

Rural Women Participations in Community Development Activities of Shan State in Myanmar: Case Study in Pekhoh Township Area

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Rural Women Participation in community Development Activities of Shan State in Myanmar: Case Study in Pekhon Township Area**” that is being submitted by John Than Htun in partial fulfillment for the award of Masters of Arts in Governance and Development Program (MAGD), BRAC University, Bangladesh, has been carried out by him under my guidance and supervision.



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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis, I declare herewith that the dissertation entitled **“Rural Women Participation in Community Development Activities of Shan State in Myanmar: Case Study in Pekhon Township Area”** submitted to the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development, BRAC University for the degree of Master of Arts in Governance and Development Program. This dissertation is of my own and original work that it has not been presented and will not be presented to any other University for a similar or any other degree award.



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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to explore the reasons role and challenges of rural women's participation in community development activities of Shan State in Myanmar. Throughout the history of Myanmar, especially in Shan State area, rural women has lacked of political power, education and a role in administration. Consequently, they have lagged behind in socio-economic development. While women in general show interest in participating in community development activities, rural women do not seem to share the same motivation. To gain an understanding of their participation or the lack of it, this study explored the challenges women face to participating in community development activities. What are the roles of rural women participation in community development activities? What are the challenges for rural women to participate in community development activities? How do rural women overcome barriers and challenges to participate in community development Activities? To answer these questions this study employed qualitative research methods including in-depth interviews with Department of Rural Development (DRD) Civil services staff and observations with community members. The DRD is also a government organization that represents and promotes the sustainable livelihood standard of rural women through of all indigenous groups in Myanmar. This study was conducted in different locations and with different levels of development geography and livelihoods of two villages in Pekhon township area, at Taunggyi district, Southern of Shan State. The challenges include language; education; cultural norms; health issues; Familiar burdens; poverty and limited formal access and control over assets.

Keywords: Rural women, participation, rural community development activities, challenges, roles

List of Abbreviations	
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALBETAC	Asian Languages Bilingual/ESL Technical Assistance Center
DRD	Department of Rural Development
GAD	General Administrative Department
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Growth Domestic Products
GEAWR	Gender Equality and Women's Rights
JICAPD	Japan International Cooperation Agency Planning Department
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MOHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MOALI	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation
MOPF	Ministry of Planning and Finance
MOLIP	Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population
MOSWRR	Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN	United Nation
VDC	Village Development Committee
VDP	Village Development Plan
WID	Women in Development
WAD	Women and Development
WA/VTa	Ward/Village Tract Administrative
WFP	World Food Programme

Chapter One: Introduction

Poverty has a woman's face and poverty incidence is expected to be higher for women than for men. Rural women lack access to and use of social services, capital and capacity development. Women's participation and access to information and benefit in selection and management is needs to be ensured (Gender Equality Network, 2012,). Today aid agencies work closely with Government agencies such as the DRD. Although there has been some improvement, women from indigenous groups including in the Shan State, but some of remote area remain difficult to reach. In these area women show that less interest in participating in developmental organizations. Further investigation is required into the challenges that prevented rural women's participation in developmental. My desire is that the research findings will provide a better understanding of why rural women do not participate by understanding their roles and challenges to participate. Regarding education of Myanmar rural women, there is at present no gender gap at any level in the developing regions, although it was not so in the olden day when girls were kept at home to do the housework and to look after younger siblings (Unicef, 2013).

1.1. Statement of the research problems

In Myanmar patriarchal cultural norms and values have still been existed. For example, men have responsibilities of decision making and household income as household heads and women take care of housework and child caring (JICA, 2013).Buddhism is the major religion of Myanmar practiced by 89% of the population(JICA,2013 P:6). Myanmar's Buddhists believe that males have religious superiority over females, in turn influencing social norms, cultural traditions and opportunities accorded to women and girls (JICA,2013 P:6). Women's rights for their own body have been limited by some Acts, Customary Laws and Religious Laws in Myanmar (JICA, 2013).Socio economic situation is affected by the regional gaps in accessing to governmental services(JICA, 2013). Someindigenous minorities in the conflict

areas are vulnerable to the violation of human rights or discrimination(JICA, 2013).

In these areas, female headed households face more risks to face poverty and are also more vulnerable for the risks of human trafficking and exploitation, because their limited education and literacy prevents them from accessing to information(JICA,2013 P: 6).In Shan State areas, mostly of women are still facing challenges that decision making, community participation, and leadership role as well as information access(Women's Organization Network (WON), 2016).Furthermore, women have lacked of health services and education services in rural area(Women's Organization Network (WON), 2016). Shan State also indicated that civilians are less interested in voting; as efforts to raise women's awareness about political participation remain weak(Women's Organization Network (WON), 2016).The problems are compounded in the indigenousregions; where most of the remote area indigenous women do not understand the Burmese language.

1.2. Aims and Objectives of Research

The third Millennium Development Goal states that to achieve gender equality "it is necessary to place women's empowerment at the center of national development plans" (United Nations Development Program (UNDP), 2010a). It is difficult to involve of rural women, especially remote area in Shan State. An indigenous woman's who are done not show interest or participate indevelopment activities. Investigating the roles and challenges rural women face inparticipating in community development activities is important to help development partners workmore effectively with these communities. Overall aim of this study is to explore rural women's participation in community development activities of Shan State Province, in Myanmar. Some general objectivesare-

- i. To explore the experiences of women from rural areas participating in community development activities for sustainable development;
- ii. To promote women participations and empowerment in socioeconomic development process and enhance empowerment of rural women;
- iii. To investigate the roles and challenges rural women face in participating in developmental activities to help of Government Departments.

Research Questions

The aim of this study is to understand rural women's participation in community development activities and to know following research questions will be explored;

- a. What are the roles of rural women participating in community development activities?
- b. What are the challenges for rural women to participate in community development activities?
- c. How do rural women overcome barriers and challenges to participate in community development activities?

1.3. Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is restricted to the survey of women roles in community development activities in a study to Shan State Area of Myanmar, data and information is collect through questionnaire and structured interviews carry out into other bodies (association) that were affiliated to Pekhon Township Area in southern of Shan State. The influences and generalization of this study is related to woman association of Shan State in Myanmar.

1.4. Significance of Study

The significance of this study will contribute to the surveying the role of women in community development activities and how it has impact positively in the whole sectors of the socio-economic development of Shan State in Myanmar. The positive impact is that encourage and incentive rural women to participate convenience in community development activities through their limited cultures, norms and concepts. I hope that this research will encourage Government departments to actions on field level activities. The outcomes to be considered consist of the following: enhance rural women to influence in political, economy and decision making; encourage rural women to participate enthusiasm in community activities at field level; and eliminate some of limit concepts are that rural women could not lead in the social, economy and political.

1.5. Structures of the Thesis

The thesis comprises of seven Chapters:

Chapter One: Provides the introduction, background to the research and introduces the statement of research problem, the research aims and objectives, scope of the study as well as significance of study.

Chapter Two: Explains the research methodology, including qualitative research interviews, research approach, data collection and analysis, cross-cultural research and indigenous.

Chapter Three: Looks at literature related to participation and empowerment including the theory and practice of participation, the notion of community, approaches to community development, and the feminist approach to development.

Chapter Four: Introduces Myanmar including the geography, government, population, land indigenous groups, and development poverty situations, population of Shan State, language of Shan State, cultures and belief of Shan State, livelihoods in Shan State and women participation in political system of Shan State.

Chapter Five: Examines the results from two village case studies. The challenges faced by women in participation are also identified and the differences between the two villages.

Chapter Six: Provides a discussion on how people perceive participation and how this influences their action; the challenges of women face to participating in community development activities.

Chapter Seven: Concludes the research summarizing the main findings, constraints of this study and recommendations.

Chapter Two: Methodology

The main objective of this research was to explore Shan State's rural women participation in development activities and so on. This chapter describes the research methodology and process. It includes a discussion on the research approach, selection of participants, data collection and analyses.

2.1. Research approach

The approach was focused on Government agencies and rural women community. A case study approach personal interviews were adopted to explore the situation as Women in Development (WID) and Women and Development (WAD) approaches, which identifies women as a distinct and separate group in a process to upgrade their socio-economic conditions were later turned towards Gender and Development (GAD) approach to overcome certain limitations of those previous approaches (Guijt & Kaul, 1998). The concept of GAD offered a new approach to include women in to the development process. This research achieved by using three sources: a view of available literature, and interviews and observations in two different villages.

These two villages were chosen to explore women's participation in community development activities. The research has used both primary and secondary data considerably. The research is more oriented towards the assessing the validity of gender specific and gender neutral development approaches in empowering women, development programmes were selected, and another on gender neutral as samples. Primary data are collected through a field study in two villages of (Kaung watt and Doe li villages) in the Pekhon township area, Taunggyi district, Southern of Shan State. The interviewers used questionnaires to elicit general information from the respondents and then ask additional, specific questions for particular individual topics. Different interviews addressed different topics. Two villages were chosen as case studies for this study.

2.2. Participants

The target participants of this study were rural community members especially the women, Department of Rural Development (DRD) Township Level Service staff. On arrival in the communities, personal introductions and an outline of the research was provided to the village headmen. Given the nature of the research it was important to observe the whole community and development activities as well as individuals. Participants were selected for in-depth interviews and observation during community activities and in the household. Participants were chosen to gather information on different perspectives of women's participation in community development activities. They included Villagers women (8) selected from different socio-economic backgrounds and status, and Villagers men (7), primarily husbands of the women selected. It was not within the scope of this community to interview those husbands working outside the village, so other men who were available were interviewed in their place. DRD service staff (3) with experience working with rural communities development activities and related policy were also selected. Three DRD service staff representatives were selected from each village (2), one with an understanding of their roles of women and their activities in the village; and the village headmen (2), one from each village. Village headmen act as official mediators between the Government, village and development organization. Village headmen are the only people able to provide statistics about people and properties in the village. They have full authority to make decisions and approve all matters in their village. A total 35 participants were interviewed and observed (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of Participants interviewed

Group	Individual	Village one	Village Two	Total
Rural community	Village headman	1	1	2
	Men	7	7	14

	Women	8	8	16
DRD Civil Service Staff	Executive Officer	1		1
	Staff	1	1	2
	Total	18	17	35

2.3. Data Collection

Data collection included in-depth interviews and observations.

2.3.1. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual participants (Table 1). This provided a relaxing setting and also allowed them to carry on working and taking care of young children while being interviewed. The questions were adapted during the research process based upon the responses and understanding of participants. Interviews with community women started off with general questions about their household followed by their involvement in community development activities. All of the interviews took place between Late-April and Late-March, 2019. The first interviews were conducted with the DRD Civil Service staff, followed by interviews in Kaung Watt Village. Time was spent time reviewing and reflecting on the interviews before visiting Doe Li Village. At the end of each day reflections were recorded from experiences in the community. A Phone recorder was used to capture the conversation during the interview.

2.3.2. Observations

Often community based research is exploratory and observations form the basis of theory generation. Observations took place on the same day interviews were conducted in the village. Apart from participant observations made during the interviews, daily life activities in the village were observed. Staying overnight

with host families allowed the lifestyle and interactions among family members to be observed, for example the division of labour and decision making.

2.3.4. Data Analysis

The data were fully transcribed. Observations on the interaction of rural women, men and DRD civil service staff and the in-depth interviews were coded into themes and patterns during data processing. Each interview response was put in a separate row and sorted by theme. The find function was used to identify key words. The data was closely examined for sequences and compared for similarities and differences.

Chapter Three: Conceptual of Participation and Empowerment

This chapter dealt with the concepts of theory and practice for the notion of community development as well as the feminist approach to development.

3.1. Theory and practice

In English the term of “participation” is defined as “the fact or condition of sharing in common (with others, or with each other); partnership, fellowship; profit-sharing” (OED, 1973, p. 15, 18). Participation in rural development was formalized in the mid-1970s. The planning paradigms of the 1960s and 1970s had developed from the colonial period when there was a top-down approach to development. However, often these approaches were not successful in rural development and poverty alleviation because there was little participation of local people in community development projects activities (UNESCAP, 2009). In early development approaches the role of women in their communities was ignored. They were not included in program design and implementation (Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), 1997). Today everyone has a right to participate. The 1979 World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD), formed the “Peasants Charter” that states that the rural poor “must be permitted to participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of rural development programs” (FAO, 1981). People have a right to development which includes participation under the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR, 2010). The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized. However, there are many different definitions and practices of participation as Chambers (2005, p. 104) highlights:

Participation is understood as a “good thing”. However, the interpretation of the meaning of participation and the form of practice is diverse. For example,

consultants, academics, developing country Governments, NGOs, bilateral donors and international organizations choose different approaches, principles, methods depending on their own mission and interests (UNESCAP, 2009). For example, Botes & Rensburg (2000) critique the problems of participatory approaches used by different development partners and the benefits and problems of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Rapid Resource Appraisal (RRA). Partnership is one of the understood meanings of participation. Karl (1995) observes that participation usually has two dimensions: quantitative and qualitative. For example, quantitative measures look at how many people were affected by the project. This is one of the standards used to measure the success of development projects. However, it does not tell us if participants really benefit. Qualitative measures tell us the quality of participation. For example, when women participate in an activity, they have access to make decisions, to be involved in leadership and bring about change.

Chambers (2005) suggests participation occurs on four levels:

1. Information sharing: People are informed so that collective individual action can be facilitated;
2. Consultation: People are consulted and interact with an agency so that they provide feedback;
3. Decision making: People have a decision making role on specific issues which they do on their own, or joint decision making with other people; and
4. Initiating action: people are proactive and able to take initiative on a certain issue or project activity.

Many international development partners believe that participation creates opportunities for all community members to contribute to and influence the

development process. It also encourages a sense of belonging and community integration (Midgley, 1986). However, Avorn (1996) suggests that participation cannot take place if participants are not fully involved in decision making. Participants must be decision makers for the desired change to be achieved. Dudley (1993) argues that where the community is not involved in decision making, it is a passive collaborator in an outsider's intervention. It should be called community contribution instead. He also believes "it is a myth to assume that everybody wants to be actively involved in decision making" (Dudley, 1993, p. 160). In the Myanmar's indigenous context it may be unrealistic to expect everyone in the community to be actively involved in decision making (Asian Development Bank et al, 2016).

Boas (1999, p. 23) reports that

"Decision making is normally centralized among a few with little, if any, downward delegation of authority. People prefer an authoritative leader who is considerate, capable, and who provides clear-cut directions". If people make decision before their leaders, they are considered as being aggressive and challenging authority which can lead to serious and harmful consequences. This is not recognized in policy on participation and may result in a greater burden for women and vulnerable groups in the community if they are forced to participate. This study investigates how to include ethnic's women in decision making".

There are many challenges to participation found in many different areas from institutional to socio-cultural, technical and logistical (Gender Equality Network, 2012). These obstacles depend on the context and exist inside and outside community (Gender Equality Network, 2012). Internally they are found in conflicts between local people over their interest. Externally they are found in the role of development professionals and Government policy on promoting participation (Botes & Rensburg, 2000). Even though genuine participation is not

easily achieved, people will participate under the right conditions (IFE, 2002). Firstly, people will participate when they feel the topic is important and relevant to them; secondly people have to believe that their actions count and make a difference; thirdly, all forms of participation such as cooking, playing sport and child care are acknowledged and valued and taken into account; fourthly, people must Although community participation as a concept seems to be overused in the developed world, developing countries have a limited understanding of this concept (Botes&Rensburg, 2000). Chambers (1997) suggests participation is used in three ways:

1. Cosmetic Label which makes things looks good. Usually donor agencies and Government demand a participatory approach;
2. Cooperation where participation gathers the local labour force and reduces costs. In this case, the community contribute their time and efforts to support the project with some outside assistance; and
3. Empowering Process which enhances local people so that they are able to take part in analysis of their own situation makes decisions, be confident and take initiative.

In a patriarchal and underdeveloped society, women are most disadvantaged. Therefore different approaches to women's participation have been introduced. Women in Development (WID) and Women and Development (WAD) were introduced in the 1970s. WID has its main focus on women. It was based on the belief that gender roles will change as women have an equal role to men in education, development, employment and health services (Ramji, 1997). Active women's participation is needed for efficient and effective development (AusAID, 1997). WAD emphasizes the importance of social class and the exploitation of the "third world". It assumes institutions need to be changed to

increase women's participation (Ramji, 1997). However, the approach does not question women's subordination and the low value placed on what women do inside the home (Chitthathalath, 2006). Then, in the mid 1980s, Gender and Development (GAD) was introduced to meet the requirements of sustainable development. The GAD approach recognizes that to improve the status of women is not just a women's issue but also requires active participation of men (AusAID, 1997). To alleviate poverty, promote development and achieve gender equality, requires women's empowerment by increasing access to economic resources, education, information and communication technology and governance including the protection of women's human rights (UNESCAP, 2009).

3.2. The feminist approach to development

The strength of the feminist perspective lies in its interdisciplinary nature in dealing with issues relating to the emancipation of women, as it posits that debates about doing development must pull together the various aspects of human life, and not focus narrowly on "taking the woman out of the kitchen" (Moore, 1988, P: 225-298). Feminist theory therefore focuses on addressing the subordination of women in different settings, be it at home, work or in the political spaces, and therefore calls for the restructuring of social systems in order to ensure that women are able to participate actively in their own emancipation (Moore, 1988, P: 225-298). Feminist thinking suggests that development serve as a vehicle and device for human progression (Oxfam Novib, 2008, P: 21).

Therefore, from the feminist perspective, existing discourses of development that afford women inequitable access to choices and opportunities, and which therefore are biased towards men, have a potentially counterproductive effect on women's participation in development, as they limit women's potential to advance and improve their lives (Oxfam Novib, 2008, P:21). Gender issues should be at the core of development; that is, gender issues must influence the substance and direction of development discourse (Oxfam Novib, 2008, P: 21).

This means that interventions to enhance the livelihoods of women should have a bias towards the advancement of women's social positioning in order for them to enjoy social benefits (Oxfam Novib, 2008, P: 21).

From the feminist point of view, efforts to reduce poverty and underdevelopment only benefit women if women are afforded access to social, political and economic resources so that they are able to participate and influence the equation of development (Oxfam Novib, 2008, P:22). However, in order for this to happen, work needs be done in order to address unequal power relations (both hidden and visible) that operate to the disadvantage of women within institutions and in communities(Oxfam Novib, 2008, P: 22). The business of development must elevate the importance of recognizing and changing the agenda of social and political institutions that continue to produce, reproduce and sustain gender inequality (Oxfam Novib, 2008, P: 22). Community development must serve as a way out and as relief for women from the shackles of poverty and inequality(Oxfam Novib, 2008, P: 22).

Chapter Four: Overview of Myanmar

This Chapter introduces Myanmar and covers the geography and people indigenous groups, the status of women, development and governance as well as the geography of the study area of Shan State province.

4.1. Geography

Myanmar, with an area of 676,552 km² the second-largest state in Southeast Asia, extends 2,056 km from north to south and 933 km from east to west, covering 20 parallels of latitude ranging from the tropics and subtropics to north of the Tropic of Cancer (Oxford Burma Alliance, 2016). Rather inaccessible mountain and hill regions separate Myanmar from the neighboring states of Bangladesh, India, China, Laos and Thailand. Myanmar, also called Burma, country, located in the western portion of mainland Southeast Asia (Oxford Burma Alliance, 2016). In 1989 the country's official English name, which it had held since 1885, was changed from the Union of Burma to the Union of Myanmar; in the Burmese language the country has been known as Myanmar (or, more precisely, MranmaPrañ) since the 13th century (Oxford Burma Alliance, 2016). In 2005 the government began to shift its administrative centre, first to the city of Pyinmana (some 200 miles [320 km] north of Yangon) and then to Nay Pyi Taw (Naypyidaw), a newly constructed city near Pyinmana. Nay Pyi Taw was proclaimed the capital of Myanmar in 2006. In 2005 the government began to shift its administrative Centre, first to the city of Pyinmana (some 200 miles [320 km] north of Yangon) and then to Nay Pyi Taw (Naypyidaw), a newly constructed city near Pyinmana. Nay Pyi Taw was proclaimed the capital of Myanmar in 2006. Myanmar is the second-largest country in South East Asia and shares borders with five other countries (Oxford Burma Alliance, 2016). Myanmar is endowed with rich natural resources, including arable land, vast forests, minerals as well as freshwater and marine resources (Matthew J. et al, 2015, P: 4-5). It is nevertheless a poor, predominantly rural country (Robert Coles, 2017).

4.2. Population

The total population figure of 51,486,253 includes estimated figures of 1.09 million in Rakhine State, 69,753 in Kayin State and 46,600 in Kachin State (census findings 2014; MoIP 2015b). The slight gender imbalance (24,821,176 males (48.2%) compared with 26,598,244 females (51.8%)) reflects the fact that more men than women are labour migrants living in neighbouring countries (census findings 2014; MoIP 2015b). The most populous areas are Yangon Region (7,360,703 inhabitants; 14.3% of the population), Ayeyarwady Region (6,184,829 inhabitants; 12.0%), Mandalay Region (6,165,723 inhabitants; 12.0%), Shan State (5,815,384 inhabitants), Sagaing Region (5,320,299 inhabitants) and Bago Region (4,863,455 inhabitants), followed by Magway Region (3,912,711 inhabitants), Rakhine State (3,188,963 inhabitants), Mon State (2,050,282 inhabitants), Kachin State (1,689,654 inhabitants), Kayin State (1,572,657 inhabitants), Tanintharyi Region (1,406,434 inhabitants) and Nay Pyi Taw Capital Region (1,158,367 inhabitants; 2.3% of the population). Chin State (478,690 inhabitants; 0.9%) and Kayah State (286,627 inhabitants; 0.6%) have the lowest population figures (all figures: MoIP 2015a: 3). According to ADB report 2014, some 69% of its estimated population of 57.5 million lives in rural areas (Kyaw Tint et al., 2014). Myanmar continues to have significant poverty reduction needs. Nationally, the incidence of poverty is estimated at around 25%. The rural poverty level is almost double that of urban poverty, at 29% and 15% respectively. Rural areas also account for 85% of food poverty incidence (What Works for Women, 2012).

4.3. Government

Government type: parliamentary government led by a military-backed political party took power in March 2011 (Tin Zar Htun & Mael Raynaud, 2017). Myanmar's parliament convened in January 2011 and selected former Prime Minister Thein Sein as president (Tin Zar Htun & Mael Raynaud, 2017). Although the vast majority of national-level appointees named by Thein Sein are former or current military officers, the government has initiated a series of political and economic reforms leading to a substantial opening of the long-isolated

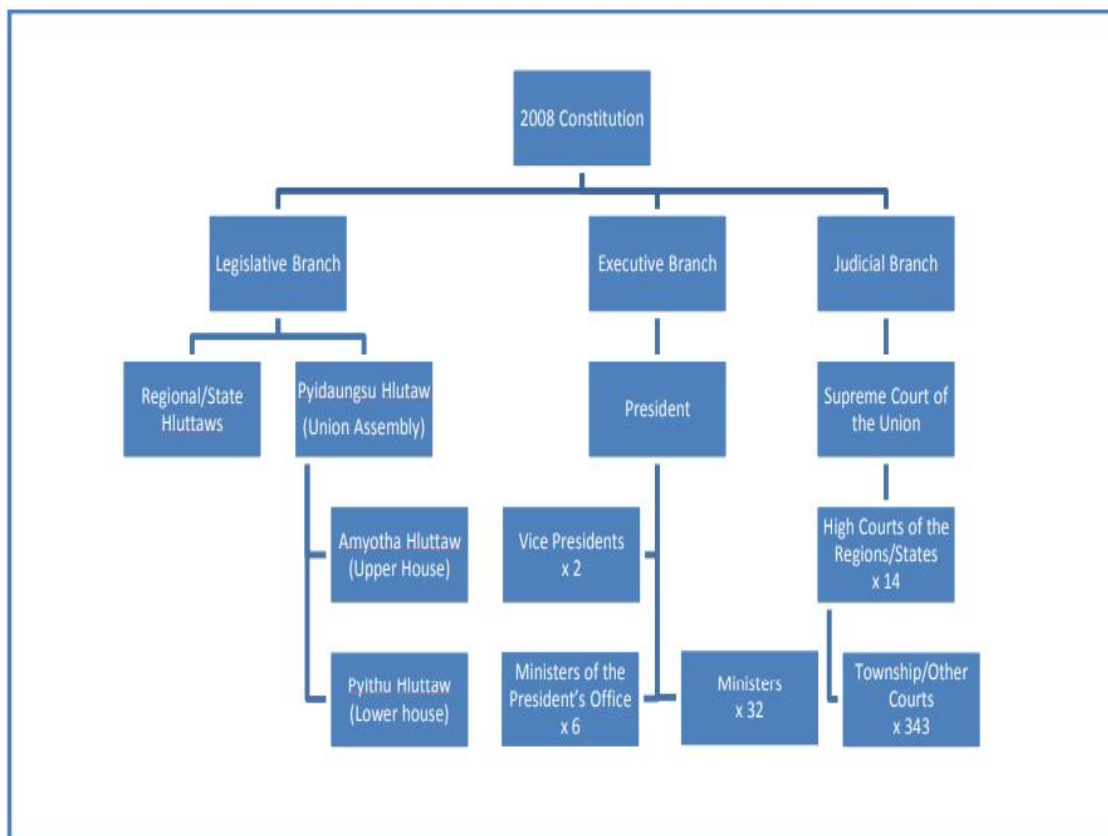
country (TinzarHtun&Mael Raynaud, 2017). A general election was held in Myanmar on November 7, 2010, in accordance with the new constitution which was approved in a referendum held in May 2008. Under the 2008 Constitution, the Union of the Republic of Myanmar is organized into seven States and seven Regions (formerly known as Divisions), six Self-Administered Zones and Self-Administered Divisions and one union territory containing the capital Nay Pyi Taw and surrounding townships (TinzarHtun&Mael Raynaud, 2017).

The population is organized into the following levels of administration, starting with the lowest administrative level: the village, with several grouped together into village tracts; urban wards; towns, with several grouped together into townships (where the lowest levels of government offices are generally located); townships are then organized into districts; several districts then comprise a region or state (Hamish, Nixcom et al, 2013). Regions and States are constitutionally equivalent. Currently, the President appoints a Chief Minister for each State and Region. Each State/Region has a unicameral legislative assembly (Hluttaw), but laws passed by the Union Legislative Assembly (PyidaungsuHluttaw) are superior to those passed at the Regional/State level (Part2: Government Structures & Legal framework P: 31).

According to the Constitution, the Union Government and the Regions and States Government were formed. In the Union Government, there are (9) Union Level Central Organizations and (36) Union Ministries (Hamish, Nixcom et al, 2013). The Union Level Central Organizations are as follows: (1) President Office (2) Office of the Union Government (3) Hluttaw Office (4) Union Supreme Court (5) Union Constitutional Tribunal (6) Union Election Commission (7) Union Attorney- General Office (8) Union Auditor-General Office (9) Union Civil Service Board Each ministry is headed by one Union Minister and one or two or three Deputy Ministers respectively (figure 3) (Hamish, Nixcom et al, 2013). Each region and state has a region or state

government headed by one Chief Minister (Union Minister level) and 9 ministers (Deputy Minister Level) (Hamish, Nixcom et al, 2013).

Figure 1: Organizational chart of the Government



4.4. Land

The land area occupied by Myanmar is approximately 676,600 square kilometers, extending about 2,050 kilometers (1,270 miles) from north to south and 930kilometres (580 miles) from east to west(Amanda Briney, 2016). It is slightly larger than the country of Afghanistan, and slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Texas (Amanda Briney, 2016). Myanmar has approximately 1,930 km of coastline on the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. Elsewhere it shares approximately 6,500 kilometers (4,000 miles) of land borders with five neighboring countries: Bangladesh to the west; India to the north-west; China to the north and north-east; Lao PDR to the east; and Thailand to the east and

south-east. Based on geographic variations in relief, soils, drainage patterns and climate, Myanmar can be divided into five distinct physiographic regions: the northern mountains, the western ranges, the eastern plateau, the central basin and lowlands, and the coastal plains and deltas (Amanda Briney, 2016).

4.5. Development

In Myanmar, the individual economic sectors make different contributions to total gross domestic product (GDP)(MNPED, 2015, P: 203). According to statistics from the Department of Planning, the primary sector (agriculture, livestock and fisheries, forestry) generates 27.9% of GDP, the secondary sector (energy, mining, processing and manufacturing, electric power, construction) accounts for 34.4% and services (transportation, communications, financial institutions, social and administrative services, rental and other services, trade) contribute 37.7% (MNPED, 2015, P: 203).The agriculture sector contributes around 25–30% of export earnings, according to data from the Department of Agricultural Planning under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation. Poverty steadily declined from 32.1% in 2004 to 25.6% in 2009 to 19.4% in 2015, using the method put forward in the Integrated Household and Living Conditions reports.Average household expenditures increased by 15% over the decade, or by 1.4% per year (Asian Development Bank et al, 2016). Improvements in living standards are reflected in a number of indicators of well-being, including the more pronounced sales of consumer goods such as motorcycles and televisions. In 2015, over 42% of households owned motorcycles, compared to 10% of households in 2009. 37% of people still live near or below the poverty line. This means that they continue to remain vulnerable to poverty (Asian Development Bank et al, 2016).

Rural poverty declined from 35.8% in 2004/05 to 23.3% in 2015 and urban poverty declined from 21.5% in 2004/05 to 9% in 2015. Growth in the last decade was lower in rural areas than in urban: 1.1% per annum in rural areas compared to 1.9% in urban areas (Asian Development Bank et al, 2016).Myanmar is a lower-middle income economy with a GNI per capita of

\$1,455 in 2017(WB, 2018). Strong economic growth translated into a reduction in poverty from 48 to 32 percent between 2005 and 2015(WB, 2018). The economy grew at 5.9 percent in 2016/17 and is estimated to have grown at 6.4 percent in 2017/18, driven by strong industrial performance, in particular garment manufacturing (WB, 2018). The recent government approval of the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan is a welcome policy development(WB, 2018). According to the Myanmar Living Conditions Survey 2017, while progress still needs to be made in some parts of the country, where outcomes are lagging, there have been some stark changes over time in access to electricity, education, goods ownership, and technology usage.

4.6. Poverty situations

Poverty in Myanmar's farms and villages (rural areas) is substantially higher than that in its towns and cities (urban areas): 38.8 percent of the rural populations are estimated to be poor compared to 14.5 percent of those in its towns and cities(World Bank et al, 2017 P: 4-8). These amounts to 15.8 million poor in total, of which 13.8 million live in rural areas and 2.0 million in urban areas(World Bank et al, 2017 P: 4-8). In the Coastal and Hills and Mountains areas of Myanmar, according to the World Bank 2017 estimate that four in ten of the populations are poor and one in six will struggle to meet their basic food needs. Despite a lower share of the population living in these areas, they account for 47 percent of the food poor and 38 percent of those in the bottom quintile of the expenditure distribution(World Bank et al, 2017 P: 4-8).

The densely populated Dry Zone and Delta areas account for 65 percent of Myanmar's poor. Although the headcount rate of poverty in the Delta is the lowest of all areas, its high population density implies that the number of poor remains substantial: there are an estimated 5.5 million poor in the Delta (including Yangon), compared to 2 million in the Coastal Zone. Children of all ages are more likely to be living in poor households than individuals of working age and elderly individuals(World Bank et al, 2017 P: 4-8). Households with more children under the age of 15 are more likely to live in

rural areas, have less educated and younger household heads (World Bank et al, 2017 P: 4-8).

Myanmar's population continues to suffer from deprivations that limit their ability to feed their families, to finish school and to recover from health shocks (World Bank et al, 2017). Approximately that a third of households report limiting the quality of their diet as a consequence of inadequate resources while 8 percent of households report running out of food due to a lack of resources (World Bank et al, 2017). People all over Myanmar, and particularly the poor, suffer from difficulties accessing some basic services and infrastructure including clean water, health services and electricity (World Bank et al, 2017). Only 33 percent of households have access to electricity through the public grid and the majority of those with public grid access live in urban areas. However, off-grid sources of electricity are used extensively, and a myriad of alternative sources of energy have sprung up, from communal provision and solar home systems to rechargeable batteries (World Bank et al 2017). Outside of the wet season, rainwater harvesting is replaced by water collection from ponds and rivers. Nearly 3 in 10 people lack access to year round improved drinking water, and 1 in 4 lacks access to improved sanitation (World Bank et al 2017).

Many rural areas also lack access to the critical infrastructure needed to connect to markets within Myanmar and to the rest of the world. Although 70 percent of households are engaged in agriculture, the majority of these households also earn income from additional non-agricultural income sources, such as income from labor, non-farm businesses or remittances from non-agricultural occupations. Poorer households are more likely to be solely engaged in agriculture and, within agriculture, in casual labor activities (World Bank et al, 2017, P: 4-8). Poor households are typically characterized as having more family members and more young and elderly dependents per working age adult (World Bank et al, 2017). Household heads also typically have lower levels of education than the average household, and their working age members

also have lower than average education levels(World Bank et al, 2017). Poverty is strongly linked to low farming or agricultural labor incomes and a heavy reliance on the main monsoon crop(World Bank et al, 2017, P: 6). Poorer households are generally less integrated into the formal economy, and have limited access to official documents that enable access to public services and formal credit sources, enforce their claims and rights, and for undertaking secure market transactions (World Bank et al, 2017, P: 6).

4.7. Population of Shan State

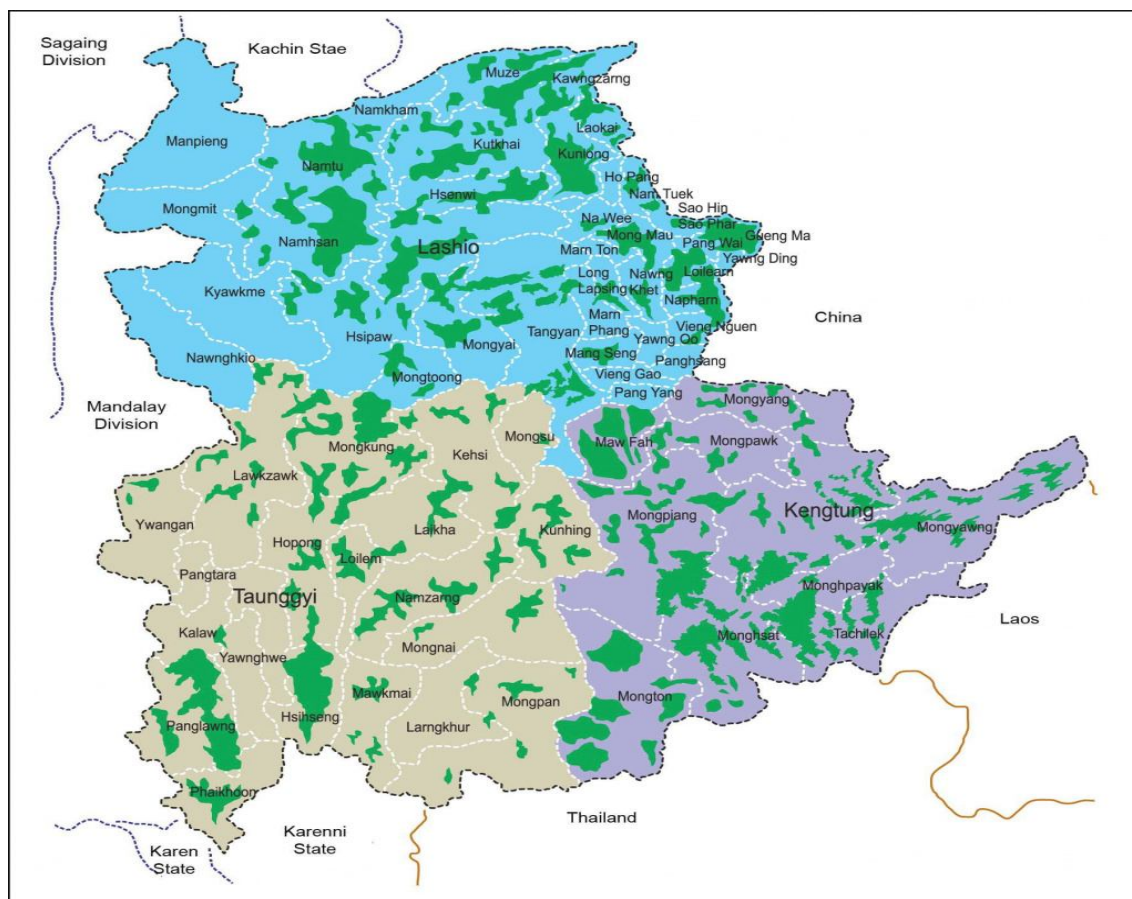
Shan State, the largest State in Myanmar, borders with China in the north, Laos in the east and Thailand in the south(WFP, 2016 P: 2). its territory constitutes 23.2 percent of the entire country and is divided into northern Shan, southern Shan and eastern Shan. It has four self-administrative zones and one self-administrative division. It is home to 5.8 million people of 33 different indigenous groups (WFP, 2016 P: 2).The 2014 MPHC shows that Myanmar had a total population of 51,486,253 persons as of 29 March 2014. Of these, 24,824,586 were males and 26,661,667 were females. The total population for Shan State as of 29 March 2014 was 5,824,432persons. Of these, 2,910,710 were males and 2,913,722 were females (Table 3). The total population of Shan State represents 11.3 percent of the total population of Myanmar.The Census results show that for every 100 persons in Shan State, 76 persons live in rural areas while 24 persons live in areas that are classified as urban by **GAD**. The proportion of the urban population in Shan State is lower than the Union level proportion, where 30 percent of the total populations live in urban areas (MOLIP, 2014 Census Volume 3 – M p: 9-12).The location of Shan state is shown in Figure (2).

Table 2: Distribution of Population by State/Region and Sex

Union	Total Population		
	Both sexes	Male	Female
Shan State	5,824,432	2,910,710	2,913,722

(Source: The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census Shan State Census Report Volume 3 – M p: 9-12).

Figure 2: location of Shan State Map



Source: Department of Rural Development (DRD), Pekhon Township

4.8. Language of Shan State

The Shan are ethnically linked to the Thai, and speak a similar language (TheinLwin, 2011). Shan language can be divided into three groups; eastern Shan dialect is closer to northern Thai dialect, the southern Shan dialect has borrowed some Burmese words, and the northern Shan dialect has Chinese influences (TheinLwin, 2011). Although there are different forms of written languages, Lik-Tai is mostly used as a written form of Shan (ALBETAC, 2013 p: 2). In most cases the Shan speaking different dialects can understand each other. As Shan is not taught in government-sponsored schools, Shan Buddhist

monasteries are the main source of the promotion and preservation of Shan language and culture in the Shan State(UNDP, 2017). Shan opposition groups also run schools on the Thailand-Burma border, where the Shan language is taught and used as the medium of instruction (UNDP, 2017). Most of these schools have decided to omit Burmese language from their curriculum. Despite the dominance of the Burmese language throughout most of the state, there are also many Shan in rural indigenous villages who do not speak the Burmese language(UNDP, 2017 p: 14). In general, Shan State was described as diverse, with many different indigenous minorities having their own languages, cultures and traditions (UNDP, 2017 p: 14).

4.9. Cultures and Beliefs of Shan State

Shan culture, language, and heritage are in a state of crisis. They are gradually being assimilated into the Thai, Burmese, and Chinese groups. Most cannot read and write their own languages(The Shan 1999). There is a lot of intermarriage between indigenous groups. In Thailand for example most Shan do all they can to become “Thai” and minimize the fact that they are Shan. Many Shan are in fact somewhat ashamed to admit that they are Shan (The Shan 1999).Shan maintains their distinct identity from other fellow indigenous groups of the Union of Myanmar in terms of language, culture and tradition. Like Thai food being famous in worldwide, Shan food is the most popular flavour in Burma (Shan culture, 2011). Typical Tai Temples are mainly found in Yunnan Province of Southern China and its architecture is very much similar to those of temples in Thailand. Shan traditional long drum, sheep dance, sword dance, material arts dance and Kinnara and Kinnari (female and male mythical birds whose face look like human or said to be half human-half bird creature) dances are very unique cultural materials of every Shan celebration events(Shan culture, 2011). Shan have its own flag which was one of the outcomes of Panglong Agreement in February 1947, which served as the most important stepping stones to independent Union of Myanmar today(Shan culture, 2011). Families have traditionally sent their sons to become monks under the belief that doing so would earn their family’s merit. Most villages

have temples(Dr. Richard M. Cooler, 2017, P: 23). The idea of “power protection” is central to the Shan belief system. The Shan believe that one gains power protection from making friends among capricious spirits and keeping them happy and that this power protects people from the consequences of their action and is unequally distributed (Dr. Richard M. Cooler, 2017, P: 23).

4.10. Livelihoods in Shan State

Within Shan State, rice is the main crop grown for household use(Shinji Yasuiet..al, 2013,P:19). Double cropping during the 8 to 9 months of the wet monsoon with rotations are practiced extensively in southern Shan State, where rice is often followed by potato, tomato or chickpea in flat areas, while different rotations are seen in sloping hill areas (Shinji Yasuiet..al, 2013,P:19).The main livelihood activity of the people in Shan State is agriculture: shifting cultivation is practiced in the hilly regions. During most of the 20th century, people relied heavily on poppy cultivation, especially in areas, where the geographic and meteorological conditions were not favorable for growing food crops(WFP, 2016 P: 2).

4.11. Women Participation in Political activities of Shan State

The National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013-2022 identified a key priority as ensuring women’s equal participation and leadership in governance at all levels of society(Center for Diversity & National Harmony, 2018, P: 10). In practice, however, women’s ability to take part in Myanmar’s political life has been very limited, made even more so by more than 60 years of military rule. This dynamic began to change with the 2010 general elections which marked the historic transition from military rule to civilian government(Center for Diversity & National Harmony, 2018, P: 10). Members were elected to both a new national bicameral parliament with an upper and lower house and 14 parliaments in the states and regions (Center for Diversity & National Harmony, 2018, P: 10).Women are not involved in political leadership in the village structure, and rarely consulted on political matters related to the community (Center for Diversity & National Harmony,

2018, P: 11).In Shan State, especially in rural areas Women's political participation at the subnational or local level (ward, township, and village) is particularly low (Women's Organization Network (WON), 2016, P: 7).Women may also be deterred from participating in politics by actual physical threats. Traditionally, women do not go outside the home alone, especially at night, because of safety concerns. "There is no participation of women in rural administration in other villages"(Women's Organization Network (WON), 2016, P: 8).The other challenges are, for instance, feminist theories argued that patriarchy system of traditional practice have men's presence and dominance over women that is the prime obstacle to women's equality in the political institution(Paul Minoletti, 2014, P: 11).

Amongst other things, such as lack of education, skills, confidence, as well as time constraints for women are the reason they are far from politics (Paul Minoletti, 2014, P: 11). Besides, it is very essential that both genders have experience in politics so that they have the ability to implicitly participate but the problem is women in Burma are still lacking in this matters(Sang HninLian, 2015 P: 3-4). There are several other things that constraint and challenge women to participate in politics. Women, particularly in ethnic minority areas do not understand what a politic is(Sang HninLian, 2015 P: 3-4). Traditionally in this area, women are responsible for households and family matters, therefore even if they understand about politics they are indecisive whether to participate in decision making process (Sang HninLian, 2015 P: 3-4).

Chapter five: Analysis and Results

This chapter presents the results of the research. First, describes the village context of the research case studies and difference between two villages, looks at the livelihoods, roles and responsibilities of women in the household and community of case study in these two villages. Finally, identifies the barriers women face to participation in community development activities. as well as looks at their Cultural norms: limited female participation.

5.1. Case Studies

Two villages were chosen to conduct the study and to compare the level of women's participation in community development activities. Also, these two villages are different of Cultures, languages and religion as well as living conditions. Furthermore, these two villages have been doing (MyaSeinYaung Project) which means microfinance project as promote their livelihoods and incomes as well as living conditions. Another one project is Village development Plan (VDP) project which also promote their villages infrastructures and so on. All of these projects are launched by Department of Rural Development (DRD). In (Table 4) described these two villages demography such as village establishment term, Males, females and their household's conditions.

Table 3: Village demography

Village Information	Kaung Watt Village	Doe Li Village
Village establishment	120 years	95 years
Households	82	136
Males	282	386
Females	358	282

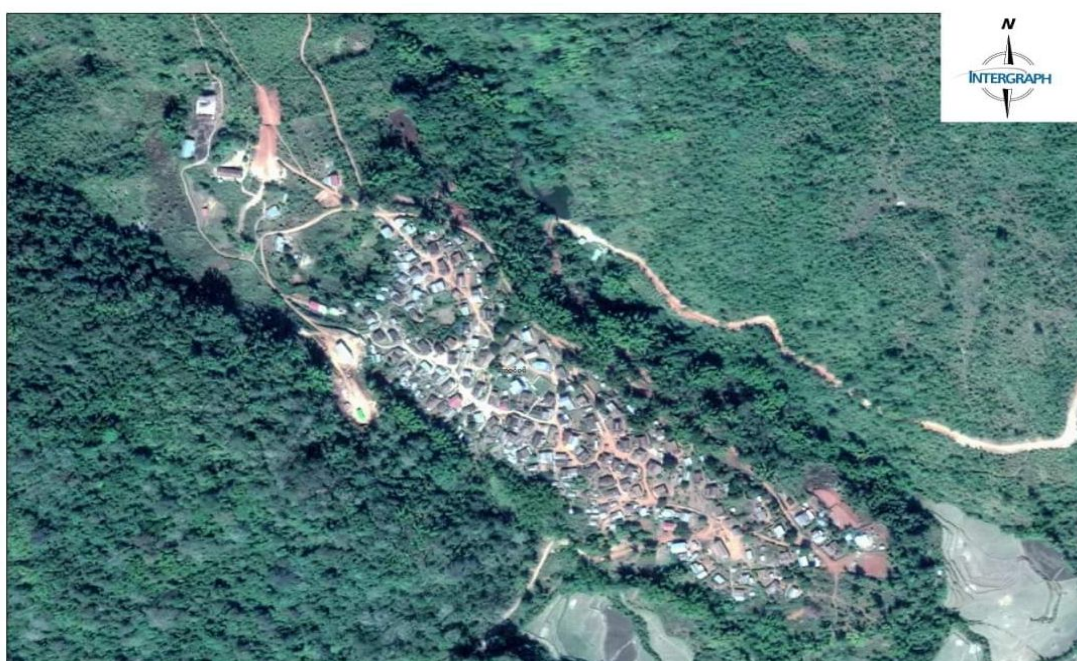
Poor households	57	115
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(Source: Department of Rural Development Pekhon Township)

5.2. Kaung Watt Village

Kaung Watt Village is located 20.2 kilometers west of Pekhon Township, Taunggyi district, Southern of Shan State province. The village also included in the (KaungEi) village-tract and exists in a mountainous area which is can be transportation and accessible trading to the city (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Kaung Watt Village Map



(Source: Department of Rural Development Pekhon Township)

A small family received three hectares and a big family received five hectares for upland farming. The village also has protection forest which belongs to the community. The forest is a source of subsistence including non-timber forest products such as costs Pine, bamboo shoots and mushrooms for food and grasses for making brooms. However, today food or non-timber forest products are scarce. Most people's farmland is near the village. In the past glutinous rice

was the main crop for cultivation but today the Government also encourages other cash crops. People plant more oranges, rice, potatoes, onion and garlic as well as tomato. More rice for home consumption. The main income for this village is from selling oranges and potatoes. The village is further from the main road that there is lot of marketing opportunities for this village. Every day the merchant with his truck would come to collect oranges and other crops in the village. Apart from raising livestock such as Buffalos, pigs, and chickens, women also collect vegetables, bamboo shoots, crabs and snails for food. Men are doing catching fish, and hunt other kinds of wild animals.

The existing village infrastructure and services include a gravity fed water system, rice, village hall, many shops for selling food and other basic household materials. Some households also have satellite TV however, only people who are using solar electric system. Truck and motorbikes are the main transport in the village. Men mainly use them for going to their farms and visiting neighboring villages. Nearly every household has a motorbike. This means people spend less time travelling to their fields and have more time available for activities in the village. Some households have a truck and those houses belong equipped with modern appliances. Everyday a butcher comes on his motorbike to sell meat. There is a primary school within the village which was rebuilt by Education Department. The school also exists in the middle of village. The number of boys and girls in lower grades are similar. Poor people may not be able to afford to send their children school and girls often do not go to township level school. All of villagers those of who are only believe the Buddha religion and one of the temple exists in the middle of village. Villagers are speaking their local language which is (La Hta) otherwise commonly known as Kayan language and Burmese language.

5.3. Doe Li Village

Doe Li village, in the south-eastern part of Pekhon Township area that one of the poorest villages in the (Ka Yaw) village-tract. The village is located along a

dirt road, about more than 100 kilometers from city. Access is limited during the rainy season (Figure 7).

Figure 4: Doe Li Village map



(Source: Department of Rural Development Pekhoh Township)

The village is surrounded by mountains and a river. It is a combination of three communities from different areas. Two communities are from a remote area, with no road access and far from the resettlement area. The other community is from nearby. For many households their cultivated land is now far away from their new home. They cultivate glutinous rice, and different kinds of vegetables, hunt and catch fish for consumption. They also collect non-timber forest products such as bamboo shoots, mushroom and vegetables. Many families plant sesame and work on a nearby plantation which is owned by a private company to earn income. Doe Li village also has protection forest,

where local people are allowed to collect fire wood, food and hunt for household consumption.

As a result of resettlement many households have to stay on their farms or in their old homes during the farming season. It takes at least four hours to walk to their farms from their new home. Often women stay at the farm to look for food during the week and bring it home at weekends for their children who are still at school. Some children go to stay at the farm with their parents over the weekend. Most households still store rice and keep their animals on their farms at the old village site. After the harvest, villagers return from time to time to carry rice home and look after the animals. The village has some facilities such as a gravity fed water system and solar electricity. However, all households have only access to use solar electricity and candle, particularly the poorer households who live at the back of the village.

The village also has one very small shop which sells basic supplies such as petrol, washing powder, salt and candy. Twice a week a butcher comes on his motorbike to sell meat. However, there are not many people who can afford to buy it. The village also has a few rice mills. However, women are still pounding their rice manually because many of them cannot afford to pay for rice mills. All of villagers who are believe the catholic religion. They have also one church in the middle of village. Doe Li village has a primary school within the village. Similar to Kaung Watt village, the number of boys and girls in lower grades are not much different. The secondary school is exists in the village. Some students are easy to go to secondary school by walk. All of these villagers are also speaking local language which known as (Kayaw Language) and speaking Burmese Language is rarely.

5.4. The differences between the two villages

Overall these two villages are different in many ways because one village is descending from the Kayan (padaung) indigenous group and another village is descending from the Kayawindigenous group. So these two villages are

different of cultures, religious, languages and living conditions. The location of Kaung Watt village has advantages in terms of economic development. It is near the main highway which provides easy access to Government services, markets and transportation. In contrast, Doe Li village is located in a remote area where the condition of the road is not good and therefore the cost of transportation is higher. In addition, Doe Li village has been settled more than 86 years while Kaung Watt village was just resettled 35years ago. This village is still facing negative impacts of resettlement including adapting to a new social and economic environment. Kaung Watt village one is wealthier than Doe Li village.

Kaung Watt village earns their income mainly from oranges and other produce while Doe Li village does not have any income source except seasonal labour on the plantation. Furthermore, the number of people attending community activities program in Kaung Watt village is higher than Doe Li village. This may be because people in Doe Li village often stay overnight on their farms because their farms are far away from home. The farms of people in Kaung Watt Village are closer to home and they also have motorbikes for transport. Even though DRD projects have been implementing activities in Kaung Watt village and Doe Li village, the level of understanding of participation as a process is still weak.

5.4.1. Women's roles and responsibility for Livelihood

Women in both villages have a primary role in housekeeping, as the caretaker and to ensure the food security of the family. All women interviewed said that they look for food for daily consumption such as wild vegetables, mushroom, bamboo shoots, fish, crabs, prawns and snails. They also collect firewood, make the fire, steam rice, cook and collect water for the family. For many poor women they still have to pound the rice by hand. For some women when they have money, they buy meat to cook for the family. Most women in this area have extended families so women are not only responsible for taking care of their own families but also for their parents. Women are in charge of cleaning

such as doing dishes, and cleaning the house. They are also responsible for feeding children and washing clothes for the family including parents-in-law. In addition, when the family has guests, it is a woman's job to be responsible for taking care of the visitors and making sure they feel welcome. While staying with many families during the field research and from past experiences as a development staff worker, women also prepare the food, boil water and prepare the blanket and mattress for guests.

Both men and women play a very important role in farming. However, for slash and burn cultivation, women must work harder than men when it comes to weeding after the seeds are planted. For Doe Li village where the farms are a long distance away, most of the women interviewed stay at the farm until the harvest season is complete. For example Doe Li village one of women said: "I always stay in the farm because there is nothing much to do here. I stay and work in the farm because it is a very long way to walk (Personal communication, April 4, 2019). Many of the women interviewed play a significant role in animal raising and seasonal cash crop production from which they generate income. Raising animals such as buffalo pigs and chickens are mainly the women's responsibility. Half of those women interviewed said that they really like raising animals to sell so that they can buy things for their family (Personal communication, April 8, 2019).

5.4.2. Household decision making

Although both men and women are active in farming, the woman interviewed seems reluctant to comment when asked about their involvement in household decision making. However, they answer easily that they can make decision about "household work". When asked "What is household work?" most women mentioned household chores such as cooking, collecting water and firewood and pounding rice. For these activities they do not have to ask or tell their husbands. When interviewed one woman who had been sick for a long time, before and after she gave birth, said that this prevented her from doing farm work. She did not question anything her husband does or know what he plans

to grow each year (Personal communication, April 8, 2019). Although women are responsible for raising animals they are not involved in some decisions about them. For example, Kaung Watt village women said that she likes raising animals and wants to obtain funds from the revolving fund to have some cows but her husband does not agree to this. As an alternative this woman has chosen to buy a pig to rear instead. Doe Li village women said that both herself, and her husband make decisions in the family. However, the final decision would come from the head of the family (the husband) because he is a leader and can give advice to his wife. Sometimes a woman's participation may be blocked by her husband.

For Doe Li village women, whose husband is sick and cannot contribute to farm work, she is left to make all the decisions for the family. She said "I make all the decision at home. I married with an old man and now he is not healthy. He does not go anywhere. My husband is not like other husbands that is why I am poor". While staying overnight in the village, a wife was observed telling her husband what to say about the issue of fire in the farm when he attended the meeting (April, 8, 2019, Kaung Watt village). In addition, widows who own houses and land are able to work and make decisions as the head of the family. Kaung Watt village two women said that before doing anything they have to ask their mother or mother-in law first because they are in charge of the house. They are the ones who make household decisions even though they do not attend village meetings or development activities. Women in general make decisions on household chores. Their decisions about finance are limited and are supervised by the men. In exceptional cases where a woman is the head of the household, she does make the financial decisions.

5.4.3. Challenges

It seems to be a common challenge for all of the staff interviewed to organize meetings or trainings in the village that women will attend and participate in. Either husbands (then head of the family) or their children attend the meeting. Although staff inform the village of the meeting in a letter specifying the date

and time villagers still go to the farm. In some villages it is hard to meet all the Village Committee members at one time. This shows that participation in community development activities is not their priority. The families who do not like to attend the community meetings are poor families and they are perceived as stubborn people who are busy looking for food (Personal communication, April 9, 2019). The lack of engagement of these area women is one of the major challenges for most field staff. When they do attend meetings they are very quiet. Staff does not know how to get them to participate actively. Women just come to the meeting to listen. They tend not to ask any questions. Often they just smile and say yes if staffs ask them to do something. Staff cannot ensure that the communities understand what has been discussed. For some women language is still an issue for understanding what is being said. When working in groups one or two women usually talk. These women dominate the whole group and the rest of the group members appear to agree with what they said and keep quiet (Personal communication, April 9, 2019).

5.5. The challenges to participation in community development activities

In this study five challenges of women's participation in community development activities were identified. The study also presents short stories of women to elaborate on these challenges.

5.5.1. Language

Local language is used in the internal meetings organized by the community themselves. However, the Burmese language is used during meetings and activities with Government agencies or DRD civil staffs. Burmese language is taught in school and all text books are written in this language. However, when students have a difficulty understanding lessons, teachers translate into their local language for them. Unfortunately, all teachers are not local, so some students are miss out the school. Outside of the classroom students only speak local language. The Burmese language is not used on a daily basis in the community, although many indigenous words are now part of these two

villages. Many of the women interviewed claim that they understand Burmese language but they do not have a full understanding.

5.5.2. Cultural norms: limited female participation

The village headman refers to the head or the representative of each family when he calls meetings. In the village a man is the head of the family and he is expected to attend meetings. Women come to meetings or attend community activities only if her husband cannot attend. Both men and women in these two villages agree that meetings are men's job. For this reason women cannot take an active role in community development activities. Men do not believe women can do this job and it is not necessary to involve them in these activities(Personal communication, April 10, 2019).Another cultural norm associated with being a good woman in these two villages is not to travel far from home alone. Women are expected to work hard on the farm and make sure the family has food to eat.

5.5.3. Familiar Burdens

It appears women do not really have much time left to do things other than their normal routine. However, it seems not to be the case for men. From my observations, these two villages are similar in terms of sharing the familiar burdens between men and women. Women get up at around four hour in the morning. As soon as they get up, they start with the work they need to do every day, including cooking, cleaning, collecting water and feeding children and animals. By 6:30am they start walking to the farm and return home before 6:00pm to repeat the housework as they did in the morning. At eight o'clock in the evening before going to bed they prepare the rice for the next day's cooking. However, men sometimes go to look for fish at night with friends. Men seem to have time walking around and socializing with other people in the village in the morning and the evening. Women on the other hand seem very busy around this time. If there is nobody at home to look after children, women cannot go to meetings. Some women take children with them to meetings and often they go to meetings late and sit at the back of the room. Women are not

able to catch up with what has been said. Everywhere women are going they carry children on their backs when they are in the meeting, cooking, cleaning, washing, and feeding animals. Women could not even focus fully on the interview. Involving women in the community development activities or in meetings means disturbing her work, which husbands do not allow. It appears that a woman with a young child has fewer opportunities to be involved in the village committee (Personal communication, April 10, 2019).

5.5.4. Education

Education is one of the criteria for being accepted to the village committee at least is able to read and write. However, this criterion limits opportunities for women to take part in leadership in the community. The majority of older women only completed grade two and so they are not able to read and write. Some of them never attended school at all. The lack of formal education among the older generation makes women reluctant to sign up for community development activities that involve paperwork such as the village fund. Although women are often responsible for implementing activities such as growing crops, many do not attend community trainings or have direct responsibility for finances. Most young women interviewed had completed primary school (grade seven). However, these young women do not have power. They are not recognized by the community or their husbands regarding their involvement in the community development activities or leadership in the community. Poverty appears to be one of the main reason preventing women attending school. Women interviewed in these two villages have to help their family work on the farm due to a shortage of labour. For the oldest daughter, she has more responsibility to help her mother to take care of younger siblings.

5.5.5. Health

Health issues are another set of problems that prevent women from taking part in community development activities. Their lack of participation has to do with their health and that of their children. The women interviewed in Doe Li village appear to have more health problems than those in Kaung Watt village. Many

of them cannot attend community meetings because their children are sick. Doe Li village women respondent said “When children are sick I have to stay at home. I can’t go to the farm or the meeting. My children those who are get sick every two or three days” (Personal communication, April 10, 2019). Health issues are not only preventing women from taking part in the community development activities, but also affecting their self-esteem. These women seem to depend more on their husbands and do not believe that they can contribute either to the community development activities (Personal communication April 10, 2019).

Chapter Six: Discussion of Case Study

This chapter addresses the aim of this study, to explore Shan State's rural women participation in community development activities of Pekhon Township area, Taunggyi district in Myanmar. The results are discussed in relation to the research questions:

- a) What are the roles of rural women participation in community development activities?
- b) What are the challenges for rural women to participate in community development activities?
- c) How do rural women overcome barriers and challenges to participate in community development Activities?

In this Chapter, section (6.2) looks at how community interpreting participation. Section (6.3) discusses the challenges and roles of women in the community, households and development activities. Section 6.4 discusses methods to increase women's participation.

6.1. Women's roles

Evaluating the role of women participation in communities is one of the purposes of this study. Women's roles in the rural community can be divided into their participation in family, community activities. Family and community roles are learnt from childhood. Boys and girls are brought up differently. Women are expected to be told what to do; men are expected to tell their wives what to do. These are informal roles. For these two villages cultures respect for authority is an unwritten rule. Relationships between Government and indigenous groups and between rural and urban people are shaped by culture.

In community development activities women remain in their traditional family or community roles. They are serving, following and informing. Attending community development activities is considered a very formal and public role. This is not a traditional role for women in communities. The relationship between women and community is important for development activities. This reflects the cultural norms observed in women communities, where men and women get together in separate groups. For example during weddings, funerals and festivals men and women work in separate groups to achieve their tasks. For women to participate in community development activities, both men and women require to have formal roles. They should also be clear about what participation actually means in practical terms.

6.2. The Challenges to Participate in Community Development Activities

The purpose of this study is to identify the challenges to women's participation in community development activities. In the context of the women community and rural development in general challenges are often institutional or cultural. This study looks at the dynamics of female participation in all components of their lives. In particular we analyse their participation in community development activities relative to their role in the family and community activities.

6.2.1. Language

This study highlighted the significance of language for communication and exchange of ideas. Conversations with many other indigenous groups have to be translated. This is a challenge to women who often do not have a full understanding of Burmese. Many women do not have regular contact with outsiders or Burmese speakers. Also, villagers are yet to have their own written language. The transaction costs are much higher for communication between three people groups with two distinctive linguistic roots. Difficulties in expressing themselves and a lack of confidence may lead to misunderstandings, a lack of exchange of knowledge and ideas and different outcomes than when a common language is shared. The study also highlighted that formal leaders and

some Government staff speak Burmese and often translate for community meetings. This is not a very neutral approach as it enforces existing hierarchies and allows the leader to control information and people. To be a good facilitator and empower poor people it helps to understand language differences. It is difficult if the facilitator is someone from the Government or a Village Committee member. Furthermore, Burmese is the language of education. Clearly, the more girls that participate in education, the greater their understanding of Burmese which will help them participate in community development activities and wider society.

6.2.2. Cultural norms

According to the Center for Diversity and National Harmony (2018) expressed that in these village's culture and history, the ideal leader is a man. Also, only men can be shamans and ritual practitioners. This limits women's opportunities in leadership. People do not trust female leaders. Leaders also require public speaking skills which women do not have an opportunity to practice. They are further constrained by their limited knowledge of the Burmese language. This is an important challenge to improving women's participation in community development activities. In addition, the roles of women may become rigid because poor people have to work hard to survive and have little free time and resources.

6.2.3. Familiar Burdens

For women to participate in the community development activities, it might mean they cannot fulfill their duty at home or in the community because of their familiar's burdens. From the investigation, it is clear that women have the burden of child rearing and farming. The role of women as the provider and subordinate (second) makes it difficult for them to be the leader even if they are given a formal role. For example, when the husband is not able to attend the meetings, to which it is compulsory for a representative of the family to go, it increases women's burden for them to attend. It means extra work that they must try to fit in their full day. In meetings, women have a hard time made

worse when their young children cry. For this reason many women cannot recall what has been discussing in meetings.

6.2.4. Education

The results of the study showed that education and community development activities are seen as formal activities by both men and women. The respondents commented that education is part of preparation for men to be in formal activities either in the community development activities. For example, literate people, who normally are men, are selected to be VDC members. This presents a major challenge to the education and subsequent participation of girls in formal activities. For example, women have low education and poor language skill, both of which limit their participation in formal positions. Education is a bridge to enable people to participate as it is in any society.

6.2.5. Health

Health is one of the major barriers to participation. From the time women get married, pregnant and have children, their own health and that of their children is a major concern. Women who suffer from health issues depend more on their husbands, have less confidence. This investigation showed that women believe that they are weak and they look down on themselves and don't have anything to contribute to community development activities. When husbands are away from home they miss out on household affairs. Women's health problems prevent them attending the community development activities. This means they miss out on benefits from the activities, for example, health awareness training. The problem is aggravated with women's lack of control on financial matters. They do not have a formal role or assigned position to manage the family budget or its allocation for health. Neither are men the primary care takers so when allocating financial resources, health issues are not considered a priority for them. In Doe Li village particularly in poor households, health is more of a barrier because they are more isolated and have less access to health services.

Chapter Seven: Summary and Conclusion

This study explored rural women's participation in community development activities of Shan state Province in Myanmar. This chapter will describe research's keys finding, constraints and recommendations based on case studies in two villages. The research is done based on qualitative research methods including in-depth interviews and observations.

7.1. Summary of Main findings

The idea of participation is associated with the material terms. It is a challenge for development partners to achieve the goals and objectives of their projects. If staff and community do not have the same understanding of participation, particularly if the concept of participation does not exist in the culture of the communities concerned. To answer the question whether rural women experience challenges of participation in community development activities, the roles of women within the community were studied. Women have roles to play in community events. These roles are the same as they play in the household, including cooking, cleaning and caring. In community events such as the indigenous New Years, wedding ceremonies and building houses, women know their role and their place. Therefore, there is no problem concerning their participation. Women take up these roles in the household and community from childhood. They watch and learn from their mothers, women leaders and other community members. The roles of women in the community have implications for how women participate in community development activities. Women often continue their traditional roles of servings and cleaning which is different from the staff or organizations expectations of participating actively in decision making.

Women do experience challenges to participation in community development activities. The study identified many barriers that prevent women's participation. Language barriers are major challenges. Sometimes staff chooses to guess what the community members are saying or have conversations translated by the village headman. Women are more comfortable and prefer to speak in their own language. The study identified cultural norms which prevent women's participation. For example, women cannot go out at night and travel far from home. They have to take care of children. However, community activities constraints may require meetings to be held at night which are not appropriate for women to attend. Familiar burdens are major barrier that women face. Women are primarily responsible for household chores, caring for children and agriculture. Because no one shares in the housework or taking care of the children, there is not much time left for women to attend community development activities. Even when they attend they find it difficult to concentrate because they have children with them.

The study also found that low levels of education prevent women being involved in the Village Committee which has a key role in making decisions regarding community development activities. Members of the Village Committee must be literate. Many women cannot meet this requirement. Health issues of women and their children also prevent them from taking part in community development activities. Being sick prevents women from taking part in agricultural production and community development activities. This makes women lose confidence and not feel worthwhile compared to their husbands. The major barrier found in Doe Li village was social issues arising from resettlement. The resettlement area is far from the women's farms and they have to walk a long distance to access their agricultural land. As a result of that distance, they stay at their farms and are not available to attend the community development activities.

Poverty was found a barrier for women to participate in the community development activities. Because of poverty people have to work harder. They

do not have much time left to do other things. Also other practical participation is likely to be restricted due to the lack of financial resources, or knowledge and skill. Low self-esteem is another barrier found in the study. The women interviewed believe that they are not capable like their husbands. Their job is not as important as their husbands. The last challenge to women's participation is access to community development activities and control over assets. Legally women have a right to participate in community development activities and control over assets. In practice, women are considered as secondary and not the head of the household. It is not a priority for them to participate in any meetings or community development activities. Women access resources through their husband. In this situation women are not involved or given responsibilities apart from their household chores and farm work.

7.2. Constraints of this study

When doing this research personal interview with women and where collected some information at field level, due to many their husbands were not at home. So their views on women's participation were not captured. Finally language is a barrier to understand everything because there are many words that do not exist in the indigenous language such as participation in community development.

7.3. Recommendations

The recommendations below are for rural women participation in community development activities of Shan State province in Myanmar. These recommendations are based on the field study and literature reviewed.

- 1) Government and policy makers should be prioritize and ensure that incentive of rural women especially for remote areas indigenous group's women to participation in community development activities such as training with their local languages and should be provide more participation in community development training for remote areas:

- 2) Provide trainings on the importance of correct translation and facilitation. Include a training to discuss the community's definition/perspectives of participation as well as include both men and women for gender training:
- 3) Organize activities that build understanding among community groups and rebuild social capital to prevent additional burdens on vulnerable groups including women. Include both men and women in their gender training activities:
- 4) Increase the membership and leadership of indigenous women in the organization to represent the needs of indigenous women specifically. Encourage mothers and parents to change their perception about education among girls by supporting girls going to school.
- 5) Should continue to encourage trainees or graduate students to work in rural communities and provide them with experience in schools and development organizations.

7.4. Conclusion

Development began as a top-down approach but today has a more participatory focus. The theory and practice of participation has no definite definition. It is different in different contexts and may be classified in different types and levels. Challenges to participation are found in many different areas from institutions to social, cultural, technical and logistical challenges. Both men and women are participating in community development activities at different levels. Women participate more in household chores, health care and subsistence agriculture while men participate more on a political level, attending meetings, leading and making decisions. This study analyzed challenges, barriers and opportunities for Myanmar's poor women participation in community development activities. Analysis shows rural women participation in community development activities such as political, leadership and decision making levels challenges are still remaining in Myanmar.

Myanmar's rural women have less access to decision making, community participation, leadership, information technology as well as knowledge than men. They are also can be subject to gender stereotypes, in particular the belief that women lack the essential capacities to be effective leaders. Myanmar rural women's participation in politics and decision-making is indeed particularly low. Myanmar context and geography have always been a challenge for development of the country and people in rural and isolated areas. Myanmar is ethnically diverse and many groups live in rural areas. Especially, in Shan State area, they have many kinds of indigenous groups, cultures and languages and different kinds of living conditions, mostly among the people who are living in the rural areas and who are poor. In remote areas women, are lacked in political powers and had limited involvement in administration.

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Appendices I

Research Information Sheet

Date.....

Dear Respondent,

Thank you for making time to be part in an interview.

I am John ThanHtun, and I worked at Pekhon Township Department of rural Development under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation. My position is upper division clerk and I am undertaking research for a Master of Arts in Governance and Development Program (MAGD) at BRAC University in Bangladesh, Dhaka.

You are invited to participate as a subject in the research entitled: **Rural Women Participation in Community Development Activities of Shan State in Myanmar: Case study in Pekhon Township area**. The aim of this study is to explore rural women participation in community development activities by exploring following question and sub questions.

The research will gain understanding of if women experience challenges in participating in community development activities?

- a) What are the roles of rural women participation in community development activities?
- b) What are the challenges for rural women to participate in community development activities?
- c) How do rural women overcome barriers and challenges to participate in community development Activities?

You have selected to participate in the interview. However, you have choice to participate and not participate in the interview. The interview will use a tape recorder to record the interview so I can transcribe and use it in analysis later. I have prepared an outline guide for this semi-structured interview, but I am really interested in what you have to say. There is no right or wrong answers. Your answers will be very useful to this study. Your task is to feel free to answer and share your opinion about the topic questions. If you would like clarification at any time please let me know. If you are not happy or not comfortable to continue with the interview, then you have the right to withdraw. If you want to withdraw the data you have provided you can do so up to before I leave the village. You also have right to refuse to answer any question if you do not want to. Would you be willing to participate in this interview? If so I would like to ask permission to record the interview.

Yes ☐

No ☐

The researcher will be delighted if this request is approved and accepted.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours sincerely,

John ThanHtun

Appendix II: Guiding Questions

Research Questions:

1. What are the roles of rural women participation in community development activities?
2. What are the challenges for rural women to participate in community development activities?
3. How do rural women overcome barriers and challenges to participate in community development Activities?

Questions for **“What are the roles of rural women participation in community development activities?”**

- I. What roles do women play in the family and food security?(Economic, Social, Agriculture sector)
- II. What kind of activities do women do each day? (24 hours activities)
- III. What is the education level of women? (Basic, Grade, Graduated)
- IV. What roles do women have in the community? (Decisions making level)

- V. Do men share information about the meetings?
- VI. Do men consult with women when making decisions?
- VII. What really happen about decision making?
- VIII. To what extent do women make decision, on what and how?
- IX. What do women think about their daughter's education and the future of women in the community?
- X. Do you have any opinions for the roles of rural women participation in community?

Questions for **“What are the challenges for rural women to participate in community development activities?”**

- I. What kind of activities do women want to participate in? Why?
- II. What do women think about the activities / Are they helpful?
- III. In what kind of activities women do not want to be involved? Why?
- IV. How do women share information with other people? Inside versus outside in the household?
- V. What does community expect about women?
- VI. What do People in community think women should be?
- VII. Do you have any opinion for the challenges to participation in community?

Questions for **“Howdo rural women do overcome barriers and challenges to participate in community development Activities?”**

- I. What do women think that they should be participation?
- II. What do women think about themselves?
- III. What do women think that they can do or cannot be?
- IV. Do women have confident that they can do a good job like men in the community?
- V. Do women believe in themselves?
- VI. Do women trust men to do everything?
- VII. What do women think about men?

- VIII. How much women accepted that participation in community is really important for them?
- IX. Do you have any opinion for overcome barriers and challenges to Participation?

Guiding questions for men

- I. What do you understand by participation?
- II. What do you think about women's participation?
- III. Do you share information about the meeting?
- IV. Do you consult with women when making decision?
- V. How do you spend their time and describe how much time they spend time doing things?
- VI. What do you expect from women?
- VII. Do you have any opinion for women Participation in community activities?

Questions for Village headmen

- I. What do you think about women's participation?
- II. Have you given chances to women to participation in community development activities?
- III. How much you appreciate women's advices and contributions?
- IV. Are you satisfied when women participate in community development activities?
- V. Are you aware that women's participation in community is really important?
- VI. How much you belief that women can do like men in the community?
- VII. Do you have any opinion for women Participation in community activities?

(Thanks you so much for your participation in this research)