the ‘Golden Triangle’ (Shan State) has since become a nexus for opium, heroin and meth-amphetamine (Yaba) traffic – especially in eastern and northern areas. The two issues of drug production and militias are intrinsically linked since the drug trade funds many of the militias. According to conflict analysis (2017), the main area of Yaba production in eastern Shan state. The amount of illegal export of Yaba has increased since the ceasefire, as the result of better access to neighboring countries. Today, Thailand is the biggest consumer of Yaba, although it is also widely consumed within Myanmar.<sup>11</sup>

Needless to say, people’s experiences in the context as described in this brief analysis have deeply impacted the relations and structures of individuals, families, and communities, leaving painful marks particularly on more vulnerable people like women, girls, older people and people with disabilities. Intersectionalities commonly create many barriers on the way towards gender equality. Gender equality means equal opportunities, rights, and responsibilities for women, men, girls, and boys. However, through the impact on social relations, identities, and institutions, gender is intricately connected to many social processes. The interaction of society, personal factors, and environmental factors in the lives of people groups in eastern Shan State will be further discussed in the section on “Integrated Perspective of Exclusion and Intersectionalities” and will further tackle how social identities intersect with societal discrimination and are therefore in need of systemic solutions.

<sup>8</sup> UNDP (2015), Local Governance Mapping, p.7, 25.

<sup>9</sup> Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (2015), We want genuine peace, p.10.

<sup>10</sup> CDNH, 2018, Citizen Voices in Myanmar’s Transition: Shan State, p.15, 25.

<sup>11</sup> Ishii, Rico (2017), Context Analysis Report, Enhanced Livelihoods for Displaced People Project, KDN project Consortium.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendations – Project Implementation

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- › Conduct community-based gender analysis activities and train/empower multipliers to use the SBCC approach for community training and introduction of other technical activities.
- › Mainstream GADI principles into all training that the project delivers.
- › Integrate the SBCC approach into the project framework and train staff to incorporate this future leading approach in work practices.
- › Create a village-based dialogue platform on gender, age, and disability inclusion. Produce advocacy messages for gender, age, and disability to be shared with all groups.
- › Consider using social media for communicating inclusion messages in Burmese and other ethnic languages.
- › Design and provide safe migration training and life skills training for young people. Initiate youths-led youth clubs for learning life skills.
- › Streamline the agriculture and livelihood component (Outcome 1) of the project to integrate Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture (NSA) principles. Exchange the “demonstration field” model with the “experimentation field model” that builds on practical activity and learning loops through practice.
- › Introduce a participatory extension approach when setting up structures and training modules for agricultural village extension workers/multipliers.
- › Design and provide life skills training for young people that includes also safe migration information.
- › Consider older women, and youth for the multiplier role to share relevant nutrition, health and hygiene messages within their circles and the community.
- › Modify the ‘hero father, mother’ approach by integrating the SBCC approach into the framework of working with women, and 1,000-day HHs (see 2.2).
- › Analyze and document power relations and male roles in female-headed households where male relatives may be present (see 2.2).

### Recommendations – CBOs, Authorities, Communities

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- › Engage CBOs and community leadership in GADI training and awareness raising for the needs of people with disabilities, and for social inclusion.
- › At cluster village level, initiate a network and collaboration between families with children with disabilities.
- › Initiate and facilitate youth-led inter-generational dialogue forums over pressing issues on the basis of the SBCC approach.
- › Establish community-based Self-Help Groups for older people. Improving older people’s self-care through physical activity etc. offers great potential for improvements to health status.
- › Community to identify accessibility barriers in schools and work with the community on a plan to realize barrier-free access to schools for children with a disability.

### Recommendations – Malteser International

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- › Set annual timeframe for GADI refresher training for MI teams, GoUM partners and CSOs/CBOs in target areas.

- › Include the SBCC approach in organizational capacity building to convey nutrition, health and WASH messages for the project's Outcome 1 and 2 and beyond.
- › Consider expertise development on setting up Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs) for women's economic empowerment and skills development, embedded in the SBCC approach.
- › Capacitate national staff to use the 5 domains of the gender and inclusion analysis framework.<sup>12</sup> Integrate these domains in project monitoring.
- › Capacitate CBOs/CSOs on GADI and increase their gender awareness and engagement in inclusive activities.
- › Establish strategic linkages with the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement and the National Nutrition Centre to participate in a regional/national nutrition convergence dialogue.
- › Conduct a rapid health-seeking behavior (women), nutrition practices and food taboos study in project area, - potentially combined with the baseline survey.
- › Collaborate with local CSOs on regional/national level to streamline GADI activities, the SBCC approach, and SUN CSA into training modules on women leadership and research trainings.

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<sup>12</sup> 1. Laws, policies, regulations, institutional practices. 2. Cultural norms and beliefs. 3. Gender roles, responsibilities, and time used. 4. Access to and control over assets and resources. 5. Power and decision-making.



# 1. Introduction

Gender, age, and disability inclusion aims for the protection from and elimination of all forms of discrimination. Since gender, age, and disability inclusion are critical cross-cutting issues to be integrated in all stages of humanitarian action to ensure the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance, equitable and participatory development action cannot be achieved without adequate responses to currently existing needs and development preferences of women, men, elderly and people with disabilities in focus. Since September 2019, Malteser International (MI) started with the implementation of the “Expansion and Rehabilitation of Social Infrastructure and Food Security in Conflict-affected and Vulnerable Communities in Eastern Shan State” project.

With its emphasis on food security, nutrition, livelihood, and WASH activities in the remotely located and multi-ethnic Monghsat district, the project is currently in its inception phase. In line with MI International’s coherent approach of a gender-, age- and disability inclusive project implementation, MI Myanmar aims to gain a more thorough going understanding of the project beneficiaries’ perceptions of gender, age, and disability and potential (in)equalities in the project area and of how these have an impact on the project’s current inclusion framework. Furthermore, in order to remedy inequality’s root causes, MI Myanmar is eager to understand traceable intersectionalities that ultimately lead to people’s exclusion from participation and decision-making processes and thus negatively affect the lives of communities in Monghsat district. As part of the research findings, the consultancy team will also describe and illuminate those aspects of project elements that might cause potential harm and suggest a few project activity modifications to prevent potential conflict in the project area.

Before further elaborating on the Shan State Context Analysis, the description of the research methodology and limitations, a brief overview of the following report section will be provided. Using the gender analysis five domain framework, part 1 will provide an overview of gender (in)equality and the role of women in participation and decision-making in Mongh-

sat/Monghsat districts, (eastern) Shan State. The description of key informants’ perceptions of current gender roles and relations in Monghsat District, eastern Shan State is complemented by key literature findings on the five domains. The section concludes with considerations on the impact of respondents’ perceptions and attitudes on the MI project activities and implications for project activity modifications.

Using the five-domain framework for elderly- and disability analysis, part 2 presents an overview of disability and age in the project areas and the key findings on people’s perceptions, with a particular focus on people’s lived experience of disability and coming to age. This section will also conclude with its relevance for project activities and implications for project activity modifications.

Part 3 presents the summary of research field findings on youths and concludes with the impact of youths’ perceptions on the project and how project activity modifications will increase youths’ inclusion and participation.

In Part 4, research findings on existing patterns of exclusion and intersectionalities that exacerbate the lives of women (and men), elderly, and people with disabilities in the region will be illustrated. This section also includes the analysis of the findings’ impact and implications for the project, including a brief outlook for gender inclusive responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Annex 3 will further elaborate on a gender appropriate COVID-19 response in the context of MI project in eastern Shan State.

Before concluding with a summary and the report recommendations thereafter, part 5 gives room for a few relevant reflections on some potential risks embedded in the current project framework, in order to prevent the project from avoidable limitations in reaching the goal of expanding and rehabilitating social infrastructure and food security in eastern Shan State.

## 1.1 METHODOLOGY

The research study on Gender, Age, and Disability Inclusion (GADI) was carried out between March - May 2020. The research study included (a) the review of literature and project documents (see Literature Used) and (b) the conduction of a five-days field research in order to assess the views, attitudes, and perceptions of target communities and stakeholders of themes and issues regarding GADI. The ultimate analysis of research data and the design of recommendations was guided by gender analysis principles of the Moser framework and the gender, age, and disability five domain analysis frame suggested by USAID. The field research included people from three different ethnic backgrounds: Shan, Akha, and Lahu. In total, 51 women and 39 men, including three families with persons with disabilities, participated in FGDs or in key informant interview sessions. Further, key informative reflections from the three-days GADI training session are included and provide additional valuable insights in perceptions and attitudes of organizational and government staff on GADI themes.

The research format of the GADI study was primarily qualitative in nature and focused on conceptualizing and evaluating roles and relationships between men and women, elderly and the youth. Further, the level of communal inclusion of women and people with disabilities in the affairs of daily life and social services (e.g. health and education) and active participation in community decision-making with regard to people's livelihoods was under scrutiny. The Mon-ghsat-based field research of this study was carried out by one national consultant in the time frame of March 2-6, 2020. The field research collaborated with participants from four village communities (women, youth, older people, people with disabilities, and caretakers for people with disabilities). Other research participating stakeholders were religious and cultural leaders, leaders of CSOs (Patron of Shan Culture and Literature Association, White Color Philanthropy Association), and leaders of EAOs and government officials from the DoPH and DSW.

The field research methodology included the design of semi-structured questions and its utilization in focus group discussions and key informant interviews. To capture the views of community members, CBOs and authorities on the lived experience of gender, age and disability inclusion (or exclusion) were of utmost importance in order to be able to comprehend and analyze local perceptions and practices that shape vulnerable people's day-to-day life in eastern Shan State (eSS). Research questions were tailored to obtain a thorough understanding of daily realities encountered by women, older people and persons with disabilities. Therefore, the practice of attentive listening to the responses and stories of these vulnerable people groups was of key importance. The qualitative field research methodology also included observation as a research tool that underlined and complemented the primary tools.

The field research complemented existing information gleaned from the literature review and thus helped the consultant team to better understand multiple forms of disadvantage and challenge as experienced by vulnerable people groups in eSS. The five domains of the Gender Analysis/ Inclusion frame provided the ramifications of the GADI assessment and enabled the research team to provide thick description of qualitative data.

These five domains<sup>13</sup> of this gender and disability analysis are this:

- Domain 1:** Laws, policies, regulations, institutional practices.
- Domain 2:** Cultural norms and beliefs.
- Domain 3:** Gender roles, responsibilities, and time used.
- Domain 4:** Access to and control over assets and resources.
- Domain 5:** Power and decision-making.

<sup>13</sup> USAID (2015), Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, [https://2012-2017.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/Gender\\_USAID.pdf](https://2012-2017.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/Gender_USAID.pdf)

## 1.2. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The GADI research study included a literature review and the field data gathering session. The extensive literature included research reports, papers, and training materials covering all essential and relevant elements and components for Gender, Age and Disability. The GADI field research concentrated on interviews and focus group discussions with representatives (men, women, older people, youth, families with persons with disabilities) from three ethnic groups; the Shan, Akha, and Lahu.

The research study was conducted within a limited budget and timeframe. Additional challenges were identified by the research team and are described further below. One important ethnic group, the Wa, could finally not become included in the field research. Due to a sudden unavailability of the respective village leader, research could not be conducted as initially planned for. The appointed visit of this village had to be canceled and therefore, Wa community voices are not included in the field research. Within the research setting, GoUM voices are also limited to two representatives.

Another challenge was to quickly create an environment of trust and to build rapport with focus group participants. This particular challenge occurred with youth research participants. Rapport previously built appears to be a necessary pre-requisite to foster a certain level of confidence and comfort in respondents. Confidence and trust are pre-requisites for youths' meaningful engagement in discussions on sensitive social and intergenerational issues. The field researcher had the impression that the respondents of all three village youth groups were hesitant to engage in information-sharing dialogue on a deeper level. Some information gaps also occurred because some interview partners or focus group participants did not respond to specific questions.

Due to the limited time frame, the research team was not able to gather specific data on women's health-seeking behaviors, people's nutrition practices and cultural food taboos. Since

these three important areas are interwoven with the gender aspects, it is suggested and to pay particular attention to ethnic nutritional behaviors and food taboos prior to launching planned project activities.

Last but not least, the remoteness of villages with respective infrastructure deficiencies was another challenge that required much travel time. However, the completion of the field research sessions was according to the schedule and could be reached prior to the COVID-19 related social distancing requirements.





## 2. Gender Roles and Inclusion

The project-related P-FIM Exercise conducted in May 2019 contributed to the following findings on gender and inclusion. Women were identified as “non-active participants in community discussions.” However, women’s voice-less participation in the community and the cultural practice of child marriage are named but not lamented. However, it has been much more talked about people’s and particular women’s most pressing issue of divorce as a consequence of the ever-increasing social threat of drug use, frequent “fights and quarrels” between women and men and related losses of livelihoods. It is notable that women did not mention their concern about inequalities in gender roles/relations. However, they elaborated on the issue of women’s exclusion and discrimination when it comes to accessibility and affordability of health services and education. Villagers described that their remote village location is a barrier for women to receive health services in sexual reproduction and maternity needs. So far, women heavily rely on the services of traditional birth attendants (TBAs). It has been reported that inclusion of women in proper health care does only come to pass when community members “plan together as a community to make it happen that the woman gets her way to the clinic.”

In order to understand the realities of people in target communities and their current perceptions of gender (in)equality and the potential exclusion/discrimination issue on a deeper level, the GADI analysis has been conducted. The evaluation and interpretation of the field research data in conjunction with the literature review is rooted in the Moser Gender Analysis Framework.

The Moser Framework provides an inter-relational process-oriented emancipation approach which emerged from majority world (non-Western) feminism which maintains active resistance against oppressive and exploitive structures and relations.<sup>14</sup> This means that gender planning procedures

are concerned with transformative processes that involve redistribution of power and resources within households, and negotiation and resolution on time used for daily work.<sup>15</sup> This implies that, in order to reach emancipation from gender inequality, development organizations need to conceptualize that gender planning is not an “add-on” but an integrative approach that becomes interwoven into every aspect of managing a development project, with a particular focus on women’s empowerment. In order to avoid to make unintendedly things worse for female and male project participants, this GADI gender-analysis is not meant to be a “one-off exercise”. The consultant team suggests that the analysis of gender roles and relations in further project planning remains to be a continuous analysis of the different impact of certain development interventions and policies on women and on men.<sup>16</sup> However, this GADI gender analysis needs to start from somewhere and thus introduces the USAID five domains of gender- and age/disability analysis.<sup>17</sup>

### 2.1 SUMMARY OF GENDER RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### Domain 1: Laws, policies, regulations, institutional practices

##### Field Data Section

**The right of inheritance** in Lahu and Shan communities varies. Sons and daughters often receive equal rights to inherit from their parents. In some cases, the eldest son inherits a greater share than his siblings. Often, parents decide to leave most of their inheritance with those children who will take on

<sup>14</sup> Meehan, Fiona, *What is Gender and why does it matter*, Module Code KD602[A], Gender and Development, Maynooth University, International Development Studies, unpublished, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Moser, Caroline O.N., *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice, and Training*, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Meehan, Fiona, *What is Gender and why does it matter*, Module Code KD602[A], Gender and Development, Maynooth University, International Development Studies, unpublished, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> USAID (2015), *Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment*.

the caretaker role for their aged parents. Other parents entitle their daughter to receive some of the parents' belongings at her marriage. However, this means that the daughter will be excluded from any further rights of inheritance for the rest of her life. In the Akha tradition, only sons have the right to inherit. Only daughters-in-law may have the right to inherit from their parents-in-law. In Akha, Lahu, and Shan tradition, wives have the right to inherit from their husbands. However, in Shan communities, as soon as a wife's husband passed away, the husband's brothers and sisters are not willing to share their brother's inheritance with their sister-in-law.

*One Akha EAO respondent said, “although there exist the Single Marriage Law for Buddhist Myanmar women, it is not affecting our region. Every ethnicity has its own ‘customs’ and traditions of divorce.”*

The **right to divorce** is only regulated for Shan women who are under the Myanmar Buddhist single marriage law. According to Myanmar Law, Shan women have the right to divorce their husbands. However, despite the fact that divorce cases are triggered by drug use in many ethnic families, research respondents explained that Shan women rarely choose to get divorced from their husbands. For Akha and Lahu women, traditional divorce customs are still fully binding for rural communities. The Lahu traditional divorce customs and actual cases are administered by the Lahu Culture and Literature Association and its announcement system. Divorce is customary regulated by an elderly committee on the level of the village administrator. When both partners wish the divorce, each partner has to pay 60,000 Myanmar Kyats penalty. However, when only one partner of the couple requests the divorce, the full penalty fee of 120,000 Myanmar Kyats which will be demanded from the person who requests divorce.

Research respondents further explained the Akha customary practice and right for men to re-marry when their wife doesn't give birth to a child or to a boy after 13 years of marriage. In such cases, the husband is allowed to marry another woman. The husband can either divorce the first wife or keep

her in the family. According to Akha customs and traditions, men are favored over women. Certain religious ceremonies can only be conducted by men. Women are only accepted to do so when they are married and reached menopause. Another significant reason for divorce was mentioned by MI staff, “There are many divorce cases because of drug use.”

## Literature Data Section

In 1997, Myanmar acceded and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This is considered a massive step in the protection of women rights, but its enforcement will be critical.<sup>18</sup> The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement adopted the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013–2022 (based on the 2008 Constitution), which includes 12 areas of development aligned with the Beijing Platform for Action (1995).<sup>19</sup> However, it is the women's organizations formed by activists who coordinated the advocacy to push for the empowerment for all women.<sup>20</sup> As part of the CEDAW, the Myanmar government committed to make and to enforce women's rights and to promote women's security and equality in political and economic participation.<sup>21</sup> However, women's issues and rights have long been the least priority. Despite the increase of elected women to 10.5 per cent in the 2015 general election, women's rights activists have thus far advocated unsuccessfully for a 30 per cent quota system.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Aye Lei Tun, La Ring and Su Su Hlaing, EMReF: *Feminism in Myanmar*, 2019, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> ADB, UNDP, UN Women: *Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Myanmar*, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Aye Lei Tun, La Ring and Su Su Hlaing. *Feminism in Myanmar*. Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation (EMReF), 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Aye Lei Tun et al., *Feminism in Myanmar*.

<sup>22</sup> Aye Lei Tun et al.

Some of the largest women's groups working on gender equality are the Women's Organizations Network of Myanmar (WON) and the Gender Equality Network (GEN). These organizations play an important role in advocacy and government accountability on gender issues.<sup>23</sup> Exiled ethnic women's groups introduced the concept of "feminism" to their sisters who remained inside the country. Ethnic women groups organized themselves to raise their voices against the human rights abuses of women by the military and initiated a "rivalry of ideology between the traditional femininity inside the country and progressive feminism outside the country."<sup>24</sup>

## Domain 2: Cultural norms and beliefs

### Field Data Section

***"Traditionally, men are the head of the household. This custom is not practiced differently in rural or urban communities"*** (CBO voice on culture and gender).

Religious/cultural leaders repeatedly exclaimed that "gender discrimination is not an issue in our community" and Shan people expressed their belief that "there is no gender discrimination in Shan society and that they are treated equally." According to the Lahu Christian church structure, "there is a women group under the church that organizes women activities." So, they argue that the existence of women groups and church programs provide evidence enough for gender inclusion. In the perspective of some of the Lahu leaders, gender discrimination only happens in terms of unequal gendered division of labor (which they don't perceive/acknowledge to be practiced in their community). In this context, these leaders referred to Akha women who tend to work much harder than their male counterparts. In contrast, research respondents reported that

Akha women perceive themselves as strong and confident because they do 'men-like' work and are able to collect fire wood and fetch water from rural areas. Some Akha women said, "according to our tradition and custom, we have to do hard work like men" (Women Focus Group).

### Literature Data Section

The national authors of *Feminism in Myanmar* stated that there is no actual Burmese translation of "feminism". It is mostly referred to as *ei-hti-ya-wada* (something that focuses only on women's issues). This means that many people in Myanmar misunderstood "feminism" as a concept that works against men "rather than social cohesion and gender complementarity."<sup>25</sup> Also, "there is the widespread belief that Myanmar women enjoy equality and high status and are able to participate in public life as men do. There is the misperception that gender inequality does not exist in Myanmar. Men's and women's official and legal equal status provided in the 2008 Constitution has been highlighted as proof. No one points out the traditional customs and practices that contradict such a belief, however. During the previous military regime, the government perpetuated the illusion of women's high status in statements and reports."<sup>26</sup> These literature findings are clearly on the confirmative side of GADI field data findings.

Extremely male-dominated military regimes reinforced traditional cultural norms that associate men with public leadership and place women in domestic and supporting roles.<sup>27</sup> Minoletti refers to a survey from 2014 that found that the majority of Myanmar citizens think that men make better political leaders than women. Forty-two percent of survey respondents agreed strongly with the statement that men make better political leaders than women, and 29 percent agreed somewhat, with almost no difference between men

<sup>23</sup> Chandra, S. *Investing in Women*, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Aye Lei Tun et al., *Feminism in Myanmar*, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Aye Lei Tun et al., *Feminism in Myanmar*, 23.

<sup>26</sup> Aye Lei Tun et al., *Feminism in Myanmar*, 26.

<sup>27</sup> Minoletti, Paul. *Gender Inequality in a Decentralized Myanmar*, 6.

and women in this perception.<sup>28</sup> It's been found that "nearly 88 per cent of the population in Myanmar is Buddhist and believing in the concept of the male power known as hpon that comes to men at birth. Myanmar Buddhist women are considered "inferior" to men because they lack that power, while that power gives men the nobility of manhood. Second, because of traditional practices, ethnic women are losing their rights in inheritance as well as in marriage and divorce. Third, the State reinforces patriarchal institutionalization in defining women's role as in the family. In the household registration list or on the National Registration Card, women are always given the position of "dependent". The name of a girl's father is more important than hers for school enrolment and for the National Registration Card."<sup>29</sup> Further, since colonialism, the conceptualization of femininity preserving the culture by women's bodies and clothing strengthened the value of masculinity, patriarchal power and nationalism.<sup>30</sup> In summary, cultural norms present the biggest barrier to women's equal participation in the society while patriarchal institutions keep women from their entitled freedoms and potential. This of course is also followed by a lack of confidence in decision-making, since leadership is associated with masculinity while femininity remains associated with modesty and politeness.<sup>31</sup>

### Domain 3: Gender roles, responsibilities, and time used

#### Field Data Section

***"Women are not included in decision-making and must do homework, and daughters cannot inherit properties from their parents, e.g. land, house, jewelry etc."*** (Male GADI workshop participant, government staff, GAD).

Among all ethnic groups, gendered division of labor is similarly described. Men's responsibility in agriculture is "land clearing, digging holes in the soil for seeds, and harvesting crops." Women are responsible for "burning slashed vegetation, planting/sowing seeds, weeding, and harvesting." Activities like clearing of land and vegetation (after slash and burn) and harvesting were often described as a shared responsibility. In remote villages, women often do not have formal education and focus on shifting cultivation, together with men. Men prepare the holes for the seeds and women plant the seeds and seedlings. Women are also responsible for burning the vegetation. Firewood collection is done by women and children, especially among Akha people.

Akha research respondents referred to the traditional method used for husking paddy (rice). Original methods were physical hard labor when the traditional equipment for pounding was used. This type of work belonged to women because Akha men refused to do it to avoid the loss of maleness reputation among other men. When this method was still in use, Akha men considered this type of work as 'light' work which was meant to be done by women. Although farmers use rice husking machines nowadays, this work remains strictly gendered divisional labor, culturally deeply ingrained.

However, all ethnic research respondents confirmed that a clear-cut division of labor roles became less common because all family members (men, women, children, and elderly) have to participate in every farm activity. In interviews, respondents talked about changed patterns in livelihoods and that

<sup>28</sup> Minoletti, Paul. *Gender (In)Equality in Governance of Myanmar: Past, Present, and Potential Strategies for Change*, 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Aye Lei Tun et al., *Feminism in Myanmar*, 8.

<sup>30</sup> Aye Lei Tun et al., *Feminism in Myanmar*, 12, 13, 16.

<sup>31</sup> Minoletti, Paul. *Gender (In)Equality in Governance of Myanmar: Past, Present, and Potential Strategies for Change*, 27.

gendered division of labor changed along with it. Men as well as women are reported to be engaged in income-generating activities. In female-headed HHs, women are often engaged in small scale food shop entrepreneurship (shops that sell groceries and noodle dishes) at home or at the markets while their husbands provide raw materials and necessary ingredients. It's been said that men adjusted "to do domestic chores like cooking and child care taking." Although migration has not so much been mentioned as an issue, some women do migrate to Thailand for economic reasons while their husbands stay home to care for their children. Some respondents know of elderly men who are not involved in income-generating activities but who focus on domestic chores instead. The model of female-headed HHs among Shan people has been observed as quite common because a number of Shan men fell victim to frequent drug use.

## Literature Data Section

Men in Myanmar have been found strongly resistant towards domestic chores. This realm of labor is considered to be women's responsibility, even if women are busy with paid work. Gendered division of labor enforces gender inequality in political participation. Research on Myanmar also indicates that women working outside of the home with their own source of income have greater bargaining power within the household.<sup>32</sup> Women perform most tasks related to crop cultivation and spend long hours with domestic care, gathering of firewood and fuel, fetching of drinking water, and with cooking and HH member care.<sup>33</sup> Several research studies confirmed that women in Myanmar have much less time for rest and leisure than men. Prevalent gender norms pitch men as the household leader and breadwinner, with the work of a man considered

more valuable than that of a woman. Gender expectations appear to be present from a young age. Girls are far more likely to engage in all types of household chores than boys, regardless whether they are engaged in paid work or not.<sup>34</sup>

A UNDP study from 2012 showed that "women spent four or five times more hours per day on reproductive and domestic tasks than men."<sup>35</sup> Role reversal can bring social stigma, and appears to take place only in the poorest households out of necessity. Frustrations about not being able to live up to norms can sometimes lead to drug and alcohol abuse in men, as well as domestic violence.<sup>36</sup> Current research reveals that women's increased engagement in the economy has not led to more equitable responsibility of household work.

In order to improve women's rights and gender equality issues in Myanmar, GEN began to "engage men" because "male attitudes crucially shape household attitudes towards women's participation in governance; they determine how men respond to women when they do participate; and they affect the broader social context determining men's and women's opportunities for participation."<sup>37</sup>

## Domain 4: Access to and control over assets and resources

### Field Data Section

***"Women mostly oversee household assets and cash flow. Our husbands ask money from us when they need money"*** (Women Focus Group).

<sup>32</sup> Minoletti, Paul. *Gender (In)Equality in Governance of Myanmar: Past, Present, and Potential Strategies for Change*, 26.

<sup>33</sup> Minoletti, *Gender (In)Equality in Governance of Myanmar*, 78.

<sup>34</sup> Chandra, S. *Investing in Women*, 6.

<sup>35</sup> ADB, UNDP, UN Women, *Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Myanmar: A Situation Analysis*, 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Minoletti, *Gender (In)Equality in Governance of Myanmar*, 33.

<sup>37</sup> Chandra, S. *Investing in Women*, 6.

In Akha, Lar Hu, and Shan communities, both women and men have access to household assets. However, women are in control of household asset administration while economic decision-making in relation to agriculture and community affairs are dominated by men. In all three ethnic groups, ownership of land and productive assets is mostly bound to the name of the man/husband. Men are reported to request money from their wives when they need it. Respondents indicated that one major source of disagreement and quarrelling between husbands and wives are finances, especially when it comes to differences in attitudes over household expenditure. This seems to become very relevant in the case of drug use, coupled with the absence of helpful negotiation practices and conflict resolution practices in place.

### Literature Data Section

Women typically decide on and are responsible for small daily expenditures. They spend more on family needs and are often the poorest members of the household. Men usually control large expenditures and spend more on personal consumption.<sup>38</sup> Access to land is the most critical productive asset in farming and the lack of access, control, and ownership are major constraints for female farmers. Current land laws state that land must be registered in the name of the head of the household. However, women are generally listed as dependents on identification documents. Legal mechanisms for joint ownership of property and frameworks for women to defend their rights upon divorce or death of their husband are missing. Of male-headed households working in agriculture, 98 per cent had access to agricultural land compared to only 61 per cent of female-headed households. Under religious customary laws that govern succession, inheritance and marriage, husbands and sons often inherit

property.<sup>39</sup> While there are female-headed households by choice (economically privileged), female headship may result from desertion, divorce, or separation, and the woman head of the household may be less educated, have an insecure livelihood, and have many children and other dependents.<sup>40</sup>

## Domain 5: Power and decision-making

### Field Data Section

***“Lahu communities were dominated by men in the past. This has changed and men are not acting as dominant rulers over us anymore. However, men are still the head of the HHs” (Women Focus Group).***

The majority of research respondents said that “most family decisions are made by men (husbands).” Men’s decisions typically reach beyond the HH level and are understood to contribute to the wellbeing of the community. Therefore, differences in men’s and women’s ideas/opinions about issues on the community level do often not exist. Only men are entitled to actively participate in community leadership. And as mentioned in others sections before, women are meant to be ‘passive’ supporters without a political voice with no negotiation practice in private and public spheres in place. While women are only supposed to (passively) attend village meetings in case of their husbands’ absence, men are the ‘official’ decision makers for the family. Women in focus groups said that “the husband has the responsibility to look after the family” and that “the worst case for us is the divorce.” Active participation and decision-making in village meetings is also

<sup>38</sup> ADB, UNDP, UN Women, *Gender Equality and Women’s Rights in Myanmar: A Situation Analysis*, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> ADB, UNDP, UN Women, *Gender Equality and Women’s Rights in Myanmar: A Situation Analysis*, 2016, Chandra, S. Investing in Women, 7.

<sup>40</sup> ADB, UNDP, UN Women, *Gender Equality and Women’s Rights in Myanmar: A Situation Analysis*, 2016, 68.

the domain of elderly (male) and religious leaders (male), see in section 3.1.

During religious and cultural ceremonies and social events, men construct temporary shelters while women do all tasks related to catering and event service. However, Shan women expressed their impression that there are no barriers for women to participate in public community affairs. In Lahu communities, women also traditionally support communal activities especially by the activities of women-led church women groups. They organize religious/cultural events and social activities. Community-women groups are also responsible for community visits of people in need (i.e. elderly).

## Literature Data Section

Since 1930, the role of women in farming that was regarded as supplementary to men's work was not well acknowledged in political participation.<sup>41</sup> After the 1962 coup, the Burma Socialist Programme Party (backed by the military) discouraged female leadership and did not support political power positions for women.<sup>42</sup> The article 352 of the 2008 Myanmar Constitution states that "the Union, in appointing or assigning duties to civil service personnel, shall upon specified qualifications being fulfilled not discriminate for or against any citizen based on race, birth, religion, and sex." However, despite prohibiting gender discrimination in appointments to government posts, Article 352 states that "nothing in this section shall prevent appointment of men to positions that are naturally suitable for men."<sup>43</sup> Minoletti writes, "the multiple forms of discrimination that currently limit women's political participation in Myanmar are thus a limit on women's rights, capabilities, and well-being."<sup>44</sup>

2014 data shows that women were only 42 of the 16,785 VTAs in Myanmar (0.25%). The Administrator (VTA) position is the most important elected position in local government. With only 0.2 per cent seats won for women in the 2012 ward and village tract administrator elections, women are likely to be [and to remain] tools of male leadership.<sup>45</sup> However, "the one elected body in Myanmar that has highly gender equal participation has also been found at the local level: The National Community Driven Development Project (NCDDP) which has the requirement that representatives on the Village Tract committees created for this project are 50% female and 50% male."<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, some of the most important factors shaping women's ability to participate in governance activities are: time constraints; cultural norms, including a bias against female leadership; restrictions on women's travel; and the presence or absence of other female leaders.<sup>47</sup> However, the feminist ideals leading the social and political changes became more emphasized when the women's groups began to challenge the traditional notions of femininity and the roles of women in politics. Also, the Shan Women's Action Network "take on women's issues for political capacity building, women's education for economic and social advancement, women's participation in economic development and the end to violence against women."<sup>48</sup>

## 2.2 ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITIES AND STAKEHOLDERS PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER ON THE PROJECT

### Address underlying root causes of malnutrition from a cultural perspective

<sup>41</sup> Aye Lei Tun et al., *Feminism in Myanmar*, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Aye Lei Tun et al., *Feminism in Myanmar*, 13.

<sup>43</sup> ADB, UNDP, UN Women, *Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Myanmar: A Situation Analysis*, 2016, 60.

<sup>44</sup> Minoletti, Paul. *Gender Inequality in a Decentralized Myanmar*, 6.

<sup>45</sup> Minoletti, Paul. *Gender Inequality in a Decentralized Myanmar*, 4, Aye Lei Tun et al., *Feminism in Myanmar*, 20.

<sup>46</sup> Minoletti, Paul. *Gender Inequality in a Decentralized Myanmar*, 4.

<sup>47</sup> Minoletti, Paul. *Gender Inequality in a Decentralized Myanmar*, 8.

<sup>48</sup> ADB, UNDP, UN Women, *Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Myanmar: A Situation Analysis*, 2016, 22.



The MI Proposal clearly indicates the project’s intention “to mainly address the underlying causes of malnutrition in order to address the immediate causes of malnutrition and to increase resilience on the individual level.”<sup>49</sup> Underlying causes of malnutrition on the HH- and community level were identified as “limited availability of clean water and sanitation as well as lack of sufficient knowledge of good hygiene, nutrition, and care practices alongside limited HH food security/diversity and HH income.” Beyond technical underlying causes of malnutrition, field data and findings from the literature review indicate that ultimate causative factors of malnutrition are rooted in cultural practices and beliefs. Underlying causes of intergenerational malnutrition (intergenerationally passed on) strongly correlate with intergenerational nutrition behaviors and -taboos (as often passed on by elderly child caretakers), gendered division of labor (time used for daily tasks by women and men), women’s triple roles in ethnic HHs, and local health services lacking inclusiveness of ethnic mothers and children.

In order to follow through with all forms of malnutrition by a multi-sectorial approach (MS-NPAN), it is recommended to conduct a rapid assessment/survey among pregnant and lactating women (reproductive age) and elderly women (who are responsible for child caretaking) on health seeking behaviors, nutrition practices and food taboos in ethnic households. Planned trainings on adequate food preparation for women and children, breastfeeding and feeding during weaning periods need to be informed by cultural beliefs and existing taboos nutrition behaviors and practices. The rapid assessment will provide ethnically relevant information on various adjustments needed in existing MI training materials.

The MI project aims for “equal participation of women and men in educational activities in order to improve their knowledge on health, hygiene, and nutrition. Shared involvement

in home gardening and animal breeding activities is anticipated, without overburdening women.” In order to reach gender equal participation, men’s active engagement and the reduction of gendered labor divisions, it is strongly recommended to conduct an ongoing gender analysis prior to actual project activities. The goal of community-based gender analysis<sup>50</sup> is to reduce women’s work loads and to empower women and men in their personal and communal evaluation and reflection on men’s and women’s time used in daily labor as well as to create opportunities for inter-gender negotiation and bargaining practices over traditional gender roles. Research key findings show that cultural norms present the biggest barrier to women’s equal participation in society. There is the misperception that gender inequality does not exist in Myanmar. With that in mind, project participants won’t come to terms with the project’s approach of women empowerment and gender inclusion. Community-based gender analysis continued creates opportunity to reflect on concepts of “male power” and “female disempowerment and inferiority” and to wrestle with the idea that gender equality doesn’t work against men but brings social cohesion and gender complementarity. Gender analysis prior to project activities that address more technical underlying causes of malnutrition may serve as an eye-opener for unequal work distribution between men and women and women’s triple roles in ethnic HHs. The ongoing process of gender role negotiation that addresses cultural beliefs bears chances for change in behavior, perceptions, and attitudes in terms of gender roles/relations. This will build a fruitful foundation and pre-requisite for all actual project activities.

### **Gender Balanced Selection Process of Agriculture Extension Workers**

Literature research findings confirm that the role of women in farming, regarded as supplementary to men’s work since

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<sup>49</sup> Malteser International Proposal.

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<sup>50</sup> Annex 6 – Links to additional resources, Helvetas Nepal.



1930, was not well acknowledged in political participation.<sup>51</sup> And after the 1962 coup, the Burma Socialist Programme Party (backed by the military) discouraged female leadership and did not support political power positions for women.<sup>52</sup> In current events of COVID-19 pandemic, farmers have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 crisis. It should be noted that 45 per cent of working women, next to 52 per cent of working men, also work in agriculture. Therefore, both, male and female workers in agriculture should be considered to be farmers.<sup>53</sup> Field research findings repeatedly confirmed that women in eastern Shan perform most tasks related to farming. In the same time, it should be noted that women spend four or five times more hours per day on reproductive and domestic tasks than men. Therefore, it is recommended to also (balanced gender quota) identify female agricultural village extension workers as multipliers for advisory services since they bring in sufficient experience in crop cultivation and are receptive for the cultivation of alternative nutritious crops for the health of their children and family. And as mentioned elsewhere, concerning the importance of community recognition, extension workers should be identified by a community-led selection process, which also implies that community women should be active participants in the selection process.

### Positive Deviants in Nutrition Education

For the Nutrition Education section, the project proposal plans to identify “a network of 60 multipliers for nutrition advisory services in communities.” These village-based multipliers are likely to include TBAs, role model mothers and possibly hero fathers who are fathers with active engagement in childcare. The “role model mother” and “role

model father” approach leans towards the Positive Deviant Approach, a commendable participatory rural appraisal tool for community development. Nevertheless, the field and literature review revealed that the attempt of immediate gender transformative activities (e.g. public utilization of hero fathers) in order to promote shared household responsibilities, child caretaking, control over resources and decision-making may result into rejection of participation on the side of “hero fathers”.

It has been observed that immediate “role reversal can bring social stigma, and appears to take place only in the poorest households out of necessity. Frustrations about not being able to live up to norms can sometimes lead to drug and alcohol abuse in men, as well as domestic violence.<sup>54</sup> Current research reveals that women’s increased engagement in the economy has not led to more equitable responsibility of household work. The cultural ‘no go’ for men doing “light” and “women” work is culturally deeply ingrained. It is likely that potential “hero fathers” might still not be willing to become publicly visible in order to avoid social stigma and shaming. But because there have been men identified who adjusted to more fluid gender norms (it is possible!) and the project’s commitment for avoiding reinforcement of gender stereotypes, it is once again recommended to implement gender analysis activities that ultimately lead towards gender roles bargaining and social behavior change communication (SBCC). It is also recommended to prioritize positive deviant role families over individual persons and to implement an ongoing awareness raising forum for engaging men in learning on positive masculinity. With the community-approved selection of community facilitators, gender role negotiation can also become mentored during village home visits.

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<sup>51</sup> Aye Lei Tun et al., *Feminism in Myanmar*, 11.

<sup>52</sup> Aye Lei Tun et al., *Feminism in Myanmar*, 13.

<sup>53</sup> OECD: Tackling Coronavirus (COVID-19). Contributing to a Global Effort: Women at the Core of the Fight against COVID-19 Crisis.

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<sup>54</sup> Chandra, S. *Investing in Women*, 6.

### **Increased women's participation in decision-making in WASH activities**

For water and sanitation activities, it has been planned to involve women in reproductive age in the planning and implementation of female-friendly water and sanitation facilities, for their personal benefit and increased participation in decision-making. Eastern Shan State research findings show that women's restrictions from leadership roles are time constraints, cultural norms, bias against female leadership and restrictions on women's travel. Many findings point to the urgent need of women in leadership functions, including leadership roles in village wards. It is therefore recommended, in collaboration with Gender Equality Network and the Shan Women Organization Network, to include research training units for women in the project activities. These women organizational networks currently offer training courses for women in leadership as well as research in social science.<sup>55</sup> In this context, it is recommendable to embark on the research questions of "what happens to female opportunities for participation in local governance in areas where many men are absent due to migration or conflict, and what happens to female opportunities for participation in local governance in areas where there are high rates of drug use among males."

### **Gender Inequality in Female-headed Households**

In the proposal sections on WASH, the implementation of the CLTS approach is targeted to "500 most vulnerable HHs, including female-headed households." Research data of this study revealed that the nature of female-headed HHs quite varies. There are female-headed HHs of rather 'affluent' single women who can afford to voluntarily lead their household under their own leadership. However, many other female-head-

ed households are led by poor and widowed women as well as by women who are divorced or whose husbands/partners are drug users or in migration. It should be noted that these female-headed HHs often accommodate male relatives. And when these women do not earn salaries from jobs outside their households, which earns them some sort of respect and ownership, it is rather likely that their ownership over household assets and resources and decision-making power is restricted and controlled by other male relatives in her household. Such information is essentially important for all planned female-headed HH provisions with advisory service, technical support, and construction materials. The type of HH should be carefully examined, to make sure that poor women are empowered through project activities, rather than confronted by greater gender inequality and overpowering by male household members.

### **Gender Mainstreaming of Civil Society Partner Organization(s)**

Gender planning in international development is highly relevant because in depth knowledge about the triple role of women in the households of the Majority World and the nature of inter-relational bargaining power makes women's identity visible. Research data from process-oriented gender analysis is likely to contribute to the emancipation of women from subordination and their achievement of equality, equity, and empowerment.<sup>56</sup>

One element of the MI project is to foster the partnership with one or more CSO(s) that becomes capable of implementing project activities. One core element of "improved institutional and operational capacity" of CSOs should be gender mainstreaming activities and the ongoing process of gender analysis. A neglect of transformative gender roles and relations

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<sup>55</sup> Gender Equality Network, *Taking the Lead: An Assessment of Women's Leadership Training Needs and Training Initiatives in Myanmar*, 2013.

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<sup>56</sup> Moser, Caroline O.N., *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice, and Training*, 1993.

should be avoided. The mere collection of sex-disaggregated gender data does not ensure that project staff take gender into consideration and simply training staff is not sufficient to promote organizational-wide adoption of gender frameworks. An 'add-women and stir method' can be avoided by implementing the original empowerment approach that recognizes women's triple role and seeks to meet strategic gender needs indirectly through bottom-up mobilization around practical gender needs. Considering transformative gender work at every stage of programme implementation means to motivate women and men to use their bargaining power, a dynamic and complex process of negotiation whereby gender relations are negotiated and power balance be found in households. It is recommended to actively collaborate with GADI training workshop participants in terms of the implementation of gender, age, and disability inclusion measures.

In response to the GADI gender, age, and disability inclusion training course, the trainers provided the following feedback: "Training subjects and lessons are absorbed by government staffs, CSOs, CBOs, MI staff, NGOs and INGOs, and they try to imagine the real ground and will focus on government projects and NGO projects that will implement GADI training material." And, "Civil Society organizations, NGOs, and INGOs also decided to continue to study on GADI subjects and to apply what they learned on a day to day basis."

Further it is recommended that MI staff, in collaboration with CSOs and women organizations, collect research data on women's participation in public decision-making, on the impact of the project, and to make data analysis more readily available. It is recommended to conduct further gender analysis of technical and vocational education/training and to ensure that TVET promotes women's expanded entry into nontraditional occupations, to match skills with labor market demand.



### 3. Inclusion of People with Disabilities and People of Older Age

***“We have a moral duty to remove the barriers to participation, and to invest sufficient funding and expertise to unlock the vast potential of people with disabilities”*** (Stephen Hawking, WHO Advocate)

#### 3.1 SUMMARY OF DISABILITY AND ELDERLY RESEARCH FINDINGS

##### Domain 1: Laws, policies, regulations, institutional practices

##### Field Data Section

***“I would like to check and test my eye sight by an eye specialist, but I never saw a doctor”*** (23 years old woman who lost her eye when she was young, Akha Village).

**Elderly.** Elderly of all ethnic groups define age between 50-60 years. Respondents stated that there is no official elderly home in Monghsat Town so far. The township community and one local CBO (White Color group) planned to establish one elderly home but could not provide required funds. According to their age, ethnic elderly people are honored at yearly traditional events and cultural festivals. Lahu Youth focus group participants stated that, “elderly take the advisory role in the community. They advise religious or cultural festivals and are paid homage by the community during religious festivals.” Particularly elderly men who previously held important leadership roles in the community are honored when they come to age.

Elderly caretaking in ethnic families is first of all organized according to ethnic traditions, which means that women are mostly responsible. Respondents explained that the ‘who’ and ‘how’ of **elderly care is not based on negotiation**. Members of church communities indicated improved elderly care practices, shouldered by the religious community. One Buddhist monk from Monghsat town testified, “when elderly persons or people with special needs come to Monghsat for medical treatment, I arrange the transport and let the elder-

ly stay at the monastery. With the help of the army medical team, I organize a mobile clinic near the village quarterly.” Respondents admit that elderly without family ties face difficulties. They receive occasional community support, when needed. Customarily, villagers are willing to build a simple house/shelter for elderly who live on their own. EAO religious leaders reported that some elderly (over 85 years) persons receive social support (10,000 MMK) per month from the government (DSW). The support is channeled through the village administrator on a quarterly basis.

Research respondents implicitly indicated that Elderly women are commonly perceived as people with special needs. Key informants (age 55-76) assume that elderly and people with special needs are ‘the same sort of people’ because older people with certain impairments eventually develop disabilities. Proper health treatments in town are desired but cannot be afforded. Several research respondents articulated the need for a community-based group formation that provides care for elderly and people with special needs.

**People with disabilities:** According to religious leaders and EAO leaders, people with disabilities are allowed to passively participate in community events/festivals. In case they are not able to participate, elderly and people with special needs without relatives are looked after by the women’s department.

Family care takers generally stated that their children with special needs do not face serious difficulties. However, family caretakers expressed the need for proper medical care and psychological check-ups of their children with impairments. One key challenge is the current lack of diagnostic and therapeutic intervention mechanisms. Some of the children with disabilities need consistent health care assistance. Some financial support from the GoUM is provided for people coming to age, however, no special support has been granted yet to people with disabilities.

## Literature Data Section

**Elderly.** Literature data shows that the number of older people in Myanmar has virtually quadrupled over the past 60 years. This ongoing demographic change will influence the direction and speed of development. Moreover, mainly due to the ongoing decline of people's fertility, the proportion of the population that is 60 years and older is increasing. Persons in the age of 60 and older are projected to constitute 14% of Myanmar's total population by 2030 and 22% of Myanmar's total population by 2050. Only modestly more than half of Myanmar elders (54%) are currently married. Living with a spouse typically is advantageous since spouses can be primary sources of material, social and emotional support and provide personal care during times of illness or frailty. In the context of healthy living and lifestyle, very few participate in group physical exercise (96% don't) while many reported on serious limitations with physical movements. This indicates a great need for group sport events at community level in which also health messages can be shared. As a support indicator, three-fourths (75%) of men 60 and older are currently married compared to only about two-fifths (39%) of women.

<sup>57</sup>The perception of age linked to disability is widespread and results in the view that older people are not involved in sportive group activities. Political participation of older persons is for most of them limited to community sponsored ceremonies. Very few older persons and even less older women attended a political meeting.<sup>58</sup>

Traditional family-based systems of social protection will inevitably weaken as a result of demographic changes. There is the need and opportunity to gradually build a clearly defined system of social protection that is inclusive of older people to complement and support care by families. In general, this system should encompass creative ways for both government

and empowered communities to help fill the gaps created by changes in family structures.<sup>59</sup>

**People with disability.** The government of Myanmar has taken some legislative and policy steps that indicate the commitment for advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. In terms of international instruments, these steps include the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in December 2011. A National Social Protection Strategic Plan (2014) is the most recent legal document.<sup>60</sup>

The GoUM's Strategic Plan recognizes and addresses the different risks and vulnerabilities that occur at different stages of the life cycle from birth to older ages. The strategic plan focuses on enhancing agricultural production through a comprehensive array of activities ranging from support to livestock and fisheries industries to rural cooperatives and credit enterprises.<sup>61</sup> In order to remain on track, the GoUM needs to be held accountable to its "Health for All" approach that aims to be inclusive and to strengthen rural health care, including maternal and child health.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the GoUM social pension program that aims to provide certain fund for people aged 65 and above, it will take time to roll out the program throughout the nation.<sup>63</sup> In this context, local development actors (CSOs) need to be empowered and enabled to promote/advocate for a higher level of inclusion as many rural older people are "invisible"<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Knodel, John (2013), 111.

<sup>60</sup> Sida (2014), Disability Rights in Myanmar. <https://www.sida.se/globalassets/sida/eng/partners/human-rights-based-approach/disability/rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-myanmar.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> GoUM (2014), Myanmar National Social Protection Strategic Plan, 8,15.

<sup>62</sup> GoUM (2014), Myanmar National Social Protection Strategic Plan, 14.

<sup>63</sup> GoUM (2014), Myanmar National Social Protection Strategic Plan, 59,64.

<sup>64</sup> Zeitzer, Ilene (2018), A Situational Analysis of Disability and Ageing in Myanmar.

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<sup>57</sup> Knodel, John (2014) The Situation of older persons in Myanmar – an overview, in BOLD, Vol.24, No.3, May 2014, 9-13.

<sup>58</sup> Knodel, John (2013), The Situation of Older Persons in Myanmar, 12.

and need support in finding access to the social pension fund.

## Domain 2: Cultural norms and beliefs

### Field Data Section

***“The lives of elderly people are vulnerable. Some do not have children or relatives or supporters to live with them. They have to live with others or in the monastery”*** (Mid-wife, grocery shop owner, Monghsat).

**Culture and disability:** Research key informants believe that villagers do not discriminate or marginalize families who care for family members with special needs. However, persons with mental impairments are not considered to be able to participate in any out of house activities. They are rarely seen in public and mostly stay at home. Elderly and people with special needs are often perceived in similar terms. Respondents describe how “every helping hand is needed” and that **‘inclusion’ means that families cannot afford to exclude anyone from contributing to the day to day survival in village life.** When persons with disabilities need caretaking, the family’s economic standing becomes more vulnerable. Key informants reported that persons with special needs are required to live ‘normal’ village lives. The field research identified two persons with disabilities who demonstrated a high level of inclusion and active participation in community life, simply because they demonstrated agency to do so. Those who are considered unable to do activities of daily life are cared for by family members. Caretaking of people with special needs is not assigned to selected persons but is the responsibility of the entire family in the HH.

Participants of the GADI training workshop reflected on **people’s views of disability** in the region. They mentioned that there happens discrimination of people with disabilities in some “uneducated” communities. It is commonly believed that disability comes from bad deeds in the past. Others be-

lieve that people with disabilities disgrace people around them. Therefore, they become rejected by their family and community.

One Akha leader further explained one customary belief about disability: “When twins are born, both babies will be immediately killed. And in case a child is born with physical impairments as for example with one missing hand, leg, or inner organ, the child will also be killed.” The belief is that human beings should be born “noble” and without any blemish. And babies should be born as single individuals, not as twins. However, the traditional Akha leader added that this practice is not practiced anymore today. Also, it is not customary to ask for community support in caretaking for persons with special needs. Villagers are more used to occasionally request assistance with education, access to health services, and infrastructure issues.

**Culture and Age:** Respondents explain that elderly caretaking is much understood in terms of providing nutritional support. When there is plenty of food available in families, food will be set aside for parents and in-laws. Also, respondents from remote villages said that, due to remoteness, older people do not have many relationships with others from outside. As a result of women groups’ outreach to elderly in the village, elderly and people with special needs receive more attention than during the past ten years. Moral support, in-kind assistance and paying homage ceremonies for elderly are part of **home visits** in the homes of elderly, of families with drug-using family members, and people with special needs.

### Literature Data Section

**Elderly and people with disabilities.** The family and particularly adult children continue to be the bedrock of support and care for older people in Myanmar, reflecting the strong sense of filial obligation embedded in ethnic cultures. The lack of social protection programs and a comprehensive pension system leaves the vast majority of older persons with little choice but to depend on their family and to some degree on

their local communities for their needs.<sup>65</sup> Another observation about the attitude towards persons with disabilities in Myanmar is that it seems to be heavily based on pity, charity and familial responsibility, rather than on any notion of social inclusion or societal responsibility.<sup>66</sup> It appears that in Myanmar, once disabled, the individual loses his or her personhood and becomes defined by the condition of being a person having a disability. In some cultures, there are superstitions that if a woman has a child with a disability, she must have done something wrong and is being punished for it and likewise, if a person has an accident that results in a disability.<sup>67</sup> The perception from the 2014 Census is that “disability is predominantly an old age phenomenon with its prevalence remaining low up to a certain age, after which rates increase substantially.<sup>68</sup> In this context, it is very important to retain that disability is often viewed as a health condition rather than a social construct.<sup>69</sup>

Women with a disability often face a double-discrimination due to their impairment and womanhood. This can lead them into chronic poverty when compared to women without disabilities and men with disabilities. The literacy rate of people with disabilities is due to lack of schooling for most people with disabilities very low and even worse for girls and women with a disability.<sup>70</sup>

### Domain 3: (Gender) roles of Elderly

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#### Field Data Section

***“Elderly take the advisory role in the community. They advise religious or cultural festivals. They are also paid homage by the community during religious festivals.” (Lahu Youths).***

**Elderly Roles:** Traditional customs provide (male) elderly with limited but important functions in advisory services and culturally organized ceremonies as e.g. festivals, weddings, and divorces. It’s been reported that older persons who formerly functioned in the role of village leaders keep influence in the community. Such elderly men are given patron/advisory roles in religious and social organizations like in the Cultural and Literature Association. Village administrators and church leaders also receive council on customary ceremonies by male elderly. Elderly participants in community meetings are regularly updated on community issues and are customarily invited to participate in political decisions and elections.

Elderly people (women) customarily look after their grandchildren. They themselves are valued by their children/family members and cared for in older age. However, social security and wellbeing of elderly people depends on the economic stability of their children. FGDs with nine elderly participants (age 59-74) revealed that most participants could not identify barriers to social inclusion of elderly. Because they are familiar with the elderly honor system and advisory roles of elderly, they do not see barriers for social inclusion. However, as already mentioned in the research data above, it appears that elderly women do have a lower social standing than elderly men who have the privilege of important community functions. It had also been mentioned that elderly women without economic family support face serious challenges with daily survival.

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<sup>65</sup> Knodel, John (2014) The Situation of older persons in Myanmar – an overview, in BOLD, Vol.24, No.3, May 2014, 9-13.

<sup>66</sup> Zeitzer, Ilene (2018), A Situational Analysis of Disability and Ageing in Myanmar, 43.

<sup>67</sup> Zeitzer, Ilene (2018), A Situational Analysis of Disability and Ageing in Myanmar, 44

<sup>68</sup> Zeitzer, Ilene (2018), A Situational Analysis of Disability and Ageing in Myanmar, 45.

<sup>69</sup> Zeitzer, Ilene (2018), A Situational Analysis of Disability and Ageing in Myanmar, 4.

<sup>70</sup> Chataika, T. (2013), Gender and Disability Mainstreaming Training Manual, GIZ.



## Literature Data Section

The Gender Equality Network (GEN) provides gender awareness training. The trainings highlighted how assumptions about gender roles are built into cultural norms (socially constructed). Cultural norms on gender roles also carry over to elderly roles and perceptions thereof. Sometimes discrimination or imbalances can be obvious, but many times they are subtler. GEN observes that attitudes and mindsets are already beginning to shift. A male training participant stated: “I used to see women as those who are lower than man. Now I know that both men and women are equal.” In this context, the MIID is seeking to learn how decisions are made within households and local villages in Shan state, a region spanning seven ethnic groups and nine languages.<sup>71</sup>

Literature further reveals that intergenerational exchanges flow in both directions. Older persons in Myanmar also contribute in important ways to the younger generation’s welfare. Many who live with adult children contribute to the household’s economic support as well as help with housework and home maintenance. In addition, many assists with grandchild care, thereby helping their adult children to be economically more productive. Wherever possible, the older generation is a vital source of material and emotional support and serves as caregivers when the need arises.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Asia Research News (2020), Sparking Change through Research.

<sup>72</sup> Knodel, John (2013) The Situation of Older Persons in Myanmar, p.v

## Domain 4: Access to and control over assets and resources

### Field Data Section

***“I am 67 years old and live with my husband who is 65 years old. We do basket weaving and do casual works in the village. Villagers built a house for us” (Akha woman).***

**Access/Control Elderly.** Key informants confirmed that some elderly individuals in the villages have to live on their own and struggle for their livelihoods. One major asset often mentioned is a house/shelter that the community builds for them. However, elderly persons with relatives live with a son or daughter and are sufficiently cared for.

**Access/Control people with disabilities:** Families with people with disabilities shared the case of one 14-year-old boy with physical impairments. This boy studied at a Government school and successfully finished his school exams in Mong-ton. The boy lives independently, together with his brother. He takes part in school activities with other children without impairments. This boy enjoys doing simple tasks like cleaning the classroom and to cheer up his friends at the football game. The older brother empowered his younger brother in the improvement of self-reliance.

One blind woman from an Akha village completes all her household chores by herself. This woman cooks for the family, cleans the house and does the laundry. Together with other women, this woman participates in religious ceremonies and helps out with cooking and other chores. Research respondents often exclaimed that people with special needs in the villages are considered to be included into community activities.

### Literature Data Section

The overall public awareness of disability issues is low and few are aware of the legal provisions and rights for people with disabilities. Another study shows that in many cases



persons with disabilities are not accessing services because of a lack of information about existing services. For instance, many persons with disabilities in Myanmar are living without national registration cards because they do not know the importance of identity cards or they are not familiar with the process of applying for one.<sup>73</sup>

Data from the literature review indicates that the persons with a disability are economically, socially, and educationally disadvantaged compared to people with no disability. Only 10% of people with a disability attending high school or having access to health care and only 15% of people with disabilities are reporting of any current livelihood.<sup>74</sup> The survey also found that NCD are on the rise and the proportion of people with disabilities with eye sight difficulties is proportionately the highest in the over-65 age group. Housing is also a well-known proxy indicator for both economic status and vulnerability. Housing can be both, a contributory risk to disability (poor housing linked to poor health, accident risk) and a reflection of the economic consequences of disability. According to the survey, over 53% of people with disabilities were living in bamboo houses with a lifespan of less than three years.<sup>75</sup>

**High dependency:** The lack of education and literacy, and hence a reduced ability to access information, also characterizes persons aged 70 years and older and the elderly in rural areas. Adult children and particularly daughters play a very prominent role in helping their parents with daily living activities and care while ill.<sup>76</sup> When older persons live alone however, which is more common among women than men, is reflecting their greater likelihood to be widowed.<sup>77</sup> In one case study, it was reported about a man who had a stroke and became unable to support himself. He said with uncer-

tain eyes, "I think I'm still young enough. I feel quite sad not to be able to do things as most of the ordinary people of my age can do. I'll try my best to be able to get back to normal. If I recover well enough, I wish to earn more money by resuming the farming jobs."<sup>78</sup>

In his paper, John Knodel writes that many people live in abject poverty and depend on their families for material support. Co-residence is very common and facilitates reciprocal exchanges across generations. In addition to high levels of private financing of health care, other barriers include reduced accessibility of health care due to geographic and infrastructure factors. Older persons from the poorest households are more likely than others to experience unmet needs for care and even when they receive care, they tend to experience inadequate care.<sup>79</sup>

In this context, capacity development of "duty bearers", the Myanmar State with its institutions acting with delegated authority and the civil society sector are of key importance to ensure that core human rights principles like equality, non-discrimination, participation and transparency are applied.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Humanity and Inclusion (2018), Include Us! Case Study report.

<sup>74</sup> Sida (2014), Disability Rights in Myanmar.

<sup>75</sup> DSW (2010), First Myanmar National Disability Survey 2010, 6,8,42.

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<sup>76</sup> Knodel, John (2014) The Situation of older persons in Myanmar – an overview, in BOLD, Vol.24, No.3, May 2014, 9-13.

<sup>77</sup> Knodel, John (2013) The Situation of Older Persons in Myanmar, vi

<sup>78</sup> Zeitzer, Ilene (2018), S Situational Analysis of Disability and Aging in Myanmar, 32

<sup>79</sup> Knodel, John, and Bussarawan Teerawichitchainan (2017), Aging in Myanmar, 5

<sup>80</sup> BMZ (2012), A human rights-based approach to disability and development, 5.

## Domain 5: Power and decision-making

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### Field Data Section

***“Villagers follow what elderly people instruct. The youth respect elderly and listen to what they say”*** (Youth - Akha, Shan, Lahu).

**Power and decision-making elderly:** It’s been reported that most elderly persons depend on their sons or daughters because they don’t have savings and don’t earn enough income on their own. The general decision-making power of the elderly (except of respected elderly in community functions) in the area of MI field research is very low (P-FIM Exercise). Living of traditional roles of some elderly had to be adjusted to political circumstances, which means that their submission under the village tract of other ethnic groups considerably reduced their community participation. When this case was reported, it had been said that elderly people are not given active roles but were informed about current developments.

In terms of intergenerational relations between young and old, it had been reported by the elderly focus groups that generations co-exist without problems or serious disagreements. FGD partners confirmed that the youth needs to accept the decisions of the elderly. There happens no negotiation between the generations and traditional hierarchy wins. Elderly with influence in religious communities do have strong decision-making powers and conflicting interests are usually not reconciled between the conflicting partners.

### Literature Data Section

The socio-economic status of people living with disabilities is considerably lower than the national average. People living with disability also have limited opportunities to participate in community life and activities and are excluded from the benefits of programs which could improve their quality of life.<sup>81</sup>

The Age and Disability Consortium research study found that in reality health services are only a very small part of what people with disabilities need. People with disabilities and older people also have the right to be included and to have equal access to all other services (food, water, livelihood, education etc.) as well as the right participating in decision-making that affects them<sup>82</sup> (see also recommendation). Disability inclusion efforts therefore, are a crucial landmark to ensure that policies and actions promote equal access to (public) services as well as enable citizen’s participation in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. In practical terms, people with disabilities and their families have valuable knowledge of disability to help develop specific risk and mitigation strategies that focus on persons with disabilities.<sup>83</sup>

In practice and at the project level, it needs to be ensured that accountability mechanisms are integrated into all levels of project implementation, so that persons with disabilities participate in decision-making processes that affect them. This includes communicating information to them in multiple accessible formats.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Hu GoUM (2014), Myanmar National Social Protection Strategic Plan

<sup>82</sup> Age and Disability Consortium (2017), Inclusion of Age & Disability in Humanitarian Action, Training Handbook, 27.

<sup>83</sup> IASC (2019), Guidelines – Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, 9.

<sup>84</sup> IASC (2019), Guidelines – Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, 42.

### 3.2 ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF STAKEHOLDERS PERCEPTIONS OF DISABILITY AND AGE ON THE PROJECT

In regard to international and national frameworks (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Myanmar National Social Protection Strategic Plan (NSPSP), research found that most government department staff are not aware of the rights of people with disabilities. This research finding is associated with cultural perceptions about people with disabilities.<sup>85</sup> Disability in Myanmar is still perceived as a self-induced problem and something that brings disgrace to families and rural ethnic communities. Therefore, people with disabilities often live in household family settings and have not much public encounter with other community members. Sadly, the established rights framework in Myanmar<sup>86</sup> that frames a support mechanism, has little relevance for most ethnic people. Public services (if available at all) can only be accessed by people who hold a national registration card (NRC). The NRC would enable them claiming fundamental rights and to be an active part of society. The importance of the NRC is simply summarized with the statement: “No card, no rights.”<sup>87</sup> In order to move beyond such deficiencies, the project may assess the status of people with disabilities and their families in the project area in more detail and tailor possible advocacy support and engagement in activities. Since holding the NRC is of crucial importance, advocacy work and the dissemination of suitable information on how the registration process works is a fundamental requirement.

Ethnic village families who seemingly include their people with disabilities in livelihood activities usually live on the economic fringes and their children with disabilities have to contribute to the family income. This can be perceived as a dignifying aspect. However, in reality, it is a pragmatic

approach of survival and has little to do with suitable work settings for people with disabilities. Also, caretakers of people with disabilities do not customarily ask others in the community for help or emotional support in caretaking. The project may advocate on the household- and community level, share suitable information about the needs of people with disabilities, and identify barriers of inclusion at the community level. The community can also become engaged in identifying and removing physical barriers of inclusion. The project may consider rewarding (honoring) those communities where significant progress could be realized. The uptake of new views and practices in regard to supporting people with disabilities is well supported by activities that are integral part of the SBCC approach.

The inclusion of people with disabilities in suitable vocational training will be beneficial in several ways. Their inclusion will increase persons’ self-confidence, skill level, and level of life skills through the out-of-house engagement and encounter with others. Newly acquired skill levels can improve the social status of persons with disabilities in the community. Their positive example bears the potential to improve community members’ view of the capacity of persons with disabilities. A very effective and necessary strategy for improving the support of people with disabilities is the dialogue with their caretakers who organize the day-to-day support as needed. The caretakers’ full engagement and approval is needed in order to enable the project’s initiatives to reduce barriers and install enablers. A successful engagement of persons with disabilities in the project can reduce or remove stigmas and prejudices. Barriers are often very practical obstacles, such as the lack of accessibility or transportation to the school site.

There are examples of positive deviants among persons with disabilities that should be noted (see Chapter 3.1, Domain 4). Some were able to develop a high level of resiliency and self-reliance. Overall however, it is needed to help caretakers to better understand impairment and disability in order to overcome blind spots in understanding, as for example the notion that people with disabilities cannot do much. In or-

<sup>85</sup> Humanity and Inclusion – HI (2018), Include Us, 7.

<sup>86</sup> GoUM (2014) Social Protection Strategic Plan.

<sup>87</sup> NRC (2017), Half a million identities, <https://www.nrc.no/news/2017/june/half-a-million-identities/>

der to improve the situation of vulnerable people and people with disabilities, the GoUM set the Social Protection Strategic Plan (MSPSP) in place in order to address the needs of vulnerable people groups. There is the need to provide technical support in two ways, to build capacity among “duty bearers” and to ensure appropriate advocacy for vulnerable groups.<sup>88</sup>

The care for elderly people in rural communities is generally framed as a fixed social care system in families. Caretaking is not negotiated between women and men but is part of the social role construction for women. Some ‘elite’ ethnic elderly men are part of an honor and respect system which is associated with full social inclusion and a few male elderlies have the privilege of having important community functions. As mentioned earlier, male elderly substitute state authority in rank and importance in many ethnic groups in remote areas. They are power organs on the level of religious and social institutions and need to be included in the project framework of organizing and conducting project activities. Respected male elders actively participate in political decisions and elections. These powerful elderlies have strong decision power and do customarily not practice in intergenerational negotiation with the youths. Therefore, the youths largely lament on the fact that traditional hierarchy wins.

The visible reality of the social inclusion of some prestigious and powerful male elderly somehow blurs realities of other male elderly who experience community exclusion, especially when they are outside of the family care system. The invisibility in the public square of such elderly is widespread. The situation for women is even worse because a high percentage of elderly women lives alone. Female elderlies have much lower social standing than their male peers and are often (if still possible) engaged in demanding childcare during parents’ absence for work. Social security and wellbeing of most elderly depends on the economic stability of their

children. Their decision-making power is rather low. Elderly without rank and position and without children fall out of the social security net. Elderly care is culturally often understood as providing food for them. The situation of many care requiring older persons is commonly perceived in similar terms to people with disabilities.

In regard to the project, due to certain levels of experience and context knowledge, older people can contribute as resource persons to the planning and conducting of activities. They also can contribute to the project as promoters of health, hygiene and nutrition messages in the community and especially among their peers. It is important to ensure the inclusion of the aforementioned elderly powerholders to ensure a smooth project implementation. In this context, one significant approach will be to engage power holder elderly in intergenerational dialogue with the youths. Good facilitation of an intergenerational dialogue is needed for allowing the youths to express their needs and aspirations with the goal of establishing a fruitful discussion culture that is built on mutual appreciation. Such a facilitated approach will motivate the youths to commit to higher community engagement. For a successful way forward, some negotiation elements can be ‘borrowed’ from the SBCC approach. The project may identify windows for initiating such dialogue. Prior to this, however, the organization’s facilitation capacity needs to be ensured so that the dialogue does not intensify intergenerational tensions.

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<sup>88</sup> BMZ (2012), A human rights-based approach to disability and development, 6.



## 4. Youths Inclusion and Participation Measures

### 4.1 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS ON YOUTH

#### Field Data Section

***“The value of social harmony causes the youths to work around issues and identify ways that keep social harmony intact by avoiding confrontation with the elderly” (Shan Youth group).***

It can be generally mentioned that the young are not supposed to raise their voice against the standpoints of the elderly in all ethnic groups that participated in this research study. This is often related to the youths' lack of education, livelihood opportunities, and independence. This was further underpinned by the youths when they said, *“No job opportunities, limited markets for agriculture products, and widespread drug issues are the challenging factors for the youths”* (Shan, (Youth group)). The youths' major problem is the availability of drugs which are cheaper and easier to access in this area, in comparison to the last five years. Youth also reported on the steady threat of human trafficking.

Youths in ethnic cultures are required to follow traditional and cultural expectations. The youths' contribution to decision-making and problem-solving is not strong at all. Youth do have frequent disagreements with the elderly of the village. Youth key informants said, *“despite our different views, younger people have to listen to what the elderly say, by tradition. The young people have to accept the decisions of elderly people.”* Traditional roles of boys and girls (the youths) in the communities is their participation in cultural and religious festivals and events. There are also youth groups run by the churches through which the youths have limited means to be engaged in music and other activities. Throughout the year, communities celebrate several events and the youths' labor is needed for the support of cultural events. Some interview partners commented that the role of youths is very similar to the role of women in the community.

Youths articulated their wishes to participate in vocational training, such as motorcycle repair, sewing and knitting, repair

of electronic devices, masonry, and carpentry, or English language. Youths mainly consider education and employment opportunities as truly relevant. The youth expressed that they are not satisfied with their current situation. Further, youths reported that early marriage (age 13-15) in their communities is still common, especially among those who live in remote areas. The limited access to schools in remote areas is a major challenge. One reason for early marriage is mentioned by a youth group member who said, *“since we have not much to do for our livelihoods, we fall in love in early age and marry.”*

#### Literature Data Section

In early 2018, the GoUM introduced a national youth policy to serve as a guideline for the welfare and development of young people. It is interesting to note that the policy intends to help the new generation in overcoming various challenges by combining creative ideas with the views and experiences of older persons.<sup>89</sup> In her speech on the day of the release of the national youth policy, Myanmar's State Counsellor stressed the importance of narrowing the gap between the old and new generation by sharing experiences, knowledge and passing down the good heritage from the old to the new generation. She also urged the country's youths, who are defined as Myanmar citizens between the ages of 15 and 35 years (36% of the population), to cultivate the right mindset of learning and engaging in the creative design of the future. She also urged the youths to stay away from drugs and to protect the communities from the dangers of drugs.<sup>90</sup>

The field data that was gathered for this study shows, however, that the situation is largely unchanged. The strong hierarchical culture between generations and age is well intact. And

<sup>89</sup> MIZZIMA, News from Myanmar, <http://mizzima.com/article/government-unveils-new-youth-policy>

<sup>90</sup> MOI <https://www.moi.gov.mm/moi:eng/?q=news/14/11/2018/id-12475>

as already mentioned in the elderly section, youths are culturally perceived as not being capable to hold decision-making responsibilities and therefore are ignored because elders are dominated by the idea that they have the knowledge. Additional burdens are faced by youths and children with disabilities who are often denied access to education or vocational training, which makes them more prone to violence and abuse than their peers with no disabilities.

The amount of data unmistakably indicates that the youths are at risk because education, training and skill-building opportunities for youths are very limited, if existing at all. And according to field data indicated before, the increasing availability of drugs, even for cheaper prices than before, is troubling news. According to UNODC reports, the drug increase in border areas between Myanmar and other neighbor countries has significantly increased over the last decade. At the same time of significant infrastructure investments to improve trade with Myanmar (road, bridges), a boom in drug trade has been noticed as well.<sup>91</sup>

#### 4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF YOUTHS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE PROJECT

In the project area of Monghsat and Mongton townships, eastern Shan, many youths see little prospects for personal and professional development because education vocational training opportunities are rarely existing. Additionally, drugs are widely available, which has become one of the major issues of the region. Additionally, the research findings indicate that intergenerational issues are very significant because the youths do not see a chance for negotiating their needs. The means of constructively discussing opinions between the generations is very limited. Low educational prospects give

youths little means to creatively contribute to livelihoods or community development. This also means that the potential of the youths' contribution to community development has been overlooked so far. All these factors increase the risk that young people start using drugs or slip into early marriage, which would increase the youths' vulnerability substantially.

The cultural perception that young people cannot contribute to community life due to a lack of experience can be tackled through three key channels. **First**, a facilitated intergenerational dialogue as mentioned in the previous (elderly) section will be useful and supportive in developing new practices of negotiation. The research findings strongly indicate the need for such intergenerational dialogue in order to minimize the risks for open conflict that can occur when the number of youths are left without voice.

**Second**, capacitating youths through vocational training settings for enhancing their skill portfolio, including life skills, will enable them to better articulate their needs within their families and communities. Vocational training should be offered only in combination with life skill training. More detailed information about a powerful vocational training setting is provided in chapter 6. One interesting example was also found during the field research where one Buddhist monk intentionally connects male students with companies for work during their summer breaks. He also offers other activities and support for people in need (see chapter 3.1). The project may include the youths in the agriculture, livelihood and nutrition education activities. Youths are quick and innovative learners with a huge capacity to effectively share information with their peers and are therefore able to effectively help their peers in gaining more knowledge in health, nutrition and agriculture. In this context, it seems very advisable to select youths as multipliers of project activity contents.

**Third**, the huge number of young people in the target communities may trigger the project to consider initiating youth clubs (youth-led platforms) for learning life skills, getting connected with vocational training and learning opportuni-

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<sup>91</sup> Thethaiger.com, <https://thethaiger.com/hot-news/crime/south-east-asias-booming-meth-industry-thailand-myanmar-china-and-laos>, accessed 3 June 2020.

ties, and to become exposed to peer exchange and support. Youth-led peer group initiatives can serve as a springboard for conducting recreational events and informal education opportunities, serving as anti-dot for drug use. The installation of facilitated youth-led platforms would also help sharing health, nutrition and hygiene messages. Within such a framework, youth groups are able to articulate their needs and to work out strategies to advocate for their rights within the community and beyond. The engagement with youths will allow the project to identify the most-pressing needs of young people in the region and pave the path for working towards improvements.



## 5. Intersectionality in Project Area

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities (e.g. gender, race, class, sexuality, political conflict, humanitarian crises) might combine to create unique modes of discrimination. Research field data already alluded to the relationship between aging and acquiring a disability which appeared to be complicated. Aging people in the project area suffer from impairments that gradually develop into full-blown disabilities. And when female elderly face full-blown disabilities, other discriminating factors often increase their vulnerability substantially. Such scenarios have been reported by research recipients.<sup>92</sup> To come to terms with 'intersectionality' is important because multiple factors may further worsen gender inequality and discrimination. From 1962 to 2011 in Burma, the combination of repressive rule by male-dominated military and a traditional cultural patriarchy had insidious and pervasive long-term negative effects on women's equality.<sup>93</sup> The Constitution of the Union of the Republic of Myanmar does not provide a definition of equality or discrimination that complies with the CEDAW nor does it contain a provision regarding the applicability of international treaties, including CEDAW.<sup>94</sup> In the Women's League of Burma Shadow Report on Burma regarding the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, ongoing patterns of conflict-related sexual violence and impunity of perpetrators are listed. It's further been stated that "the combined impact of drug use, continuing conflict, land confiscation, and economic insecurity has displaced vast populations, including women and girls. Displaced women and

girls are subject to violence and trafficking, and are denied basic services such as education and health care.<sup>95</sup>

### 5.1 SUMMARY OF INTERSECTIONALITY RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### Field Data Section

***"We can send our children to school and this has reduced early marriage."*** (Voice of Women Focus Group)

**Early/Forced Marriage.** Focus Group respondents and EAO/religious leaders repeatedly named 'Early Marriage' as one common challenge in ethnic communities. The average age of ethnic young girls is between 13 – 15 years of age. Many research respondents assume that the lack of formal education for girls in rural areas is the major root cause of forced early marriage. Forced marriage also happens to young women who were married as household workers to older men. Some research respondents perceive early marriage decreasing among ethnic Shan people, due to higher levels of education. The lack of formal education opportunities is often described resulting from ethnic conflict over several decades. And due to remoteness of villages, the access to schools is a challenge. One Lahu woman from Monghsat said, "Last year, an animal disease killed many domestic animals like pigs and chicken. In addition, the price of crops fell and we did not receive good income. It will cause hardship when we have to send our children to school next year."

**Migration.** Several respondents reported on current low migration flows to Thailand or other townships. However, regarding youth migration, key informants were aware of higher migrant numbers among girls and women than among

<sup>92</sup> Zeitzer, Ilene. A Situational Analysis of Disability and Ageing in Myanmar (Help Age International Myanmar), 6.

<sup>93</sup> Women's League of Burma. Shadow Report on Burma for the 64th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2016, 5.

<sup>94</sup> Women's League of Burma. Shadow Report on Burma for the 64th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2016, 3.

<sup>95</sup> Women's League of Burma. Shadow Report on Burma for the 64th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2016, 13.



boys and men. Especially young people with lower education levels face limited employment opportunities in the district. Regional youth migrate to Thailand for seeking job opportunities. Women are reported to work as department store vendors, home helpers, or factory workers while men work at construction sites, factories and farms. In the context of migration and the drug business, one female youth from the White Color group Monghsat reported, “Many young women are feeling depressed because they want to buy cloths, they want to spend money like other people who are drug sellers. But they only earn very little salaries.”

***“We would like our generation to be free from drugs and to be educated people. If we could increase our incomes, we are expecting that it would reduce drug abuse on the other side.” (P-FIM Exercise research respondent)***

**Drug Use.** Drug smuggling and use is perceived as an overwhelming issue and socio-economic threat in the project area. Drug use is perceived to be on the rise, in comparison to the past five years. Drug use has been reported as “the strongest cause for marriage partners and family problems.” One respondent commented, “when the man is drug addicted, the woman has to work even harder.” CBO voices mentioned, “when drug abuse is committed by the father and husband, the relationships in the family get destroyed. Divorce is the last option but with consequences.” However, focus group participants do not mention any examples for successful conflict resolutions or reconciling negotiation among disagreeing marriage partners. Village leaders and youth testified that drug use is also common among youth and teenagers. Young girls are already divorced due to drug issues in their young marriage.

***“There is no gender-based violence in this village, but I heard about it in the army battalion. There are 3 army battalions near this village.” (Shan woman)***

**Gender-Based and Domestic Violence.** Surprisingly, many focus group discussion partners and EAO/CBO leaders as well as religious leaders pointed out that GBV/domestic violence rarely happens in their communities. Research data on violence against women/ gender-based violence remains scarce. Respondents are aware about the connection between drug use and violence. However, one focus group with women admitted, “we have GBV when the husband uses drugs. Men can get violent when the wife does not give the money for buying drugs.”

**Ethnic discrimination.** Ethnic women reported that they are hesitant to attend vocational trainings organized by the Development of the Border/National Ethnic Department, most likely due to ethnic discrimination. Also, women respondents from the P-FIM exercise reported on ethnic discrimination when it comes to medical treatments in local health services. Sadly, women of many ethnicities in Myanmar currently experience higher levels of vulnerability due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 5.2 ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF INTERSECTIONALITIES ON THE PROJECT

The anti-drugs strategy of the MI project is “strengthening and diversifying legal livelihood components.” With its target group of women in reproductive age (15-49 years), it is recommended that the project widens its scope from merely addressing technical underlying causes of chronic malnutrition to also addressing cultural and humanitarian crises’ causes of ongoing chronic malnutrition. Where particularly traditional norms on gender roles prevail, COVID-19 amplifies women’s unpaid work burdens and increases women’s time spent in the home due to confinement. Women also experience greater difficulties in accessing rights. Particularly women who depend on remittances from abroad are more vulnerable because remittances are important for the day-to-day survival and a lack of can create new HH poverty. Farmers have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

45 per cent of working women, next to 52 percent of working men, work in agriculture as farmers. Both, men and women, may need assistance during this crisis.<sup>96</sup>

With its multi-sectoral approach, the MI project may also address intersectionalities (early marriage, migration, drug use-related issues, GBV, ethnic discrimination, and economic/social crises of COVID-19 pandemic) by integrating these issues in ongoing gender/age/disability analysis (SBCC activities) and inclusive responses. To simplify the complexity of gender, age, and disability inclusion in addition to all other areas of intersectionality as listed above, it is recommended to choose “communication for change” (SBCC) as unifying theme. SBCC is the combination of a process, the use of a socio-ecological model for change and doing advocacy and social mobilization for change. It is important to teach how SBCC as the unifying theme interconnects all other project elements/activities and how it overcomes barriers in beneficiaries’ participation in project activities and to teach how SBCC is all about finding communication solutions for problems by analyzing them at different levels.

In order to address attitudinal barriers, the project can integrate GADI training elements that visualize own prejudices and how we stereotype people – men, women, boys, girls, older people and people with disabilities. Sample activities were already introduced during the GADI training on day one and can be simply introduced at village level with a high reflection and learning effect.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> IFPRI Myanmar: Strategy Support Program Policy Note, May 2020.

<sup>97</sup> Further literature: Age and Disability Consortium (2107), Inclusion of Age & Disability in Humanitarian Action, 38.



## 6. The Project Framework in the context of Do-No-Harm

Whenever a project intervention enters a new area, it becomes part of the context because no project intervention can be perceived neutral by people living in the context. Context analysis is therefore essential and includes the identification of “Dividers” and “Connectors” of possible conflict. Through the project team, resources and messages are communicated by their conduct and transform situations for better or worse. A Do No Harm approach has therefore three basic assumptions:

- 1) Aid and support is not neutral.
- 2) Aid and support is a transfer of resources and know-how which can become subject of competition.
- 3) The deliverance of aid and support can contribute to mitigate “drivers” of conflict or fuel conflict.<sup>98</sup> In this context, the project assesses risks and identifies mitigation strategies.

### 6.1 IDENTIFIED RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES (DO NO HARM)

The potential risks listed in this table were extracted from the research findings and the designed recommendations. The project team needs to understand that DNH measures need to be applied at all times and that conflict potential will be assessed, documented and that information is escalated on a regular basis.

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<sup>98</sup> Wallace, Marshall (2015), From Principle to Practice, A User’s Guide to Do No Harm

Potential Risks	Potential Risks	Mitigation Strategy
Vulnerable people are not reached and do not benefit from the project	Vulnerable HHs do not participate in activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Intensify home visitations for trust building</li> <li>› Identify barriers</li> </ul>
Vulnerable people are not reached and do not benefit from the project	Vulnerable HHs do not participate in activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Ongoing trust building efforts</li> <li>› Capacitate project team on DNH and conflict mitigation strategies</li> <li>› Install a mediator</li> </ul>
Project team and PM is not sufficiently capacitated to deal with the multi-sector project and its (conflict) monitoring tasks	Conflict potential is not assessed as needed, including ineffective monitoring in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Regular training of staff and partners</li> <li>› Bi-annual external monitoring</li> <li>› Tailored training units for specific roles in the project</li> <li>› Project staff speaks local languages</li> </ul>
People with disabilities remain 'invisible'	Families with a people with disabilities do not cooperate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Identify people with disabilities HHs and do home visits for trust building</li> <li>› Identify barriers</li> </ul>
Drug use in communities results in weakened community leadership and insufficient cooperation with the project	Low uptake of activities and approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Identify critical villages</li> <li>› Work with GoUM TS authorities</li> <li>› Further professionalize the team on how to respond to the drug issue</li> </ul>
Youths are not encouraged by parents and leaders to participate	Youths seem to be not interested in activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Strategic promotion for youths</li> <li>› Trust building among village youth groups</li> <li>› Deeper assess their pressing needs and challenges</li> <li>› Organize life skill training events for village youths</li> <li>› Promote youths' participation among village leaders</li> </ul>
Activity implementation schedule has not included timeframes where villagers are not available	Villagers set other priorities (either religious, cultural or agricultural activities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Collaborate with village leaders and women representatives in planning the activities</li> </ul>
Voluntarism is viewed as unattractive with low reputation and recognition	Sufficient number of volunteers cannot be identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Communicate about the incentive package</li> <li>› Conduct promotion events at village level</li> <li>› Work with communities on the benefits of volunteer community engagement</li> </ul>
GoUM training content does not focus on NSA nor on the participatory extension approach	Trained farmers are not engaged nor change practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Capacitate government staff to deliver training in participatory manner</li> <li>› Training monitoring and participants' reflection (pre-post training assessments)</li> </ul>



## Conclusion

The results of the analysis of this Gender, Age and Disability Inclusion research study identify common views of gender, age and disability as culturally constructed concepts that shape people's relationships, define roles, and therewith impact development interventions. The research, which was based on five domains of the gender and inclusion analysis theory emphasizes the need for introducing innovative tools and approaches that stimulate a positive dialogue and negotiation practice between women and men and between older generations and the youths. The evidence-based SBCC approach is suggested to be utilized at various project platforms; as a guide into good negotiation practice and fruitful intergenerational dialogue. The SBCC approach also promotes the inclusion of vulnerable people groups in decision-making which effects people's lives. And the SBCC approach is anticipated to be effective in promoting equal opportunities for all project beneficiaries, to develop their skills, to secure their livelihoods and constructively contribute to community affairs as well as in promoting healthier and dignified lives.

The particularities of the location in which MI implements the multi-sectoral development project requires the integration of monitoring processes that continuously assess risks as well as monitor the effectiveness of used approaches. In this context, the research findings promote the installation of the SBCC approach within the project monitoring system which enables a frequent gender- and inclusion analysis within the project context. Collected data includes information about the process and uptake of gender negotiation work and inclusion measures at the HH and community level and enables the project to adjust activities as needed.

In regard to the project components, the agriculture- and livelihood-related activities are of utmost importance for rural households. Establishing linkages with a distinct participatory approach as outlined in Annex 2 will enhance the uptake of improved farming practices. The integration of government staff in capacity building on agriculture extension is significant because potential positive field experiences will feed back into government working practices. At the same time,

farmers become engaged in 'field experimentation' on their land, which brings along with it a great chance for sustainably change of farming practices. The 'demonstration' of farming systems without direct and hands-on engagement carries the risk of low uptake by farmers. The nutrition education activities, the selection of multipliers and formation of mother-to-mother support groups have good chances for establishing significant improvements, especially when these activities are well linked to the SBCC approach. In this context, the significance of the participatory approach needs to be mentioned which also implies that cooking lessons should be hands-on experiences with locally available ingredients. The skill-building component of the project is especially important for young people and those who have a limited skill portfolio. Therefore, it is recommendable to include life skill training as important component of technical training inputs. This training combination bears high potential for increasing young people's employability.

The WASH component for rural communities is very significant and ensures the internalization of best hygiene practices. The Government's goal to be ODF by 2050 is a challenging goal which can only be achieved by sustainable behavior change. In this context, the integration of schools will be valuable and allow students to learn and practice essential WASH measures. The local construction of latrines is important and builds local capacity. The setting up of small micro-enterprises (small groups of interested people) to produce latrine units will be useful. Latrine construction is very likely to be sustainable for many years because it carries the chance to generate small income. A school assessment will give more information about the WASH needs in schools and helps to promote the installation of toilets at the HH level.

Local organizations (CSOs) are the key institutions in many rural areas where government service delivery is weak or non-existing. The strengthening of these CSOs through regular capacity building, beyond those needed for the project, is essential in order to work towards sustainability. The incorpo-

ration of all participatory development approaches used by the project, including management- and leadership related aspects, will be very useful and capacitate local partners to carry on lessons learned and to build on what the project already accomplished.

MI's multi-sectoral development project, implemented in Monghsat and Mongton townships of eastern Shan State, addresses the most pressing needs of rural communities. The inclusion approach of the most vulnerable groups will be especially meaningful when it is built on valuable principles of participation. The chance for undergoing hands-on activities and experiencing a new level of mutual appreciation between women and men, older people and youths as well as appreciating unique agency in people with disabilities will be best nurtured through dialogue, negotiation and inter-generational communication on the understanding of interdependence.

## Recommendations

These recommendations are the result of the extensive field data collection as well as the review of some relevant literature (see literature list).

### Recommendations – Project Implementation

- › Mainstream gender and inclusion principles into all training that the project delivers, so that gender equality and inclusion messages are communicated regularly. Ensure that GoUM and EAOs are included in GADI training units.
- › Integrate the unifying theme “communication for change” (SBCC)<sup>99</sup> in all staff meetings and refresher trainings. SBCC is the combination of using the socio-ecological model of change and doing advocacy for social mobilization towards behavior change.
- › Introduce GADI training elements as introductory activities at community level to raise awareness for inclusion (i.e. WASH). Use the “Attitudinal barriers” game, facilitated by MI project team who participated in the GADI training.<sup>100</sup> Train how SBCC as a unifying theme interconnects with all project elements/activities and helps to overcome barriers in beneficiaries’ participation in project activities.
- › Do gender analysis activities prior to actual project activities: community-based investigation of gendered division of labor and time used in daily activities. Community facilitators/ trained multiplicators with advisory roles in the village are advised to encourage women and men to learn and maintain the process of negotiation over gender roles. The SBCC approach as a proven method ultimately leads

towards inter-relational negotiation on gender roles and social behavior change.

- › Design project monitoring as listening/learning sessions about peoples’ perspectives of disability and inclusion. Ensure that monitoring and feedback sessions in communities include all vulnerable groups and assess their needs through formal and informal consultations for identifying barriers. Conduct HH visitations as appropriate.
- › Create a village-based dialogue platform on gender, age, and disability inclusion. Produce advocacy messages for gender, age, and disability to be shared with all groups. The goal is to facilitate an understanding of gender, equality and disability inclusion by using practical tools, as already partly introduced in the GADI training.
- › Consider using social media for communicating inclusion messages in Burmese and other ethnic languages. The media account can be used beyond the project life cycle and operated by a CSO.
- › Establish community-based Self-Help Groups for older people. Improving older people’s self-care through physical activity etc. offers great potential for improvements in their health status. Provide training for promoting healthy aging through better nutrition, disease management and more active lifestyles. Community groups/self-help groups can supplement family support and reduce social isolation.<sup>101</sup>
- › Design and provide life skills training for young people that includes also safe migration information. The research found that particularly young women from the target area migrate to Thailand. Young people who plan to migrate for work or further education need training on protection

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<sup>99</sup> C-Change. 2012. C-Modules. A Learning Package for Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC). Washington, DC: C-Change/FHI 360.

<sup>100</sup> Age and Disability Consortium (2017), Inclusion of Age & Disability in Humanitarian Action, Training Handbook

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<sup>101</sup> See more info in: Knodel, John (2013), The Situation of Older Persons in Myanmar, 112.

measures and human rights, embedded in a life skills training module.

- › Advocate in target communities for obtaining the National Registration Card. Citizenship is crucial to access public services, either for people with disabilities, elderly or any other person from a vulnerable group. Disseminate information in communities.
- › Consider older women and youths for the multiplier role to share relevant nutrition, health and hygiene messages within their circles and the community.
- › Conduct advocacy work as social events and as “story time” about gender, age, and disability inclusion. “Nothing about us without us” and “If you have not heard her story, you have heard only half of history.” Themes include care for persons with a disability (stigma and shame), elderly care, HH workload, and inclusive decision-making processes.
- › Streamline the agriculture and livelihood component (Outcome 1) of the project to integrate Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture (NSA) principles: (a) making food more available and accessible (inclusion principle), (b) making food more diverse and production more sustainable, and (c) making food itself more nutritious.<sup>102</sup>
- › Exchange the “demonstration field” model for the “experimentation field model” that builds on practical activity and learning loops through practice on farmers’ fields instead on demonstration plots. Farmers should be encouraged to “experiment” on their own fields and exchange experiences with other farmers (showing results).
- › Introduce a participatory extension approach when setting up structures and training modules for agricultural village extension workers (multipliers). Streamline the village extension worker training on inclusive measures; assess whether older persons can be included in the service system.
- › Collaborate with health centers and community health workers to identify eyesight limitations among older people. Supplying affordable eyeglasses may be one straightforward intervention to improve vision for many and to rapidly build trust. Further COVID-19 gender-specific responses and recommendations are in Annex 3.
- › Identify accessibility barriers in schools and work with the community on a plan to realize barrier-free access to schools for children with a disability. In this context, advocate for inclusion. As appropriate, seek advice/build collaboration with HI.
- › Initiate youth-led youth clubs for learning life skills, get connected to learning opportunities that can serve as anti-dot against drug use. The installation of facilitated youth-led platforms would also help sharing health, nutrition and hygiene messages.

### Recommendations – CBOs, Authorities, Communities

- › Engage CBOs and community leadership in GADI training and awareness raising for the needs of people with disabilities, for social inclusion, and for understanding enablers and barriers. Use practice examples from the community.
- › Engage communities in selecting Community Volunteers (multipliers) that support the project in promoting nutrition and WASH messages.
- › Discuss at village level the establishment of youth-led peer group initiatives (youth clubs) where youth find opportu-

<sup>102</sup> FAO 2018, [https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/nutrition\\_sensitive\\_agriculture.pdf](https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/nutrition_sensitive_agriculture.pdf)



nities to express their interests, learn life skills, and get connected to vocational training opportunities.

- › Initiate a network and collaboration between families with children with disabilities. Use the project as a platform to communicate the difference between the 'Charity Model of Disability' and the 'Social Inclusion Model of Disability'.
- › Initiate and facilitate youth-led inter-generational dialogue forums. Such a forum is meant to be a platform to exchange life experience and perspectives between young and older people. The inter-generational dialogue is framed within the SBCC approach of doing advocacy for social mobilization towards behavior change.

### Recommendations – Malteser International

- › Plan out annual GADI refresher training modules for MI teams, GoUM partners and CSOs/CBOs in target areas. Develop internal capacity for training local and ethnic rural communities on the concepts of inclusion and gender roles/relations.
- › Collaborate with local CSOs on regional/national level to streamline GADI activities and training in project areas. Conduct gender leadership and research trainings in collaboration with the 'Shan Women's Action Network' and/or the 'Gender Equality Network' for supporting capacity building efforts of local CBOs and village workers.<sup>103</sup>
- › Consider to incorporate a training unit in MI's program that tackles the issue of "Women Workload Reduction" (WWR) as women are generally more loaded with work tasks than men. Consider to also include the SBCC training to convey nutrition, health and WASH messages, in line with the project's Outcome 1 and 2.
- › Consider expertise development on setting up Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs), embedded in the SBCC framework. Women's economic empowerment but also skills development are entry points for enabling women to express their strategic needs and start negotiating more equitable gender relations.
- › Capacitate national staff to use the 5 domains of the gender and inclusion analysis framework.<sup>104</sup> Integrate these domains in project monitoring. Establish other accountability and best-practices for inclusive training and workshop preparation and monitoring tool.
- › Consider forming school clubs to regularly promote nutrition, health and hygiene messages. Supply the school clubs with attractive IEC materials. The age-relevant work with children in their adolescence, where the most rapid physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development takes place is impactful. It also presents a narrow window of opportunity to disrupt the intergenerational transmission of poverty before children reach adulthood and parenthood.
- › Conduct a study on women's and female elderly (grandmothers in the house) child caretakers' health-seeking behaviors, people's practices and cultural food taboos for pregnant/lactating young mothers and children in ethnic households. These three areas are interwoven with the gender subject and need to be assessed in more depths.
- › Modify the GADI training contents for the community-level. The training content may focus on inclusion, and under-

<sup>103</sup> Shan Women's Action Network, <https://www.shanwomen.org> and the GEN - <https://www.genmyanmar.org>

<sup>104</sup> 1. Laws, policies, regulations, institutional practices. 2. Cultural norms and beliefs. 3. Gender roles, responsibilities, and time used. 4. Access to and control over assets and resources. 5. Power and decision-making.

standing that GADI deals with the wellbeing of all in the community.

- › Capacitate CBOs/CSOs on GADI and increase their gender awareness. Quite frequently, local organizations are gender blind and to inadvertently perpetuate gender inequalities. Capacity building for improving the inclusion and gender equality lens in an organization need to include the leadership level to ensure time and resources, as well as organizational culture is designed toward inclusion and gender equality.<sup>105</sup>
- › Link up with the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement,<sup>106</sup> and the National Nutrition Centre (DoH) to establish and facilitate a regional (district and township level) forum to discuss means for collaboration and community-based activities in order to support the convergence nutrition interventions and services at the community, household and individual level aiming to trigger desired nutrition outcomes. Develop inclusive action steps which are based on the MS-NPAN.<sup>107</sup>
- › Integrate Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) training modules in project frameworks. Train staff, local communities, CBOs, and local authorities on disaster response principles and facilitate the setting up of community structures that are capacitated and equipped to mitigate natural disasters and pandemic crisis (see Annex 3).

## Intersectionality – Recommendation

Do not immediately try to convince men into participation of gender equal/neuter activities (domestic chores, child care-taking) or activities that provoke the perception of “female work”. Also, do not try to convince men who are in fact good father models, to present themselves as good fathers in the public. It can be anticipated that men in practicing “good father roles” are not immediately interested in getting into public spotlight. Public visibility of their culturally deviant behavior could be shaming and provoke fears of social exclusion by other men. Research data shows that living against cultural norms increases drug use in men. Therefore, as mentioned in the gender analysis (2.2) and recommendation section, it is recommended to implement gender analysis activities that ultimately lead towards inter-relational negotiation on gender roles and social behavior change communication (SBCC) as a process that takes time, not as a “one-off” awareness raising campaign. It is also recommended to modify the Positive Deviance (PD) approach and to emphasize positive role families rather than individual persons and to implement an ongoing awareness raising forum for engaging men in learning processes on positive masculinity.

Carefully investigate female-headed households (prior to WASH activities) that accommodate male relatives in substitution or addition to the woman’s husband or life partner. It has been reported that only those women who earn salaries from outside the household environment enjoy some sort of respect and entitlement of ultimate ownership and access to household resources. However, women who accumulate resources from their economic activity inside their own households do not necessarily have independent ownership over their household assets and resources. It is likely that these women are overpowered by male-defined ownership over assets/resources of other male relatives. Such vulnerable situation may worsen gender inequality for women, especially when resource provisions from the project become the object of division and debate between female household owners and other male relatives.

<sup>105</sup> WaterAid, Gender equality and disability inclusion, discussion paper.

<sup>106</sup> SUN is a global movement aiming to end malnutrition in all its forms. Myanmar joint the movement in 2013 and is engaged through ‘Alive and Thrive’ – Myanmar SUN CSA, <https://scalingupnutrition.org>

<sup>107</sup> Republic of the Union of Myanmar (2018), MS-NPAN

Communicate intersectionality consequences from COVID-19 with local partners, Shan women organizations on the ground, and government departments. Evidence from past crises and natural disasters suggests that confinement measures often lead to increased or first-time violence against women and children.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, it is recommended that MI partners with local health workers, to enable and prepare local health services for adequate responses to increased cases of domestic violence, child abuse, and violence against women (see Annex 3).

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<sup>108</sup> OECD: Tackling Coronavirus (COVID-19) Contributing to a Global Effort: Women at the Core of the Fight against COVID-19 Crisis



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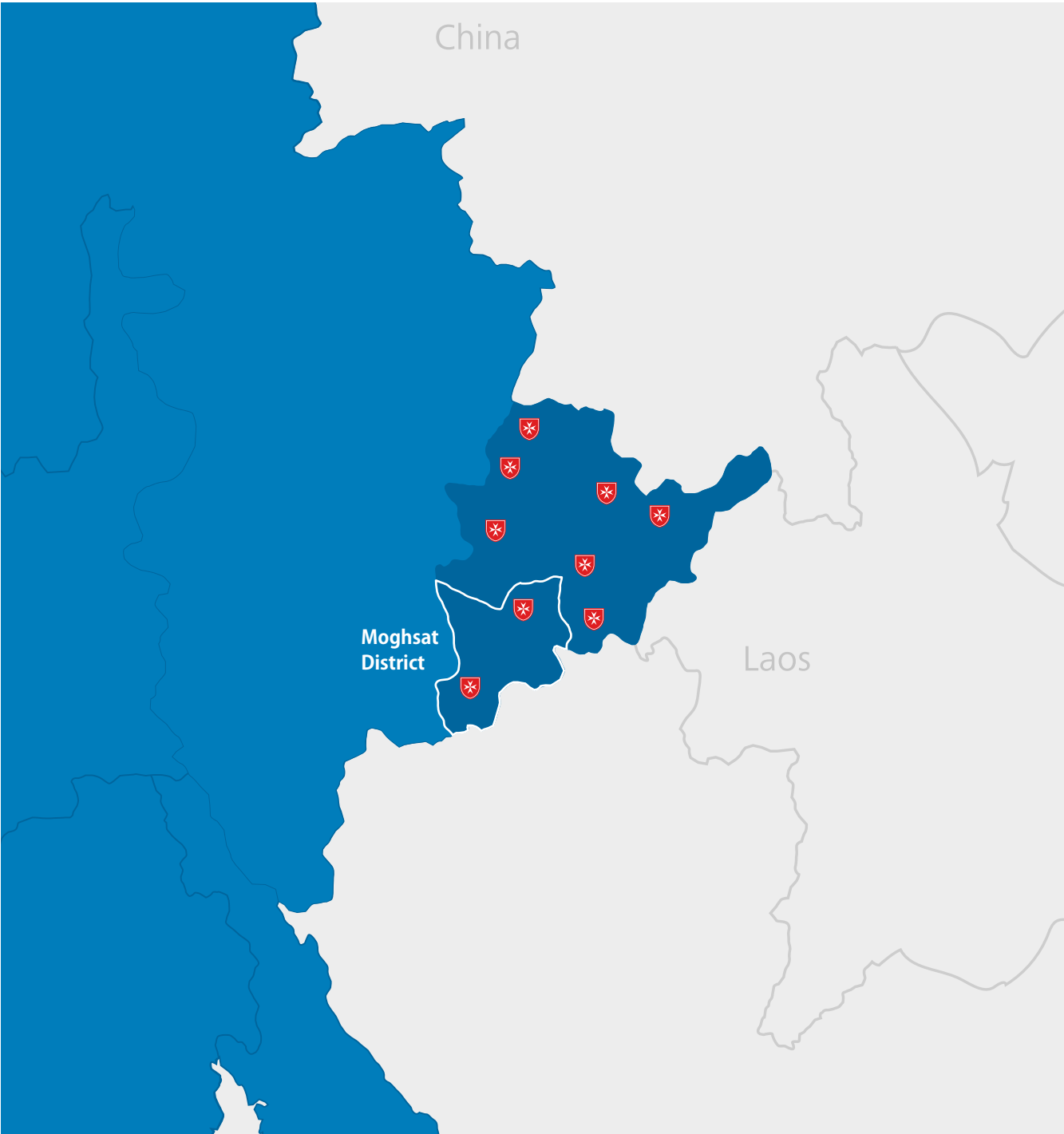
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ANNEX 1 – SHAN STATE (EAST) DISTRICT MAP – MI’S PROJECT SITES



## ANNEX 2 – THE PROJECT FRAMEWORK IN THE CONTEXT OF DO-NO-HARM

**In this section, a number of planned project activities are highlighted for considering small modifications in order to fully underline the commitment to participatory and gender-sensitive/inclusive action and DNH approach. This section is linked to Chapter 6.**

**Outcome 1. Indicator 1.1** – Agriculture (Implementation Approaches): MI plans to roll out the project in a fragile and conflict-affected context and therefore needs to systematically ensure that its work avoids contributing to divisions, tensions, disputes or violent conflict. In each component (Outcomes), the project uses a number of approaches and builds on previous experiences of what has worked well elsewhere. The considered approaches of establishing farmer groups (farmer field schools) is a proven concept to improve agriculture, farming systems and food production-related issues. In this context, it is suggested to ensure inclusiveness of older people and people with disabilities if this deems possible. The rationale behind is that the older generation has experience to share and is thus able to contribute with advice, if found constructive. Innovative farming techniques and systems can be best introduced through “experimentation fields” instead of “demonstration fields”, which are two different concepts. The farmers’ field experimentation is built on the idea that farmers, while technically supported by agriculture extension workers and peer farmers, experiment themselves on their own fields and try out newly learned farming methods. The farmer field school is the hub where experiences come together and where lessons learned are extracted by participants and shared among all members. The agriculture and livelihood component of the project needs to integrate Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture (NSA) principles that primarily focus on food security for vulnerable groups. Therefore, agriculture village extension workers need to be trained to facilitate farmer groups in the areas of inclusion, conflict mitigation and -negotiation.

In this context, the selection of agriculture village extension workers as multipliers is suggested to be a participatory process with the inclusion of all affected stakeholders (GoUM, EAO, Farmers (women and men) and vulnerable groups who will benefit. It is crucial that the selected agricultural village extension workers (volunteers) find local acceptance in their role as advisors, have the right attitudes towards vulnerable people (inclusive mindset), and are able to mitigate tensions as they arise. This will be especially important in inhomogeneous communities. In regard to the selection of village extension workers as volunteers, it is necessary to rightly motivate them to work in this capacity, which is best ensured when they understand the benefits involved. The planned training modules (educational talks) should be conducted as highly participatory learning events (applied adult learning principles), which means that a rather top-down “teacher-student” approach would be inappropriate. In order to embrace a high level of participatory agricultural advisory, the modification and adaptation of a participatory extension approach” is suggested. The participatory extension approach is built on the idea that farmers are “experimenting” and undergo facilitated learning loops.<sup>109</sup>

**Indicator 1.2 – Livestock:** The concept of selecting farmers for the demonstration of pigs inbreeding with improved breeds is a technical advanced method and within the rural context of Akha, Lahu or Shan villages most likely a significant challenge. Therefore, the context situation in most villages raises concerns over the successful feasibility of such intervention. The current technical know-how, ability and practice of undergoing regular and timely monitoring visits to villages and the availability of adequate resources accessible for the LBVD leaves some doubts whether the inbreeding experiment with improved pig breeds will be successful. Finally, in a context where food insecurity and malnutrition are major threats to most rural communities, improved pig breeds that

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<sup>109</sup> OECD: Tackling Coronavirus (COVID-19) Contributing to a Global Effort: Women at the Core of the Fight against COVID-19 Crisis



require ‘advanced’ animal feed grown on crop land (corn, soy beans) can be seen as direct competition to human food crop production. If pigs shall remain as a project component, farmers should work with robust local breeds and become introduced to improved pig raising techniques, including better pig feed and shelter management, as well as needed vaccination. Adequate animal care and management is closely linked to the other components (nutrition, health, hygiene).

**Indicator 1.3 – Nutrition Education:** The identification of multipliers for nutrition advisory services in communities should be a community-led process. The acceptance of these multipliers is crucial for the uptake of nutrition messages by community members, especially by women in reproductive age and children up to two years of age. In this context, the “awareness raising” approach might be altered with the “Social Behavior Change Communication” (SBCC) approach that was introduced to Myanmar by UNICEF. It is expected to shortly be integrated in government terminology as well as become an integrative working approach for development interventions that focus on nutrition, hygiene, health and WASH. As stated by UNICEF, social change is a deliberate and iterative process of public and private dialogue, debate, and negotiation that focuses on the community as the unit of change. It aims to change behaviors on a large scale, eliminate harmful social and cultural practices, and change social norms and structural inequalities.<sup>110</sup> Further, the MoL states that SBCC in Myanmar uses an evidence-informed process that utilizes a mix of communication tools, channels and approaches to facilitate dialogue, participation and engagement with targeted audiences for positive and social behavior change. The approach aims for changing people’s beliefs, attitudes and perceptions, so that they are empowered, develop skills and are confident to adopt optimal practices for improved nutrition.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> UNICEF [https://sites.unicef.org/cbsc/index\\_65736.html](https://sites.unicef.org/cbsc/index_65736.html)

<sup>111</sup> MOHS (2020), National Social and Behavior Change Communication Strategy for Nutrition (SBCC-NPAN)

**Indicator 1.4 – Livelihoods:** Vocational training is defined by the GoUM as a driver for development. As stated in this research report, youths are in need to build skills that help them to identify and master a future livelihood activity. However, skill-building training of one month only is unlikely to enable the youths to successfully uptake new skills and transform these skills into successful livelihood activities. Additionally, to solidify technical trainings of at least 2 months, life skills training will be necessary to help the youths to increase self-confidence in order to become successful applicants on the job market (become employable). During training times, youths also should be familiarized with protection, anti-abuse and anti-trafficking knowledge that enables them to make informed migration decisions. For youths who successfully develop business plans, a small start-up grant would be useful. The VSLA model which is primarily designed as a practical and community-based women empowerment tool can become a catalyst for establishing successful small-scale businesses that secure livelihood in remote areas. The women-led saving funds might be of significance and avoid that money is being taken from the HH and spent on drugs.

**Outcome 2. Indicator 2.1 – Water Supply:** Access to sufficient water supply is of major importance to all rural communities. As repeatedly highlighted in this report, the inclusion of vulnerable HHs is essential. The design and rehabilitation of water supply systems should include women and youth, as well as households with persons with disabilities. The inclusion of their voices will be useful for the successful installation of a village water system. The inclusion of women in the WUGs will ensure that the establishment of water systems will be evaluated and checked through the gender lens.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> WaterAid (2018), Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion within Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, 3,11.

**Indicator 2.4 – Sanitation/WASH:** The GoUM has set an ambitious strategy<sup>113</sup> in place to tackle the needs for water and sanitation in rural areas. Innovative approaches and funding through international channels are needed to support significant goals such as becoming ODF by 2030. In this context, it is suggested to work with communities to form teams of small-scale entrepreneurs at the village cluster level who can be trained to build all the elements for latrines and provide them for interested households at a low-cost level.<sup>114</sup> The inclusion of schools in the program will be valuable and improve the uptake of health and hygiene messages by students. The dissemination of WASH IEC materials to schools and all households in the 30 target communities will be beneficial and support the transition to ODF communities. According to UNICEF, schools offer platforms for engaging children in actions that promote behavior change related to hygiene, sanitation and water.<sup>115</sup> The installation or improvement of WASH units in schools is important and can support the uptake of new hygiene practices, including using a toilet, especially among vulnerable households. It needs to be ensured that vulnerable HHs are enabled to receive a latrine.

**Outcome 3. Indicator 3.1 – CSO Development:** The selection of local partners (CSOs) is a crucial step toward successful project implementation. The selection of local partners may include women organizations that operate or have experiences in the area. The process of leading MI as well as local partner organizations to more gender and disability inclusive work procedures, training and performance checks are needed. The project monitoring system needs to be effective and inclusive. The CBM Disability and Gender Analysis Toolkit provides mature templates that can be used to assess organiza-

tional progress.<sup>116</sup> Experienced women groups and networks, for instance the Shan Women's Action Network and GEN are potential project collaboration partners.

### ANNEX 3 – DISASTER PREPAREDNESS MEASURES AND PANDEMIC RESPONSE

The integration of disaster preparedness measures in program design is an important step and ideally also an inclusive process because it helps to identify and map local capacities to cope with natural disasters, hazards, including the pandemic crisis (COVID-19). Ultimately, effective disaster response reduces the negative effects on people, including vulnerable groups. The GoUM has reinforced an Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction (2017) to make Myanmar safer and more resilient against natural hazards, thus protecting lives, livelihood and developmental gains.<sup>117</sup>

At community level, the goal of disaster preparedness training is to lessen the impact of disasters on people, capacitate local structures to deal with response activities, and to install a plan and prepare equipment that helps to respond effectively. Humanitarian crises affect each person differently depending on their gender, age, disability and other personal characteristics. Older people and people with disabilities are often overlooked in humanitarian relief and response and they may find it harder than others to access the assistance and protection they need. The humanitarian principle of *impartiality*, providing assistance on the basis of need and without discrimination, requires agencies working in emergencies to reduce barriers so that people with disabilities and older people are not purposefully or inadvertently excluded from the humanitarian response. Disaster preparedness training needs to be built on the 'Minimum Standards for Age

<sup>113</sup> GoUM (2016), National Strategy for Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

<sup>114</sup> GoUM (2016), National Strategy for Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), 31.

<sup>115</sup> UNICEF (2016), Strategy for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2016-2030.

<sup>116</sup> CBM (2019), Disability and Gender Analysis Toolkit, 26f.

<sup>117</sup> Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (2017), Myanmar Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction.

and Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Action”<sup>118</sup> and help capacitate local communities, CBOs and local authorities to identify and install practical/feasible community-based response mechanisms.

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented health crisis, whose severity has led to a worldwide economic crisis with devastating affects to people from poor, remote and conflict-affected backgrounds. People from these areas often work in the informal sector or migrate elsewhere for work and have little savings or guaranteed income. Their livelihoods are threatened by travel restrictions and border closures, which disrupt markets, value chains and livelihoods. Within the DRR framework, the rural communities need to be familiarized with a number of activities that enable the community to increase the level of preparedness and mitigation capacity. The annually designed training module needs to be built on local experiences that merge with best-DRR knowledge, research findings, and communication channels that connect even remote villages with outside support mechanisms. The outcome of a training session is a locally crafted disaster preparedness plan that identified and foresees the development of local organizational (CBO) capacity, sets roles and responsibilities, developed locally relevant policies and procedures in order to reach a level of preparedness that enables communities to respond effectively to a disaster should one occur. According to a local expert, *“engaging local civil society groups and women organizations is key to improving policy implementation, designing interventions, and promoting coordination and inclusiveness.”*<sup>119</sup> A DRR training model may include the action steps suggested below.

## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS IN PRACTICE

The project proposal already indicates that Shan East lies on a fault line and experienced a major earthquake of magnitude 6.9 in 2011. Additionally, slash and burn remain a common practice particularly in Shan East and contribute to soil depletion, environmental degradation and increases the risks of natural disasters.

This following list of activities includes action steps that are suggested to be part of an inclusive and community-based annual disaster preparedness training. The overall goal is to capacitate existing village groups (i.e. CBOs) to effectively organize a disaster response. The inclusion of local authorities in training units will be valuable.

### Disaster Preparedness of Communities

- › Capacitate existing village structures and ensure that roles, responsibilities, and communication lines (internally and externally) are in place to organize and coordinate inclusive support for people in need.
- › Support villagers to develop a disaster preparedness plan that foresees inclusive and transparent measures (action steps) community members have developed, approved (agreed to), and internalized.
- › Set up a disaster response tool kit and include local materials and people’s skills to regular maintain equipment and tools.
- › Include schools (teachers, students, school clubs) and vulnerable groups in training sessions and the practice of disaster response measures.

<sup>118</sup> HelpAge International (2015), Minimum Standards for Age and Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Action.

<sup>119</sup> Khin Khin Mra in ‘New Mandala’, 20 May 2020, <https://www.newmandala.org/fighting-on-two-fronts-the-women-facing-conflict-and-covid-19-in-rakhine-state/>

## Pandemic Crisis Response

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented health crisis, which has triggered an unprecedented economic crisis and the social and economic impacts are likely to be serious. While these global and national restrictions in movement and social contacts to prevent the disease from spreading, severe economic social crises can be anticipated. Where particularly traditional norms on gender roles prevail, COVID-19 amplifies women's unpaid work burdens and increases women's time spent in the home due to confinement. Evidence from past crises and natural disasters suggests that confinement measures often lead to increased or first-time violence against women and children.<sup>120</sup>

COVID-19 crisis will exacerbate existing inequalities and discrimination against women and girls and put a hold to some gender transformative policies and reforms.<sup>121</sup> Women are serving on the frontlines against COVID-19, they make up almost 70% of the health care workforce, have high care responsibilities in the home, and are denied proper delivery of maternal health services in COVID-19 pandemic. Women are also under-represented in the leadership and decision-making processes in the health sector.

## Recommendations for balancing health and economic considerations

- › Institutionalize an effective system to support survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, draw on social work-

ers that have been trained by the Department of Social Welfare on gender dimensions of COVID-19 and on psycho-social counseling.<sup>122</sup>

- › Launch together with Shan Women's Action Network<sup>123</sup> community- and public awareness campaigns regarding the non-acceptability of gender-inequality and gender-based violence (use television, radio, follow up messages on social media, and the mass distribution of written handouts for community HHs). Note that the baseline data from January 2020 on women's empowerment in Myanmar's central Dry Zone show that 81 percent of male and 92 percent of female respondents think that wife beating is acceptable under several circumstances.<sup>124</sup>
- › Conduct rapid and ongoing sex disaggregated gender analysis in collaboration with Women's League of Burma, Shan Women's Action Network, and Gender Equality Network.<sup>125</sup> Assess data on COVID-19 effects on gender equality and access to health and reproductive health rights.
- › Conduct women leadership- and research trainings with GEN.
- › Organize complementary information campaigns for women, including behavior change communication on health

<sup>120</sup> OECD: Tackling Coronavirus (Covid-19) Contributing to a Global Effort: Women at the Core of the Fight against Covid-19 Crisis. <file:///Users/regine/Documents/GESI%20Advisor/Women%20at%20the%20core%20of%20the%20fight%20against%20COVID-19%20crisis%20-%20OECD.webarchive>

<sup>121</sup> OECD: Tackling Coronavirus (Covid-19) Contributing to a Global Effort: Women at the Core of the Fight against Covid-19 Crisis

<sup>122</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/protecting-rights-and-opportunities-women-and-girls-enmyanmar> Myanmar Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction.

<sup>123</sup> Shan Women's Action Network: [www.shanwomen.org](http://www.shanwomen.org)

<sup>124</sup> Ragasa, C., K. Mahrt, Z.W. Aung, and I. Lambrecht. 2020. Gender, Crop Diversification and Nutrition in Irrigation Catchment Areas in the Central Dry Zones in Myanmar: Implications for Agricultural Development Support. IFPRI Discussion Paper (forthcoming). Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

<sup>125</sup> Gender Equality Network: [genderequalitynetwork@genmyanmar.org](mailto:genderequalitynetwork@genmyanmar.org). Women's League of Burma: [www.womenofburma.org](http://www.womenofburma.org). Shan Women's Action Network: [www.shanwomen.org](http://www.shanwomen.org)

- and nutrition and education on leadership and self-esteem (partner with women organization and health service network)
- › Ensure lasting gender-transformative change and women's inclusion: Designate women as the recipients of unconditional cash transfers. Explicitly target female farmers and entrepreneurs with cash transfers, loan programs, technical assistance, and input provision.
  - › Implement labor-intensive community infrastructure projects for those laid off and for returning migrants
  - › Support farmers, small Agri-processors, seed farmers, and agri-businesses for planting and income retention
  - › Establish rural cash-for-work programs
  - › In cooperation with the Shan Women's Action Network and Women's League of Burma (WLB) and the eastern-Shan Ministry of Health Committee, ensure safe health service delivery to women/girls (sex. reproductive health/maternity) and push back social acceptance of domestic violence and gender-based violence.
  - › Ensure the distribution of reliable/verified and adequate information on disease prevention which will help villages to make informed decisions on lock-down- and quarantine measures.
  - › Capacitate trusted village health workers/village authorities for setting up reliable communication lines within the village and with regional health centers and authorities.
  - › Design and disseminate a pandemic awareness raising and response toolkit and ensure its translation into local/ethnic languages that include practical action steps every community member can do/is familiar with to reduce the risks for spreading diseases.
  - › Equip local health workers, CBOs, or any other suitable body at community level with basic pandemic response equipment and sanitary items.
  - › Ensure at least one annual DRR refresher training for local staff, community members, local authorities, students and teachers in target areas. Ensure the inclusion of vulnerable people groups.
  - › Female local staff/village volunteers of CBOs and frontline health workers are sensitized for an increase of vulnerability in communities, including GBV in case of lock-downs.
  - › Establish/intensify a village-based social support network/committee that cares for elderly, PwDs and female-headed households.
  - › Local authorities and EAO/GoUM to collaborate and ensure the uphold of rule of law and prevent villagers /vulnerable groups from additional harm (smuggling, drug dealing, human trafficking).
  - › Ensure that protection measures are reasonable and reduce the negative implications for essential local trade, access to markets, health services, and education to a minimum. Livelihood securities of villagers and farmers is essential.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Interview with a 'Karen News' coordinator, May 2020.

## ANNEX 4 – DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Refers to the socially constructed differences between women and men throughout their life cycle.</li> <li>› It is not the same as sex, which refers to the biological attributes of a person.</li> <li>› Does not focus only on women. While women and girls most often face constraints within gender roles, men and boys are also influenced by strict expectations of masculinity.</li> <li>› In this document, the term gender is not seen in binary terms (man and woman), but also includes transgender and intersex people. For the ease of readability however, this document uses the terms man and woman only. (ADCAP, IASC, MI).</li> </ul>
Gender Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Means that all human beings are free to make their own choices without the limitations set by gender roles.</li> <li>› Equality means that the diversity in behaviour, needs and aspirations of women and men is equally valued and considered. This does not mean that women and men are the same, but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life chances are equal and not limited by their gender. (ADCAP, IASC, MI).</li> </ul>
Mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Is shorthand for saying that the impact of all policies and programs on the different needs and capabilities of boys and girls, women and men with and without disabilities of all age groups should be considered at every stage of the program cycle, from planning to implementation and evaluation (ADCAP, IASC, MI).</li> </ul>
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. (ADCAP, IASC, MI).</li> </ul>
Disability and Age Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Is defined as inclusion of people with disabilities and older persons into everyday activities and involves practices, programs and policies designed to identify and remove physical, institutional, communication and attitudinal barriers, that hamper the ability of individuals with disabilities and the elderly to have full participation in society on an equal basis to those without disabilities (ADCAP, IASC, MI).</li> </ul>
Older People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› The concept of older age must be understood in broad terms. In many countries and cultures, being considered old is not necessarily a matter of age, but it is rather linked to circumstances such as being a grandparent, or showing physical signs such as white hair. Where people live in hardship, some of the conditions that can be associated with older age, such as mobility problems or chronic disease, are present at younger ages.<sup>127</sup></li> <li>› In Myanmar, the official retirement age starts with 60 years.</li> </ul>

<sup>127</sup> HelpAge International (2015), Minimum Standards of Age and Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Action, p.5.

Vulnerability Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Include, e.g. ethnicity, religion, economic, migration or marital status, sexual orientation.</li> <li>› Often increase experiences of discrimination, exclusion and abuse.</li> <li>› Are context specific and need to be mainstreamed into the program cycle alongside gender, age and disability.</li> <li>› Especially disadvantaged are persons with multiples vulnerabilities, e.g. girls of a low caste with a disability.</li> </ul>
Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of sex or disability which impairs or nullifies the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of all rights.</li> </ul>
Gendered division of labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Gendered division of labour refers to the way women and men are directed towards certain tasks, and prohibited from performing others according to their gender. Labour is divided into productive work, reproductive work and community work. Often women are responsible for more hours and types of labour in the day, yet receive less remuneration and benefits, (both monetary/ resource related and social), for their labour.<sup>128</sup></li> </ul>
Positive Deviance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› This are outliers - people who succeed in their (agriculture) activities “against all odds”. A positive deviance (PD) is found on the premise that at least one person in a community, working with the same resources as everyone else, succeed in his/her (agriculture) activity above others. This individual is an outlier in the statistical sense – an exception, someone whose outcome deviates in a positive way from the norm.<sup>129</sup></li> </ul>
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Barriers are defined as external factors in the environment in which people live, which purposefully or inadvertently hinder persons with disabilities and <i>vulnerable groups</i> from accessing and participating in activities.<sup>130</sup></li> </ul>
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Enablers are defined as external factors facilitating access and participation in society for PWD and <i>vulnerable groups</i> alongside capacities that person with disabilities already possess.<sup>131</sup></li> </ul>

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<sup>128</sup> WaterAid, Gender equality and disability inclusion, discussion paper.

<sup>129</sup> Pascale, Richard et al. (2010), The Power of Positive Deviance, Kindle Loc.214.

<sup>130</sup> EU (2019), ECHO Operational Guidance, The Inclusion of Person with Disabilities in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations, p.5.

<sup>131</sup> EU (2019), p.5.

## ANNEX 5 – LINKS TO ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Case Study on Participatory Gender Analysis – Helvetas Nepal

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOkvPP5g1ro>

Gender Analysis of Conflict: why is it important? – Saferworld

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sl2AZdl-2O8>

Re-thinking Gender in Peacebuilding

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cid9OiYUIOU> – guardianwitness



## ANNEX 6 – COMMUNITY VOICES (WOMEN, ELDERLY, YOUTH, PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES)

These below listed voices are additional data gathered through the field research period in early March 2020. Due to the structure of the report, only some of the captured voices from ethnic groups of women, elderly, youths and PwDs (mainly caretakers) were integrated into the report. All remaining voices are listed below.

### Voices on Gender Roles

***“Women mostly oversee household assets and cash flow. Our husbands ask money from us when they need money.”*** (Women Focus Group)

***One 38-year-old Shan woman said, “I am becoming old and worry that my husband takes a new wife”*** (Won Ton Shan village)

***The Malaria officer from one health department said, “some Lahu women take pride in taking many husbands.”***

***One woman from Hwy Par Sap (Lar Hu village) in Monghton township said: “Early marriage is one of the challenges in Lar Hu community, especially in rural areas. More health education and adolescent education for Lar Hu girls is required.”***

***“Early marriage is still a problem in some ethnic groups”*** (Lahu women)

***“Polygamy is a problem in some ethnic groups (mainly Lahu) when men or women are rich and take more than one life partner. This is associated to a higher social status”***

***“In Lahu culture, increasing wealth is a cultural entitlement for men and also women to marry more than just one partner.”***

***“Women are not included in decision-making and must do homework, and daughters cannot inherit properties from their parents, e.g. land, house, jewelry etc.”*** (Male GADI workshop participant (government staff, GAD)

***One 36-year-old Akha woman said, “I have to get up early to cook for the family. Then I have to go to the farm, in Taung Yar, to do shifting cultivation with my husband and to work together. My husband is doing housework only when I am sick*** (Htway Mee 1 Village, Akha village)

***One 32-year Lar Hu woman (female-headed HH) said, “Due to my husband’s drug addiction, he did not take care of family responsibilities. Our children cannot go to school and I as his wife have to make the living for our family”***

Nine Lahu women in focus group discussions reveal that the customary belief ***“the man is the head of the HH”*** is still strong today.

***“Shan women traditionally accept that the husband is the head of the house”*** (Shan woman from Won Ton village). The majority of Shan people in the Monghsat district are Buddhist people. They said, ***“In the Buddhist community, there is no gender discrimination. In some cases, women are taking on productive roles like men and prepare and sell foods.”***

***“Akha women are strong enough and they can work like men on the farm land”*** (Akha woman, Htway Mee 1 village)

***“When a father and husband uses drugs, the relationships in the family get destroyed. Divorce is the last option but with consequences”***

***“We have GBV when the husband is using drugs. Men can get violent when the wife does not give money for buying drugs.”*** (women focus group)

***At family level, the most disagreement between husband and wife is over drug issue.*** (women focus group)

***“Women in most communities have a job like selling things, working in government departments and trading like men.”*** (women focus group)

***“In the past, girls were sent to school only for the primary level and favor was given to boys. But now parents send boys and girls to school equally.”*** (women focus group)

***“The man is the head of the household.”*** (Women Focus Group)

***“Traditionally, men are the head of the household. This custom is not practiced differently in rural or urban communities.”*** (CBO voice on culture and gender)

### Voices on Age and Disability

***“There is no concrete program for elderly persons, neither for men nor for women in this village”*** (Hway Par Sap, Lar Hu Village, Mongton)

***“Due to a more political stability when compared with the past 3 decades, people can live more stable and give more attention to elderly and people with special needs”*** (Village elderly, HPSap, Lar Hu Village, Mongton)

***“At the present, the life for elderly persons is not so bad because their children look after their parents. However, older people worry once their children cannot look after them anymore in the future”*** (Shan elderly persons, Won Ton, Shan Village)

***“It depends on the personal luck or fortune of the elderly person whether he or she is looked after by their children or their relatives”*** (Elderly person, Shan Literature and Culture Committee)

***“If there is an elderly in a family, women are mainly looking after her or him.”*** Lahu Women

***“I am 75 years old and live alone. I am healthy and able to work for my living. The village community helped me to build my house. However, there is no health care professional in my village. I wished I had a clinic in the village”*** (Akha elderly woman, Hway Mee 1 Village)

***“The lives of elderly people are vulnerable. Some do not have children or relatives or supporters to live with them. They have to live with others or in the monastery”*** (Mid-wife, grocery shop owner, Monghsat)

***“There is not the custom to make the decision for who takes care of elderly people. Usually women take care of elderly persons in the family”*** (Woman from Hway Par Sap, Lar Hu Village, Mongton Township)

***“I am 67 years old and live with my husband who is 65 years old. We do basket weaving and do casual works in the village. Villagers built a house for us”*** (Hway Mee 1, Akha)

***“I would like to bring my daughter to a psychologist in Taunggyi but cannot afford it”*** (Mother of a 5-year-old girl with mental impairments, Lar Hu Village, Mongton)

***“I would like to check and test my eye at an eye specialist, but I never saw a doctor”*** (23 years old woman who lost her eye when she was young, Hway Mee 1, Akha Village)

***“Elderly take the advisory role in the community. They advise religious or cultural festivals. They are also paid homage by the community during religious festivals.”*** Lahu Youths.

***“If there is an elderly in a family, women are mainly looking after her or him. Young people rarely look after the elderly in the family.”*** (Lahu youth)

***“There is no concrete program for elderly persons, neither for men nor for women in this village”*** (Hway Par Sap, Lar Hu Village, Mongton)

***“Due to a more political stability when compared with the past 3 decades, people can live more stable and give more attention to elderly and people with special needs”***  
(Village elderly, HPSap, Lar Hu Village, Mongton)

***“At the present, the life for elderly persons is not so bad because their children look after their parents. However, older people worry once their children cannot look after them anymore in the future”*** (Shan elderly persons, Won Ton, Shan Village)

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***“I would like to check and test my eye at an eye specialist, but I never saw a doctor”*** (23 years old woman who lost her eye when she was young, Hway Mee 1, Akha Village)

## Youths Voices

***No job opportunities, limited markets for agriculture products, and widespread drug issues are challenging factors for the youth. Shan,*** (Youth group)

***“The value of social harmony causes the youth to work around issues and identify ways that keep social harmony intact by avoiding confrontation with the elderly”*** Shan, (Youth group)

Youth key informants say, ***“despite our different views, younger people have to listen to what the elderly say, by tradition. The young people accept the decisions of elderly people.”***

***“There is not much disagreement between youth and the elderly in the village. The youth follow the instruction of the elderly in religious ceremonies and social events.”*** (Youth, FGD)

***“The village youth cannot fully stand up against the elderly, to self-advocate for their positions”*** (Youth, FGD).

Youth reported, ***“Since we have not much to do for our livelihoods, we fall in love in early age and marry.”***

***Drug issues also became a threat to youth girls”*** (Lahu Youth).

Lahu youths said, ***“there is negative impact drug addiction in their region is still an issue today and that drug addiction lessened the level of education.”***

ANNEX 7 – FIGURES ON ETHNIC COMMUNITY’S OPINION





#### IMPRINT

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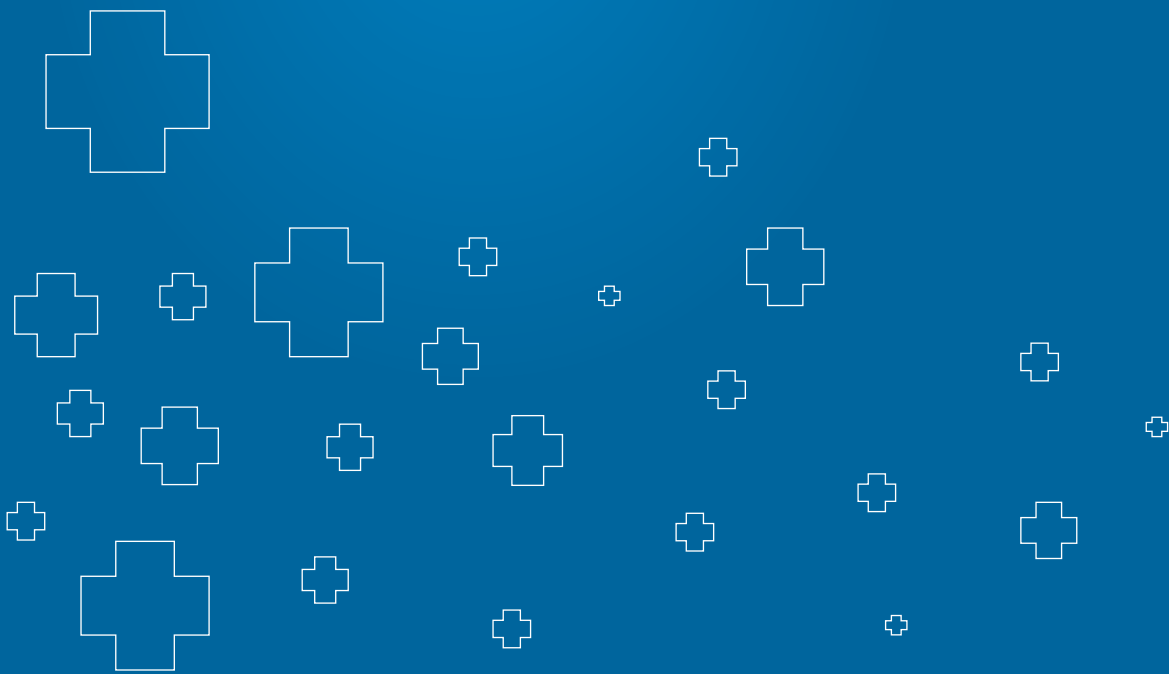
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