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## Gender equality and international peacebuilding

*A comparative case study of UN Women's actions and their impact on the progress of gender equality in Nepal and Myanmar*

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# Abstract

This paper seeks to understand the different progress of gender equality between Myanmar and Nepal, which is examined through a comparative case study of UN Women's actions in each case. The material contains reports and documents from UN Women's missions, which will be analyzed through a qualitative content analysis. The analysis is guided by the analytical framework Gender Dimensions in Post Conflict Societies, which dimensions on gender equality, will be applied on UN Women's actions. The purpose is to provide with an explanation to why the progress of gender equality has been better in Nepal compared to Myanmar. Thus, this study is not only for providing new case studies - but also for examining two cases on depth, which will contribute to the existing research on international peacebuilding and gender equality. The empirical findings indicate that UN Women's actions probably have had impact on the progress of gender equality in Nepal, while not having the same opportunity to contribute to a better progress of gender equality in Myanmar.

*Key words:* UN Women, peacebuilding, international actions, gender equality, Nepal, Myanmar

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# 1 Introduction

For more than a decade, the inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes has gained momentum in policy discussions as a direct consequence of United Nations<sup>1</sup> Secret Council's adoption of Resolution 1325 (2000). This resolution stresses the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace-building and peacekeeping. (Operation1325,2010). The international community has recognized that women's participation is vital to achieving and sustaining peace, yet the number of women taking part in the decision-making remains relatively small and the resolution has been criticized for doing little difference. Women are not only denied seats in official positions, they have also been subjects of exclusion in many peace negotiations, which not only contributes to a continuation of discrimination and marginalization against women, but also threatens the potentials of reaching sustainable development (UN Women, n.d.1).

UN Women is a branch within the UN system, which, together with its prior organizations, exclusively has focused on reducing gender inequalities and empowering women for many years. They even describe themselves as the only global champion for gender equality, working to create environments in which every woman can exercise her human right and live up to her full potential. In many parts of the world, UN Women acts to increase women's participation and influence in decision-making to prevent and resolve conflicts (UN Women, 2011a). Many researches claim that a leading actor on women's empowerment is essential in times where gender inequalities continues to be widespread (e.g Andersen, 1993; Barnes, 2006; Cohn, 2008), especially in patriarchal governed countries and conflict-ridden societies, where the state often is unwilling to adapt gender sensitive policies (ibid).

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations will from here on be mentioned as the UN

Nepal and Myanmar<sup>2</sup> are two countries that have been featured as consisting of male-dominated power structures, and their long civil wars have had devastating effects on the lives of women (IJCT, 2010; Peace Direct, 2013). Despite this, women's presence in Nepal's and Myanmar's peace negotiations has been scarce, and women's priorities have received little attention in the following peace agreements. Yet, in spite of women's absence during the peace negotiations, substantial progresses have been made on gender equality in Nepal during the five following years after the signing of the peace agreement. Gender-responsive budgeting, gender-sensitive legal reforms and increased decision-making power to women are some of the improvements made in Nepal (Falch, 2010; World Bank Data, 2017). However, such achievements have not been reached in Myanmar; instead, huge gender inequalities still pervade the budgeting, as well as, legal frameworks and the decision-making system (Gender Index, 2017).

The differences between Nepal and Myanmar along the gender dimension of the peace processes are considerable. This study seeks to investigate why, as both countries are low-income countries and have much of the same patriarchal structures, socio-economic and development problems to struggle with. In both cases, the government and domestic armed forces have been responsible for the underrepresentation of, and the violence against women (Asia Foundation, 2016; UNFPA, 2007), which increases the likelihood of external actors' invaluable support to the progress of gender equality. With UN Women as the leading global actor on reducing gender inequalities and to support the advancement of women's empowerment, it is reasonable to believe that their actions have affected the progress of gender equality in Nepal and Myanmar, especially since they have been present in each peace process since they started. For all these reasons, this study aspires to understand the different progresses of gender equality by looking into the actions made by UN Women, which will be examined by answering the following question:

*“What effect has UN Women had on the progress of gender equality in Myanmar and Nepal?”*

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<sup>2</sup> Myanmar was until 2011 officially called Burma, a name some still are using today, However, this study have chosen to referred to name it as Myanmar, since it is the official name today.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of UN Women's actions on gender areas during their peacebuilding missions, and to provide with an explanation of why the progresses of gender equality have been differed in two countries that share so many similarities. The aim is to provide with increased understanding of what affects the progress on gender equality during peacebuilding processes, and through this also make a contribution to the theoretical framework on international peacebuilding and gender equality.

## 2 Theoretical framework

This chapter aims at situating this study in relation to the relevant fields, while also discussing the framework which will guide the empirical finding. Following the research question on this thesis, this chapter will look into international peacebuilding and gender equality, theories of which this study builds upon on. Culminating from these subjects, this study will put its main emphasis is on policy tools to successfully achieve gender equality during peacebuilding missions, which will be applied to analyze UN Women's actions in Nepal and Myanmar.



### 2.1 Literature overview

International peacebuilding is not an unexplored field and neither is studies related to gender equality in post-conflict societies. In fact, a considerable amount of theoretical studies have been conducted on gender dimension in peacebuilding processes (e.g. Pankhurst, 2000; Norris & Inglehart, 2003; Caprioli, 2000), but so far very few have been done through case studies, particularly those who focus on Asian contexts. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring how UN Women has addressed gender dimensions during their peacebuilding missions in Nepal and Myanmar, and simultaneously contributing to the larger peace and conflict field of how to reach gender equality in post-conflict societies. Thus, this study is not only for providing new case studies - but also for examining two cases on depth, which will contribute to the existing research on international peacebuilding and gender equality.

Many researchers within the field of gender equality affirm that women thoroughly have experienced subordination to men, as being structurally excluded from political participation, decision-making and peacebuilding efforts in many parts of the world (e.g. Phillips, 1998; Tickner, 1992; Caprioli, 2000)

Consequently with this exclusion, Cynthia Enloe poses one of the most defining questions central to all feminist queries, “where are the women?” (Enloe, 1990). Through this question, Enloe underlines that the relevance of including women in international politics as well as in local decision-making is essential, not only for the purpose of reaching gender equality, but equally important in the creation of sustainable development. Hence, various challenges of creating gender quality have been identified and covered in several Sub-disciplines of Social Sciences, whereas Peace and Conflict Studies have paid particular attention to women in conflicts and their roles during peacebuilding processes (Enloe, 1993; Höglund, 2008; Pankhurst, 2000; Nakaya, 2004).

Despite the leading research on the importance of including women in the transition from war to democracy, many peacebuilding missions have indicated a tendency to have either ignored or marginalized issues of gender and women (Jarstad & Sisk, 2008: 56). Hence, women consistently remain a minority of the participants in peacebuilding projects and receive less attention than men in peacebuilding policies. This is in spite of the fact that numerous of UN resolutions have for more than a decade criticized such marginalization and neglect. These resolutions have called for gender issues and women's needs to be given much more serious attention in all policies relating to conflict and peace (Ferris, 1993; Tryggstad 2009; Pratt & Richter-Devroe, 2011). Accordingly, disregarding gender dimensions during peace processes is pointed out to have negative effects on development, and international organizations plays essential roles in making sure that women's rights and voices are addressed and included, particularly in societies dominated by patriarchal structures (Pankhursts, 2000). International organizations serve a number of crucial functions that enhance the possibility ending conflicts and reaching long lasting peace. How they assist and act during peace processes affect how well they settle, especially in conflict-ridden countries where the domestic support is limited, often unwilling to provide with resources for the purpose of increasing gender equality (Aoláin, 2009; Cousens & Call, 2008; Doyle & Sambanis, 2000).

## 2.2 Gender Dimensions in Post-Conflict Societies

As noted in the section with previous research, actions made by international organizations affect peacebuilding processes, and that the incorporation of gender aspects is essential for the purpose of reaching sustainable peace and development. My study takes notion of the previous research on international peacebuilding and gender equality in post-conflict societies, but it will primarily draw upon Zuckerman's and Greenberg's framework to analyze UN Women's actions on gender equality in Nepal and Myanmar.

Relying on peacebuilding and feminist theories in combination with field studies conducted in South America, Africa and Europe, Elaine Zuckerman and Marcia Greenberg have constructed a framework on how they believe gender equality will be achieved in post-conflict societies. They argue that their framework covers the most crucial gender aspects for peacebuilders and policymakers to address if gender equality will have any possibilities of being achieved in the aftermath of violent conflicts. Their approaches on how to achieve gender equality has been summarized in *Gender Dimensions in Post-Conflict societies*; a framework of which provides with guidelines for peacebuilders in regard to the actions necessary to make for the purpose of empowering women and reaching gender equality (Zuckerman & Greenberg, 2006: 70)

What they have constructed is based on three interrelated dimensions, consisting of rights which they affirm need to be guaranteed for women in post-conflict societies. These rights are: the right to participate meaningfully in policy making and resource allocation, the right to benefit equally from public and private resources and services, and the right to build a gender-equitable society for lasting peace and prosperity (ibid). Zuckerman and Greenberg argue that peacebuilders need to meet the pressing need of implementing these rights for women during the reconstruction of a conflict-affected society, that failure to recognize and address

gender-related rights will undermine the prospects of women's empowerment; while purposeful efforts strengthen gender equality and increase the likelihood of sustainable peace (Ibid). These rights are categorized into three dimensions, labeled as: *Women-focused activities*, *Gender-aware programming* and *Transforming gender roles*.

*Women-focused activities* advocate that peacebuilders and policymakers take actions by creating activities for women that will compensate for gender disparities and inequalities. The main attention lies on increasing women's political opportunities and leadership abilities, capacities that Zuckerman and Greenberg believe are strengthened by organizing training and education on capacity building, legal awareness and skills advancement, and they underline the necessity of increasing women's awareness of justice and legal opportunities, while providing with knowledge on how to act politically and act as leading and inspiring social figures. In that way, it will improve women's opportunities to empower themselves, while increased female political participation contributes to better prospects on reaching sustainable development (Zuckerman and Greenberg, 2006: 71-73).

*Gender-aware programming* has an economic approach, whereas Zuckerman and Greenberg are recognizing that gender-related impediments diminish the effectiveness of macro and micro economy. Women need to get access to resources, market opportunities, education and healthcare, which are all areas normally male-dominated or at least unfavorable for women, but which cannot afford to bypass women or to ignore gender-related impediments and opportunities. Thus, it is essential to institutionalize gender equality through legal framework and policies, and peacebuilders should therefore encourage and press the government to design policies and programs taking women and women's groups into account, while mainstreaming gender awareness and effectiveness in such. Especially since institutionalized gender areas is more likely to have contribute to increased gender equality and affect the everyday lives of women. (Ibid: 73-77).

*Transforming gender roles* is the last gender dimensions. Zuckerman and Greenberg are that it is crucial to transform gender roles in patriarchal and conflict-affected societies where women have been subjects to exclusion, discrimination and structural violence. Hence, this dimension proposes ways to transform gender roles that could heal the traumas associated with conflict and to rebuild social capital with gender-focus. The objectives of building social capital through gender lenses are to support social cohesion, prevent conflicts through strengthening community dynamics and to enhance the role of women as mediators and representatives of non-violent conflict resolution. Zuckerman and Greenberg also underline the responsibility of peacebuilders to break cycles of violence affecting women, as this is often neglected, or at least insufficiently addressed by the governmental efforts during peacebuilding processes (Ibid: 79-81).

These policy areas, proposed by Zuckerman and Greenberg on how to achieve gender equality are no unique concepts, neither are they unsupported by other scholars and researchers. Instead, many researches in fields of gender equality emphasize similar objectives and ideas as they do (e.g. Pascall & Lewis, 2004; Bacchi CL, 1999; Hall & True, 2009). However, Zuckerman and Greenberg specifically conceptualize the implementation of gender issues during peacebuilding processes, which is the reason behind primarily drawing upon their framework in this study. Besides, their framework serves the purpose of this study, as using their dimensions enables UN Women's actions to be analyzed through a distinct set of policies focusing on achieving gender equality. Also, by examining two cases of which Zuckerman and Greenberg have not studied, this research provides an opportunity to raise awareness and give new insights on what policy tools that effect on the progress of gender equality. How their gender dimensions will be utilized to analyze UN Women's actions in Myanmar and Nepal is illustrated in the section below, but further clarified in the section *operationalization*.

### 3 Method and research design

This study uses a *structured focused comparison design*, whereas Myanmar and Nepal are the examined cases. The choice of cases are based on Mill's method of difference, meaning that selected cases are similar in many ways, but whereas the dependent variable differs (Hopkins, 2010: 291). Even though the conflict in Nepal has been mainly ideological and the conflict in Myanmar is instead characterized by ethnic disputes, nonetheless many other similarities make them comparable. Most importantly, they have both experienced long civil wars where violence from the state and rebel groups has fueled discrimination and marginalization against women during the period of conflict, thereto are they both low-income countries, struggling with resembling socio-economic and development problems, and through their geographical proximity, they share similar culture, traditions, and history (Falch, 2016; UCDP, 2017).

Nevertheless, the progress on gender equality has developed differently between the countries. Nepal has during the recent years experienced a positive progress on gender equality, while little advancement has been made in Myanmar. This study seeks to understand the reasons behind this variation and aims to suggest an explanation to why the progresses on gender equality have proceeded so differently between the cases. *Progress of gender equality* is therefore the dependent variable, which this research aims at providing with an explanation to (Salkind, 2010: 348-349). The progress of gender equality has been defined and measured through five overall areas; political participation, economy, education, healthcare and legal reforms, gender development areas inspired by the Gender Development Index. In regard to these areas, Nepal has made much progress in terms of increased gender equality, while similar developments have been notable by its absence in Myanmar.

With that said, gender inequalities are still prevailing in Nepal, whereas discrimination against, and marginalization of women occur in many parts of the society (Global Gender Report 2016). Nevertheless, the scope of this study only emphasizes Nepal's and Myanmar's dissimilar progresses, and will not consider whether reached degree of gender equality is satisfactory or not.<sup>3</sup> As this study departs from the notion that international organizations, in this case UN Women, affect the progress of gender equality, the independent variable utilized to examine the differences of the dependent variable is *UN Women's action*. Actions which will be scrutinized and evaluated with the ambition of providing with an explanation to the different progresses on gender equality.

UN Women is not the only organization that has been present in Myanmar's and Nepal's peacebuilding. Instead, many international organizations have been active in their peacebuilding processes, whereas a few of them have focused directly on gender issues. However, the gender-focused organizations acting in Nepal and Myanmar have not been the same in both cases, with the exception of UN Women, and due to the importance of comparing the cases on equally (George & Bennett, 2005: 68). UN Women's actions are the only ones to be analyzed in this research. UN Women is also the largest and probably most impactful global organization advocating for gender equality as they are mandated by the United Nations to exclusively work on increasing gender equality worldwide. It is therefore reasonable to believe that among international organizations, the actions made by UN Women have been the most influential to what extent women have become empowered in these cases.

However, it is also likely that other mechanisms have affected the different progress of gender equality between Nepal and Myanmar. Underlying social, historical and governmental structures could either have undermined or strengthened the prospects of achieving gender equality. Nevertheless, as

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<sup>3</sup> There might be a gap between the objectively reached gender equality and the perceived one. However, women's perception of whether gender equality has increased or not will not be included in this research unless it is mentioned in UN Women's reports, as the scope of this study doesn't have the objective or opportunity to measure that.

mentioned in the theory section, many researchers claim that international initiatives and actions in peacebuilding missions affect the outcomes of a peace process. Therefore, my point of departure is that UN Women's actions have had some sort of impact on the progress of gender equality in Nepal and Myanmar, although it is to what extent, and how their actions have affected the progresses that this research will examine. This is the assumption of which is guiding the research design of this thesis (Bryman, 2012: 115-166). Additionally, considering that much of UN Women's work aims at transforming discriminatory gender norms, their actions are likely to have some effect on structural mechanisms as well.

UN Women merges and builds on the important work of four previously distinct part of the UN system, which exclusively has focused on gender equality and women's empowerment; The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (UN Women, 2012). UN Women was formally established in 2010, and is today consisting of all these prior branches. How UN Women acted in Nepal will mainly be analyzed prior to the year 2010, but as UN Women's emerges on the same work as these prior branches conducted, these actions will be mentioned as made by UN Women. Additionally, in UN Women's reports, they refer to the actions made by its prior parts as being conducted by themselves, namely as UN Women.

To evaluate how UN Women has addressed gender issues in Nepal and Myanmar, Zuckerman's and Greenberg's framework *Gender Dimensions in Post-Conflict Societies* will be leading the analysis. The term used by Zuckerman and Greenberg is "post-conflict", but this thesis will refer to this process by calling it "peacebuilding". The reason behind this choice is that both Myanmar and Nepal can be argued to be within a process of reaching and sustaining peace; accordingly, they are both subjects to a process of peacebuilding. Besides, there is no definitive definition of either *peacebuilding* or *post-conflict reconstruction*,

making academics and professionals involved in this field to denote different meanings when using these terms. This thesis will use the following definition of peacebuilding, described by the United Nations Secretary-General's Policy Committee:

*“A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development [...]”<sup>4</sup>*

The gender areas proposed by Zuckerman and Greenberg will be applied on UN Women's actions, to see whether or not, and in what ways, they have addressed these areas in their peacebuilding. Their actions will be evaluated through the method of a qualitative content analysis, where UN Women's official reports and documents are analyzed with guidance of analytical questions (Bryman, 2012: 516). These questions are utilized as indicators of the independent variable, clarifying what to look for in the material. The purpose of following a distinct set of indicators is to enable a structured-focused comparison between the cases (Bergström & Boréus, 2012:50-52, Hopkins, 2010: 304). As Zuckerman's and Greenberg's framework is the basis of this research, the indicators, of which the content analysis will focus on, are directly drawn from their dimensions *Women-focused activities*, *Gender-aware programming* and *Transforming gender roles*, and from which it will be asking the same question to both cases. This method of comparison ensures high reliability as it provides with clear indicators of what the content analysis is seeking for (George & Bennett, 2005 69-71). Also, as this method is associated with a hermeneutic approach, the risk of analyzing the material to subjectively is reduced by using clear indicators to guide the content analysis (Bryman, 2012: 356; Bergström & Boréus, 2012: 52).

Considering the signed peace agreement in 2006 as an end to the violent conflicts in Nepal, their peacebuilding process started earlier than it did in Myanmar, which was formally launched in 2011 (UN Women Asia Pacific, 2011a). Peacebuilding

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<sup>4</sup> Source: United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, 2007

processes are long-term processes but the actions during the first phases are often most crucial, as they paving the way for the possibilities of reaching sustainable development (UN, 2017a). The reports on UN Women's actions in Nepal will therefore be analyzed from the beginning of the initiated peace process in 2006<sup>5</sup>, and until 2011. This is also the period of which gender equality made most progress in Nepal, significant for the purpose of this study as it is interested in understanding the reasons behind this development. Myanmar reopened its closed borders to foreign actors and investors in 2011, permitting international actors to act within the previously closed national borders. The peace process started simultaneously and UN Women's work in Myanmar will therefore be analyzed from 2011 until 2016. For the purpose of examining the cases on equal terms (Bryman, 2012: 145), the period of which UN Women's actions will be analyzed is demarcated to five years in both cases.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, the time interval of this research is based on the increased degree of gender equality in Nepal at this period of time, but also considers the fact that Myanmar's borders were closed until 2011 (Migration Policy Myanmar, 2017), restraining the opportunities for international organizations to take substantial actions prior to this year.

### 3.1 Material

The content analysis of UN Women's officially submitted reports and documents of their actions in Nepal and Myanmar will be drawn from UN Women's official websites. The amount of documents is sufficient enough to allow a comprehensive analysis, yet an adequate amount to avoid making selections among the material (Esaiasson et al., 2012: 221). Some reports are more extensive than others, whereas a few only contain shorter paragraphs. Nevertheless, through making a pilot check on the material (Bryman, 2012: 360), I have noticed that their documents of how, and with what tools they operate, most commonly are

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<sup>5</sup> UN Women's involvement and actions in Nepal in regard the earth quake 2006 will not be taking into account, as it is not directly related to the general peacebuilding mission.

<sup>6</sup> UN Women's office in Myanmar was not established until 2013, although, UN Women has been active in the peacebuilding efforts since 2011. Similarly, UN Women has an office in Nepal since 2012, but have been active in the peacebuilding since it started in 2006 (UN Women, Asia Pacific, 2017)

explicitly expressed, adding high validity to the categorization of their actions. Naturally, one could, and should, always reflect on the liability of reports written by and about the organization itself, considering the risk that they are expressed in a way that benefits to their objectives (Bryman, 2012: 306 + 561). However, UN Women has a good reputation in regard to transparency and accountability, which considerably reduces the risk of inaccurate information.

The paragraphs above discuss the material used to answer the main question of this thesis, namely how UN Women's actions during the peacebuilding processes in Nepal and Myanmar have affected the different progresses of gender equality. Following this is a discussion on the material used to define the dependent variable of this study, being gender equality. There are namely numerous of indicators that can be used to measure gender equality. Although, this study has chosen to draw upon the same areas as Global Development Index (GDI) does in their statistical analysis of national gender equality developments. These areas are: reservation in the political field, economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and legal frameworks. However, this index does not cover statistics concerning the time interval of this research; neither does it include data of Myanmar's development. Nevertheless, there are many additional databases to use, with clear references to gender equality (e.g GDI, GEM, WEF), even if none of these databases have collected a sufficient amount of data on gender equality in Myanmar and Nepal in respect to the time interval of this study. The combination of databases will be used to illustrate the differences in gender equality progresses.

Due to these statistical gaps, the areas used to define the progress of gender equality are inspired by GDI, but the data have been drawn from different sources such as; Gender Gap Index, World Health Organization, World Bank, World Health Organization and International Labor Force Study. Still being able to achieve reliable results, I have chosen to use the same database for the same indicator in Myanmar and Nepal (Bryman, 2012:159). In that way, the indicators can be measured equally between the cases. For example, the indicator *Labor Force Participation for women* has been measured by the World Bank in regard to

both Nepal and Myanmar. This method helps avoiding unreliable comparisons between the cases. The definition of the dependent variable is further clarified in the section below.

## 3.2 Operationalization

Following the discussion above, this section further clarifies how the dependent variable *gender equality* has been defined, and how the independent variable *UN Women's actions* will be analyzed.

Starting with the dependent variable gender equality, which as earlier mentioned has been measured through Gender Development Index categories, a clarification of what their gender-focused areas contain follows below:

- *Reservations in the political field*: representation in decision-making structures
- *Economic participation and opportunity*: access to employment and participation levels on labor market
- *Educational attainment*: access to education
- *Health*: access to healthcare and medical facilities
- *Legal frameworks*: legal frameworks emphasizing women's rights and gender aspects

These gender development categories have been translated into the indicators shown in table 1 and 2, being the indicators are used to clarify what I refer to by claiming that Nepal has made greater progress on gender equality compared to Myanmar. The emphasize lays on changes over time, meaning the progress of gender equality during the time interval of this research. Accordingly, the data concerning Nepal accounts for the five years between 2006 and 2011 and Myanmar's gender equality developments are measured from 2011 until 2016.

Country/year	Table 1: Indicators on gender equality progress						
	Seats held by women in national parliament <sup>7</sup>	Labor force participation (15 years and above) <sup>8</sup>	Enrollment in primary school (girls) <sup>9</sup>	Literacy women 15-24 <sup>10</sup> years <sup>11</sup>	Women in senior leadership positions in peacebuilding missions <sup>12</sup>	Maternal mortality (per 100.000 live births) <sup>13</sup>	Implemented gender-responsive budgeting <sup>14</sup>
<i>Nepal 2006</i>	5,9%	60,4%	40,9 %	<u>61%</u>	None	910	No
<i>Nepal 2011</i>	33,2%	80,1%	73,1%	84%	3 women have been Head of Missions	223	Yes
<i>Myanmar 2011</i>	6%	51,1,%	94,3 %	<u>87%</u>	None	531	<u>Yes</u>
<i>Myanmar 2016</i>	12,1%	49,3, %	95,1 %	90% <sup>15</sup>	None	237	<u>Yes</u>

Country/year	Table 2: Institutionalized gender equality and ender-sensitive reforms in legal frameworks						
	The right against discrimination of women	The rights to reproductive health	The right against physical, mental and other forms of violence	Equal rights to property	Marital rape included in the definition of violence – can be punished	National committee for women's affairs	Mandatory percentage of women in political parties
<i>Nepal 2006</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Nepal 2011</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	30 %
<i>Myanmar 2011</i>	Yes	-	-	Yes	-	Yes	-
<i>Myanmar 2016</i>	Yes	-	-	Yes	-	Yes	-

As table 1 and 2 illustrates, Nepal has made more progress on gender equality from 2006 until 2011 than Myanmar has from 2011 until 2016. The only exceptions are in regard to education and literacy, where Myanmar's percentage rate already was quite high from the beginning of the demarcated time interval. Also, a few institutional areas incorporate gender aspects in Myanmar. Nevertheless, as this study only is interested in the *progress*, these indicators demonstrate that Nepal has made most progress on these gender equality indicators, especially in terms of the many recently adopted legal reforms. The tables also illustrate that Nepal has made significant progresses on (1) increased labor force participation for women, (2) seats held by women in the national parliament and (3) girls enrollment in primary school. Also, maternal mortalities decreased a lot from 2006 to 2011, whereas a similar degree of improvement has not been reached in Myanmar.

The aim of this paper is to contribute with an explanation on why the progress of gender equality has been so different between Myanmar and Nepal, and this will be approached by scrutinizing UN Women's actions. Therefore, the independent variable of this thesis is *UN Women's actions*, which will be analyzed through the gender dimensions presented by Zuckerman and Greenberg. These dimensions have been assigned with indicators, utilized to guide the content analysis of UN Women's documents. The indicators, which also can be described as analysis questions, summarize the core ideas of each dimension (Hsieh & Shannon 2005: 1281). Zuckerman and Greenberg describe that their gender dimensions are interlinked, meaning that a few policy areas are repeated in more than one dimension, although emphasizing slightly different aspects. To exemplify, *labor force participation* is discussed in both "*Women-focused activities*" and "*Gender-aware programming*". In such cases, this study will choose to group related areas into one dimension to ensure clarity in the analysis. Accordingly, issues concerning *labor force participation* will be categorized in "*Gender-aware programming*", as this dimension primarily focuses on economic aspects.

The indicators drawn upon Zuckerman's and Greenberg's three gender dimensions are presented below and clarified in terms of what distinguishes them.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Table 3: Indicators used to evaluate UN Women's actions</b>
<b>Women-focused activities</b>	<p><i>If and how UN Women has organized activities and training focused on:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing women's opportunities and ability to run for office, win seats and to participate politically</li> <li>2. Capacity building and the advancement of women's leadership skills</li> <li>3. Increasing women's awareness and knowledge of their rights</li> </ol>
<b>Gender-aware programming</b>	<p><i>If and how UN Women has advocated and supported:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gender-sensitive budgeting</li> <li>2. Increased labor force participation for women</li> <li>3. Improved healthcare for women</li> <li>4. Women's access to education</li> </ol>
<b>Transforming gender roles</b>	<p><i>If and how UN Women has addressed:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Actions toward changing attitudes on gender roles<sup>7</sup></li> <li>2. Ways of breaking cycles of violence</li> <li>3. An enhancement of women's role as mediators</li> </ol>

- *Women-focused activities* has an educational focus, as it emphasizes UN Women's actions on developing women's abilities and knowledge by training and education. In broad terms, the actions are in this dimension characterized in terms of activities.

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<sup>7</sup> By my opinion, this indicator is to some extent, interrelated with the overall process of increasing gender equality. Attitudes on gender roles affect the success of women's empowerment in every dimension analyzed in this study. F.ex. that women are able to win seats in the parliament does not mean that men (or women) will vote for a female candidate on Election Day. This indicator is however separated from the other indicators when UN Women's reports explicitly express and show that changing gender roles is the main purpose of a certain action.

- *Gender-aware programming* has an institutional focus, as it emphasizes UN Women's actions in terms of advocating, and supporting the governance (e.g. through financial funding) to institutionalize gender dimensions. By advocating I mean advocacy in terms of concrete actions. I will not label a general advocacy by UN Women, such as "We advocate for better education in Nepal", to be an action, unless UN Women has expressed this concern with governmental actors, or pushed for gender-focused changes in these areas. Also, *support* does not necessarily need to be in financial terms, it can also refer to other actions supporting the areas within this dimension.
- *Transforming gender roles* has a normative focus, as it emphasizes UN Women's actions on breaking the prevailing norms and structures discriminating and marginalizing women. In this dimension, *address* refers to actions in a broad sense, as it can include activities, campaigns and promotion of legislative reforms for example.

Through the usage of these indicators, the content analysis will be provided with clear guidelines of what to look for in UN Women's documents. The analysis will start off by scrutinizing UN Women's reports related to these areas. Thereafter, a description of the found indicators will follow, by focusing on if UN Women has acted differently in one country compared to the other? Have the dimensions been addressed in different extents between the cases? Also, if UN Women has made most of their actions on the indicators from one particular dimension in Nepal, that would signal that actions on these areas have affected the progress on gender equality. Likewise, if UN Women in Nepal has made few, or no, actions related to a certain dimension, that indicates that actions on these areas might not have been particularly influential to the progress of gender equality. Moreover, if indicators from a dimension barely have been addressed by UN Women in Myanmar, it can be argued that this dimension is important to increase gender equality, as there has been little progress on gender equality in Myanmar.

My point of departure is not that UN Women must have made actions directly correlated with the areas measuring progresses in gender equality to actually have had an impact on these indicators. Just as Zuckerman and Greenberg highlight is it problematic to judge whether a certain action has had impact on a certain indicator

(Zuckerman & Greenberg, 2006: 71). Instead, they argue that actions made in one area, such as *breaking cycles of violence*, also could affect other areas of gender equality, such as *improved healthcare for women*, or something else. With that said, there is still a clear correlation between the indicators from dependent and the independent variable, whereas the indicators used to define the dependent variable (gender equality) are similar to the indicators used to analyze the independent variable (UN Women's actions). This study is not focused on finding a causal mechanism between the variables. However, it assumes that UN Women's actions have affected the progress on gender equality. Nevertheless, it is unknown how their actions have had impact on the progress of gender equality, which is what this study is interested in exploring.

## 4 Cases

This section contains the empirical findings of this study and the disposition of this section is as follows. Initially, a brief background will be given on each country, particularly focusing on gender equality issues and women's situations during and after the period of intense conflict. This is followed by a description of UN Women's actions in regard to the gender dimensions and its indicators, which later will be thoroughly analyzed and compared in the section *between-cases analysis*

### 4.1 Nepal

The decade long civil war in Nepal, from 1996 to 2006, resulted in broken communities and more than 30,000 casualties (UCDP, 2017). The whole country has been affected by this intense conflict, mainly fought between the Royal Nepali Army (RNA) and the Communist Party of the Nepal (the Maoists). In addition to the considerable amount of civilian casualties have human rights abuses, economic stagnation and political instability characterized the ten years of civil war. The conflict finally reached an endpoint in 2006, as the Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed by the government and the United Communist Party of Nepal. The signed peace accord was the beginning of a long process of social construction and a transition period from conflict to peace (Falch, 2010; Peace Accords, 2015; OHCHR, 2017)

Even though entire communities have suffered from the consequences of this conflict, women and girls have been specifically affected due to their sex and status in society. Besides being victims of rape and domestic violence, women in Nepal have undergone and endured numerous of other difficulties in the period of conflict; family separation, lack of healthcare and economic hardships, such as bearing an excessive workload of informal jobs without salary. The status of women in Nepal has varied throughout history, but inequalities based on gender have been a characterizing theme in Nepal for

a long time (Bahdra, 2007). However, progresses on matters of gender equality slowly began in 2006 and have since then moved in a positive direction in terms of women's empowerment (UN Women, 2015a)

Nepal was for example the first country in Asia to implement the UN resolution 1325 (UN Women, 2015b) and they have been cited as one of the "fastest movers" by Human Development Index (Human Development Report, 2006). Despite the fact that gender inequalities still pervade the social structures of Nepal has the country successively climbed in ranking on the Gender Equality Index since 2006 (Gender Equality, 2007). Affirmative action laws and policies have improved women's voice and agency in politics and governance, women's representation in the Constituent Assembly dramatically increased to 29% in November 2013 elections from 2.9% in 1991, and during national elections, political parties' candidate lists must now be at least one-third women and Nepal's constitutional and legislative framework is today incorporating gender-sensitive aspects (World Bank, 2016; UNDP, 2014) Women and girls have significantly higher literacy rate and increased school attendance than before, maternal mortality rates has decreased and some improvements have been evident in women's access to economic resources, including land and house ownership (WomenKind 2017; Quota Project, 2017; UNDP, 2014)

Accordingly, since the end of the conflict, many achievements have been made in favor of Nepalese women. This research aims at understanding the reasons behind this progresses and the section below will describe UN Women's actions in Nepal, and later evaluate their impact on the progress between 2006 and 2011; the time of which most achievements were made.

#### 4.1.1 UN Women in Nepal

The work conducted by UN Women was until 2010 divided into three prior branches within the UN system, branches that today are included within UN Women. As UN Women was first established in 2010, these parts were the ones conducting the UN's work in Nepal that exclusively focused on women's empowerment and gender equality. I will therefore refer to their work as being conducted by UN Women, as that is how

UN Women refers to the work conducted by these, and since they all have worked for the same objectives.(UN Women, 2016b)

### *Women –focused activities*

From 2006 until 2011, UN Women organized various forms of trainings and education focusing on improving women's capacity, knowledge and skills.

In 2006, they held a pilot project on gender-sensitive rights-based training, aimed at increasing the legal literacy for women in Nepal. According to UN Women's report form 2006, most Nepalese women lack necessary knowledge about legislative frameworks which diminish their opportunities to enjoy equal access to justice as men. To improve women's awareness of such rights, UN Women organized informative projects with the purpose of updating and notifying Nepalese women about their rights and issues. These projects were initiated by UN Women, but later submitted to local organizations in Nepal so that they could carry on with the important work of enlightening women of their rights and opportunities (UN Women, 2006). This project later lead to the construction of Women Power Connect (WPC) set up by civil society organizations in Nepal with women as the leading figures. WPC later developed into an extensive network of women's groups, working on gender-right based advocacy through legislative coordination and education (UNIFEM, 2006a; UN Women, 2009).

This is not the only project where UN Women has collaborated with women's organizations in Nepal for the purpose increasing the legal literacy among women. Between 2006 and 2007, UN Women launched a program together with local women's organizations and other domestic partners, intended to build an endowed understanding of UNSCR's resolution 1325 (UN Women, 2007). As Nepal adopted this resolution in 2006, UN Women argued that the awareness of what the resolution actually symbolized, and expected by its signature, had to improve, especially within the civil society. The programs designed, which mostly were in terms of workshops for both women and men, attempted to provide an opportunity for the civil society to increase their comprehension of gender equality issues; how they need to be met and what obligations both governance and individuals have to ensure this.

Some of the programs that UN Women launched in Nepal had previously been initiated in other Southeast Asian countries. One example is the cooperation with the network HomeNet, which today is based in Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Nepal. The vast purpose of this network is to improve the lives and livelihoods of home based workers; those who conduct informal, often indecent and scarcely paid work at home (HomeNet, 2017, International Labour Organization, 2014). As HomeNet not specifically focus on women's roles and situations, such perspectives were what UN Women contributed with when they jointly organized events concentrated on women's concerns and roles as home-based workers in Nepal. By composing discussion groups among the participants, Nepalese women shared their experiences of being home-based workers and discussed how women would prefer to improve their conditions as in conjunction of labor force participation. These discussions were later followed by policy meetings between UN Women and grassroots women in Nepal, whom jointly created a policy demand for the government based on their experiences and suggestions of improvements for home-based workers (UNIFEM, 2007).

Apart from rights-based training, UN Women has made efforts on strengthening women's capacity to become and to act as leaders in their communities. In UN Women's report from 2009, they describe Nepal as a segregated country in terms of caste, gender and religion. UN Women therefore organized smaller workshops for women from different casts and regions, with the purpose of earning trust among Nepalese women, trust that should not depend on caste, age or political affiliation (UN Women, 2011). Also, in 2007 and 2008, UN Women held a meeting with women from 57 districts in Nepal (which is all of Nepal's districts) to articulate women's demands in declarations and statements. This meeting resulted in a mutual agreement between UN Women and a majority of the participants, who consequently designed a 10-point declaration on women's need to become integrated within the decision-making system, instead of being isolated from the official policy-making. This declaration was later submitted to political parties in Nepal (UN Women, 2011; UN Women, 2012).

Lastly, Together with Centre for Microfinances (CMF), UN Women participated in launching a project to ensure the inclusion of women in Nepal's emerging democracy. It aimed at

developing women's savings and credit potential by providing training for women in advocacy, debate, and leadership skills (UNIFEM, 2006b).

### *Gender –aware programming*

In connection with the indicators of this dimension, UN Women has provided with a lot of support to Nepal between 2006 and 2011. Most importantly, UN Women helped drafting the National Actions Plan (NAP) on resolution 1325 (Actions Plans, 2017), which primarily seeks to address women, peace and security issues in the post-conflict context of Nepal. They also supported the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction to raise national awareness of gender equality; why it is important to achieve and how it can be implemented. The National Actions Plan on resolution 1325 was first launched in 2011 but had been in the process of construction since a few years back, where women in civil society played a major role in its construction (UN Women, 2012a). In 2009, UN Women arrange a National Planning Workshop with the objective of orienting the stakeholders on resolution 1325, to get their ownership and commitment for the future. It was organized with senior level government officials, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare and gender advocates. One of the first actions made by UN Women in Nepal was to provide assistance on implementing gender policy to support women's increased participation in the democratic process. They did so by lobbying for increased participation and leadership of women in major political parties and in public institutions (UN Women, 2014a)

In terms of economic issues and labor force participation has UN Women made many actions. They have for example given funds to the Nepalese government, aimed at breaking the non-payment of wages for women in Nepal, and to establish a gender equitable labor system where women do not have less pay, virtually no benefits and long working hours. Besides, UN Women have also advocated on improving gender-responsive budget allocations. By requests from civil society organizations, UN Women stressed the government to make policy changes in greater favor of women's financial

opportunities and provided with technical assistance<sup>8</sup> to develop financial programs focusing on labor force participation, paid work and agricultural development. Furthermore, UN Women has pressed the government to undertake a pro-poor gender budget analysis in Nepal, which they embodied in the Gender Responsive Budgeting system, adopted by the government in 2007/2008. Through these efforts, the Gender Responsive Budgeting system eventually covered 22 % of the total budget (UN Women, 2012b)

Emerging from a multi-media campaign and other advocacy activities organized by UN Women, they have assisted in implementing gender mainstreaming into Nepal's Tenth National Development Plan: which specifically is concentrated on budget allocations. As was touched upon in the dimension Women-focused activities, UN Women has supported the formulation of National Policies for Home-based workers (HBW) and played a key role in highlighting women's concerns as such. UN Women has organized and partly financed more than 15 training programs, covering over 1100 HBW. These programs did not only help establishing National Policies for HBW, but as a result of UN Women's continuous advocacy, they also forced the government of Nepal to establish a Task Force for drafting of National Policy on HBWs, and towards setting up of a Labor Commission to look into the labor rights of female workers in Nepal. However, due to time and cost constraints, the mapping exercise was restricted mainly to district headquarters and it did not cover remote areas in Nepal. As a last economic aspect, UN Women stressed the government into adapting affirmative policies and laws, such as a required percentage of female delegates in security agencies (UN Women, 2014a).

Accompanying financial contributions, UN Women supported the Women's Skills Development Project (WSDP), a domestic NGO whose objective is to establish health check-ups for women in Nepal. Through technical assistance, WSDP installed local hospitals in rural areas, which enables women normally lacking access to medical facilities, to be provided with health check-ups on a close distance from their villages (UN Women, 2010). I further connection with increasing access to healthcare for

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<sup>8</sup> Technical assistance is non-financial assistance often provided of specialists. It can take the form of sharing information and expertise, instruction, skills training, transmission of working knowledge, and consulting services and may also involve the transfer of technical data (UNESCO, 2017)

women, and in response to the issues of HIV/Aids in Nepal, UN Women developed and advocated on a strategy to combat sexual diseases. They also gave technical support and funding to the production of radio programs, broadcasting on issues related to HIV/Aids. These programs are produced and held by youths and women, primarily concentrated on bridging issues of reproductive health and to break sexual taboos related to HIV/AIDS. As education on sexually transmitted diseases is scarcely covered in the curriculum of Nepalese schools, access to information on HIV/Aids is limited, and women affected normally become stigmatized in the society (Un Women, 2013)

### *Transforming gender roles*

UN Women's actions on the indicators belonging to this dimension are not as many as they have been in Women-focused activities and Gender-aware programming. Yet, some actions have been made on breaking cycles of violence and changing attitudes on gender roles. There are also a few examples of when UN Women mention concrete actions focused on enhancing women's roles as mediators.

In terms of breaking cycles of violence, UN Women has promoted laws and legislations with zero-tolerance policy on sexual and domestic violence, and provided with a three-year grant to end violence against women in Nepal. Some parts of the funding were used to launch radio programs, aimed at raising awareness of sexual violence, to connect people with similar experiences, and to encourage community actions on breaking cycles of sexual violence against women (UN Women 2015b). In connection with these actions, UN Women trained female sex workers and survivors of sexual violence to become community reporters, broadcasting for the purpose of breaking the stigmas women experience from being victims of sexual violence, and to highlight the challenges women face to get justice. These stigmatized women, often afraid to step outside their homes at, described that they felt honored to hear their voices on air, as they believed that sharing their stories could help preventing and stop sexual harassment. Additionally, in 2006 and 2007, UN Women held discussion meetings with women and girls who had been victims of rape. The reason behind was to ensure that their experiences would be recognized, and later translated and adopted into the legal frameworks. Following that, UN Women stressed the government in Nepal to add domestic violence and sexual abuse to be incorporated within the legal framework, through which perpetrators would be punished (UN Women, 2016c).

UN Women has further addressed breaking cycles of violence by launching the *Most Understanding Husband Campaign*, where Nepalese women have broken their silence of stigmas from being victims of sexual violence, through increased understanding and support from their husbands. UN Women created educational programs for men, so that they would achieve an enriched comprehension of sexual violence and its connection to their wife's stigmatization. The number of women seeking help more than doubled after this campaign, and men supporting actions to break the violence against women has increased five-fold (UN Women, 2017c)

## 4.2 Myanmar

Myanmar (until 2011 officially called Burma) has had experienced decades long, multilayered conflicts between ethnic minority groups and the government, resulting in heavy numbers of internally displaced persons and mass human rights abuses. The conflict first broke out in 1948, and the country has experienced various degrees of armed conflicts ever since, making Myanmar's civil war to be the longest in the world (UCDP, 2007, Insight on Conflict, 2007). The transition from war to democracy began in 2011, providing an opportunity to finally bring peace and progress to Myanmar, and some progresses have been made, such as new reforms, signed ceasefire agreements, eased media censorship and releases of political prisoners. As a result, many years of international sanctions on Myanmar successively eased and the prospects of the country's political and economic development became more optimistic. Nevertheless, human rights' abuses still occur, which is under hard international criticism, not least the violence against Rohingya Muslims (Insight on Conflict, 2007). However, gender implications and marginalization against women have hardly been factored in the negotiations of the peace agreement, and the initiatives of national reforms barely included any aspects of increased gender equality. Being isolated for around forty years allowed the myth that women living in Myanmar face less gender discrimination and have more rights than females in surrounding Southeast Asian nations, but a variety of international organizations have tried to educate people that this belief is a misconception and make strides towards protecting women's rights in Myanmar (UN Women, 2014b).

Despite the fact that men has stood for the highest casualties in combat conflict in Myanmar, women have been the prime victims of the conflict (UNDP, 2014). Besides from the inordinate burden women and girls in the conflict zones have experienced, they have also suffered in terms of human rights abuses, sexual violence and limited access to health services. Some of the most integral challenges for women in Myanmar are their absence as political participants and their unequal participation in the peace process related to men (UN Women, 2017b). Accordingly, after the democratization process started in 2011, there has been little progress on the degree of gender equality in Myanmar.

As this research aspires to understand why Myanmar has not made as much gender equality progress as Nepal, the section below will describe, and later analyze, what actions UN Women made on increasing gender equality.

#### 4.2.1 UN Women in Myanmar

UN Women has a country-based office in Myanmar since 2013, but they have been supporting Myanmar's peace process, and an increased gender inclusion for many years, especially since their national borders reopened in 2011.

##### *Women-focused activities*

Between 2011 and 2016, UN Women arranged a few workshops and other events in Myanmar for the purpose of strengthening women's capacity and skills.

Between 2012 and 2013, UN Women arranged trainings and workshops in Yangon, centered on women's role and participation in Myanmar's peacebuilding process. The first occasion was in 2012, followed by a longer process of mentoring women of how to become leading figures in civil society and how to act politically without being exposed to risks. The participating women were brought together from different ethnic groups, most of them based in Yangon – the capital of Myanmar, and the purpose was to sharpen women's skills of debating and to argue their cause. For that reason, UN Women held three training courses for women, aimed at building their confidence to speak their mind. The trainings partly focused on increasing the amount of women being politically active, but they also held discussions of

what challenges women face in regard to claiming space in the political sphere and during the peace process (UN Women, 2012c). The following years, UN Women arranged similar workshops, but shifting the focus to women's rights. Myanmar has not developed a National Actions plan on resolution 1325, but UN Women has tried to improve the recognition of women's rights by arranging educational programs for both men and women on gender equality. UN Women has for many years advocated the implementation on resolution 1325, for the mainstreaming of gender provisions into the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, and into the Framework for Political Dialogue, although without succeeding with an implementation (Asia Pacific, UN Women, 2015b).

Apart from arranging workshops and opportunities for discussions, UN Women has supported initiatives promoting increased female political participation. In collaboration with partner organizations in Myanmar working for women's empowerment, they summarized a demand for a quota system of 30% women in every political party. The idea behind this proposal was to improve women's opportunities to run for office and to be entitled official positioning in the government. This proposal was signed by various local women's groups and later released to the press. However, it was never approved or adopted by the government, (UN Women, Asia Pacific, 2015b).

### *Gender-aware programming*

As previously mentioned, UN Women has held a few workshops and events aiming at strengthening women's capacity and skills. Although, there have also been occasions where UN Women targeted their training to governmental representatives and to the justice sector, such as the in regard to the implementation of CEDAW, which is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Since 2014, they are working in close partnership with a range of government ministries, civil society, and international development co-operation partners to institutionalize gender equality in Myanmar (UN Women, 2012). Also, since late 2013, UN Women has contributed to the incorporation of gender provisions in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), thus supporting the enhancement of government's commitments to women and peace issues (UN Women, 2015c).

In fulfillment of its co-ordination mandate, UN Women's Gender Theme Group has supported a range of strategic issues, such the Gender Situation Analysis, intended to support the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (UN Women, 2014). And in 2013, together with state representatives and the World Bank, UN Women led the collection, analysis, validation and interpretation of gender chapters in the constitution, which later was consulted with multiple stakeholders in Myanmar. UN Women was also a part of the coalition promoting gender mainstreaming in banking, finance and labor sectors such as agriculture and fisheries. UN Women stressed that livestock should be evaluated by the government with gender lenses so that women (1) receives the same salary as men for the same type of work, (2) actually get paid for work that previously hasn't been recognized as paid labor for women in Myanmar (UN Women, 2013)

In addition to stressing the government into using so called gender lenses in their budgeting system, UN Women also ran a campaign on entrepreneurship in favor of women. Through funding, UN Women provided with small business loans to women in Yangon so that they could create smaller businesses. With the increased amount of small businesses in Yangon, self-help groups emerged from the idea of sharing expertise and knowledge between female entrepreneurs in Myanmar (UN Women, 2017a). UN Women has also promoted the government and private sectors to develop policies on decent work for women, including for female migrant workers. They have further supported women's livelihoods, job skills and business development by providing the government with suggestions on programs focused on women's access to labor, energy and entrepreneurship (UN Women, 2014a)

### *Transforming gender roles*

UN Women has made many actions in connection with the indicators of this dimension. As illustrated below, UN Women has strongly promoted legal frameworks and addressed programs aimed at *breaking cycles of violence against women, enhance women's roles as mediators* and on *changing attitudes on gender roles*.

UN Women held two workshops in 2012 and 2013 where they invited members of the justice sector and governmental organs. The objective of these workshops was to educate on the impacts of sexual violence against women, and to provide with an opportunity for the women of Myanmar to share their experiences on sexual and domestic violence. Their pilot project

was held in 2012 and the goals were to prevent and protect violence against women and girls, and to change the prevailing attitudes and behaviors connected with domestic violence (UN Women, 2012c)

UN Women has pushed for a broader legal framework including laws against rape and violence against women. The following year, in 2013, UN Women supported domestically initiated programs responding to the needs of female survivors of violence (UN Women, 2013). They also provided with psychosocial support and ran workshops to raise awareness about violence against women, where thousands of adolescents, male and female, attended. Moreover, gender sensitive legal advocacy and support to legislative development has been provided. Women's rights has been used as a frame of reference for technical advice in drafting CEDAW and compliant anti-violence laws, advocating against Race and Religion Bills and to stop punitive proposals on prostitution laws. In conjunction with UN Women's programs on ending violence against women, they also addressed reproductive health assessments about women who have experienced any form of gender-based violence during their lifetime (UN Women, 2015d)

UN Women's actions directly focusing on changing attitudes on gender roles have for example been through their support to the project ActionAid Myanmar, which aimed to stem violence against women by challenging social and cultural norms. The project is managed by UN Women, having the purpose of changing attitudes and behaviors to approach greater gender equality. UN Women has put a lot of efforts into changing the way women are perceived in the society, which is as only having duties and capacities with purpose in the private space, meaning their homes (UN Women, 2017)

UN Women has also made actions on enhancing women's roles as mediators and representatives of non-violent conflicts. One example is when they initiated a meeting together with governmental representatives in 2011, where they have advocated the government into providing women with leading roles in the peacebuilding process. Also, on the 16th anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325, UN Women in Myanmar organized a multi-stakeholder panel dialogue focused on women's empowerment, participation and leadership in the Myanmar peace process. More specifically, the panel focused on the specific strategies to ensure (a) 30 per cent participation of capacitated women

in Myanmar's Peace Dialogues and (b) that all issues are addressed and acted upon also from a gender equality and women's rights perspective. The event brought together about 100 representatives of governments, civil society, international organizations, and media (UN Women, 2016c)

Additionally, UN Women arranged Open Day meetings in Myanmar, with the purpose of addressing women's priorities in the peace processes, and the Open Day meeting comes on the heels of several efforts by the UN Women in Myanmar to address women's priorities in different aspects of the peace process. For instance, in November 2012, UN Women held a peacebuilding and negotiation training course for women in Yangon, aimed at building women's skills and empowering them to play a greater part in peace negotiations. Two additional courses have been held since then, in February and June of 2013, with peer-to-peer mentoring to help women from various ethnic groups influence the peacebuilding process. To date, close to 80 women peace advocates have received such trainings (UN Women, 2017b).

## 5 Between-case analysis

This section will analyze the empirical findings and in connection with Zuckerman's and Greenberg's framework, and the theoretical basis in this thesis, compare and analyze the cases in terms of UN Women's actions in Myanmar and Nepal.

### *Women-focused activities*

By having read UN Women's documents and reports on their actions in Nepal and Myanmar, it appears like they have addressed many similar concepts and activities in both cases. Workshops and informative sessions on women's rights have been regular activities during the examined time interval of this research. Also, training focused on developing women's leadership skills have been held more or less as often in Myanmar as in Nepal. In both Nepal and Myanmar, these activities have been very inclusive in terms of inviting women and men, grass root actors and governmental parties to attend the events. The main difference found is that the trainings and workshops held in Nepal have more continuously reached remote areas, especially when it comes to increasing women's capacities to act as leaders in their villages. In contrast, UN Women's activities in Myanmar have predominantly been held in the capital Yangon and there have been few attempts, or opportunities, to outreach rural areas in Myanmar. Another difference is that many of the projects initiated by UN Women in Nepal emerged into a local ownership and agency, whereas the responsibility of leading these projects was submitted to local organizations and grassroots actors, who continued to arrange similar events on an annual basis.

In regard to developing women's opportunities to act politically in Myanmar, UN Women made efforts to increase women's seats in the national parliaments through the policy demand of a quota system, jointly formed by UN Women and women's organizations in Myanmar. UN Women has also lobbied for increased female political participation in Nepal, but not through activities, instead as through stressing the government to implement gender policies related to women's participation in the democratic process. Furthermore, UN Women has in

both cases made actions on increasing the legal literacy among women, especially related to resolution 1325, even though it has not been implemented in Myanmar.

### *Gender-aware programming*

The actions made on increasing women's labor force participation and gender-responsive budgeting have been addressed quite equally in Nepal and Myanmar, at least in terms of the amount of actions made by UN Women and how they have addressed these indicators. In both cases, UN Women has pressed the government to adapt a greater focus on gender-sensitive budgeting and to improve the conditions and rights for women as labor force participants. The only difference between UN Women's actions in Nepal and Myanmar within this dimension is actions related to increasing access to healthcare, whereas UN Women has put more focus on issues related to reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases in Nepal. However, UN Women covered similar areas in the dimension transforming gender roles, at least in terms of addressing sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases

The percentage rate on girl's school attendance in Nepal increased significantly between 2006 and 2011. However, UN Women has not mentioned any explicit efforts on improving girls' access to education in their reports; but neither have they made any concrete attempts on this indicator in Myanmar. Although, the percentage of girls enrolled in primary school in Myanmar was already quite high in the beginning of this study's time interval, at least compared to Nepal and one could therefore assume that UN Women chose not to prioritize educational issues in the same extent as they have addressed budgeting areas in Myanmar. In summary, the indicator on access to education is the only indicator which has not been addressed in either Myanmar or Nepal.

### *Transforming gender roles*

UN has made several attempts on transforming the gender roles in Myanmar and Nepal, especially in correlation with the indicator breaking cycles of violence. Many actions have been conducted which address sexual violence and domestic violence. Even though it might have been approached by UN Women in slightly different ways, similar focus has been on adding sexual violence into legislative frameworks, and to break stigmatization related to sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases. However, UN Women's reports indicate that they have made more actions in Myanmar than in Nepal explicitly addressing enhancing

women's roles as mediators. In both countries, UN Women has addressed actions on changing attitudes on prevailing norms marginalizing and discrimination women in various forms, for example through advocacy on legislative reform, and by arranging discussions groups, as in Myanmar, or radio broadcasts, as in Nepal, for the purpose of breaking taboos and stigmatization of victims of sexual violence .

## 6 Concluding discussion

To answer the question of this thesis; “*What effect has UN Women had on the progress of gender equality in Myanmar and Nepal*”, it can be said that there are a few conclusions to be drawn from this research.

First of all, by comparing the actions made by UN Women in Nepal and Myanmar, this research shows that the actions have been addressed in more or less equal extent. There is no clear difference in either number of indicators addressed by UN Women, or in terms of what kind of actions they conducted. Instead, much of their actions have been rather similar, addressing a clear majority of the indicators used to analyze UN Women’s actions. Although, relying on Zuckerman’s and Greenberg’s framework, this does not imply that UN Women has not had any effect on the progress of gender equality, it rather demonstrates the opposite. As Zuckerman and Greenberg argue that as many areas as possible within their dimensions should be addressed to achieve gender equality, UN Women’s efforts to increase gender equality have most likely been influential to its progress in Nepal. As this research reveals that UN Women actually have addressed every dimensions in Nepal, and most of the including indicators, with the exception of access to education, it is likely that their actions have affected the progress of gender equality in Nepal. As UN Women has made most of its actions on the dimension gender-aware programming in Nepal, this dimension could be considered as a potentially influential dimension in regard to the progress of gender equality, at least in regard to the case of Nepal. Which Zuckerman and Greenberg claim, as a matter of priority, it needs to be affirmed that women do have equal rights under a host of laws and protocols to participation in public decision-making about their lives, their communities and countries. What is institutionalized, or bound by law, is more likely to have an impact on the everyday lives on women. I interpret their statement of institutionalized gender equality, that as long as they are not given space to actually exercise these abilities, it might have little effect on the national gender equality.

However, as UN Women have made similar actions in Myanmar, the scope of this thesis is not sufficient to explain why there has not been as much progress in this case. As Myanmar has not made any great progress on gender equality despite the many efforts made by UN Women, the results imply that the work of UN Women cannot replace the actual development and implementation of national policies that provide opportunities for women to enjoy equal rights as men. Much as UN Women's proposals have been adopted into legal reforms and policies in Nepal, which is not the case in Myanmar. This implies a great importance of governmental compliance to actually adapt the gender-responsive and gender-focused legal frameworks of which UN Women lobbies on. Domestic, or governmental willingness, might therefore be a potential explanation to why women has not been as empowered in Myanmar as they have in Nepal. However, this is not something that this research can confirm, and further research has to be done on this area to support such a statement.

This study should therefore be viewed as a suggestion to a potential explanation on what has affected the different progress of gender equality in Nepal, as it cannot explain why the progress has not been better in Myanmar. To summarize the answer to the question of this thesis, UN Women's actions in Nepal have probably affected the positive progress of gender equality here, while their actions in Myanmar does not seem to have had the same opportunities to increase the gender equality. More research needs to be done on how we can understand the different progress of gender equality between these cases. Especially since Zuckerman and Greenberg argue that progresses on gender equality is a long-term processes, and this the scope of this research only covers a short-time interval. Therefore, more extensive studies are necessary to comprehensively evaluate the impact of UN Women's impact on gender equality and the reasons behind different progresses of gender equality between states.

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