

**THE GENDERED IMPACTS OF CLIMATE
CHANGE IN RAKHINE STATE,
MYANMAR**

THEIN DOLLAR

MASTER OF ARTS

IN PUBLIC POLICY

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CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY

MAY 2024

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RAKHINE STATE, MYANMAER**

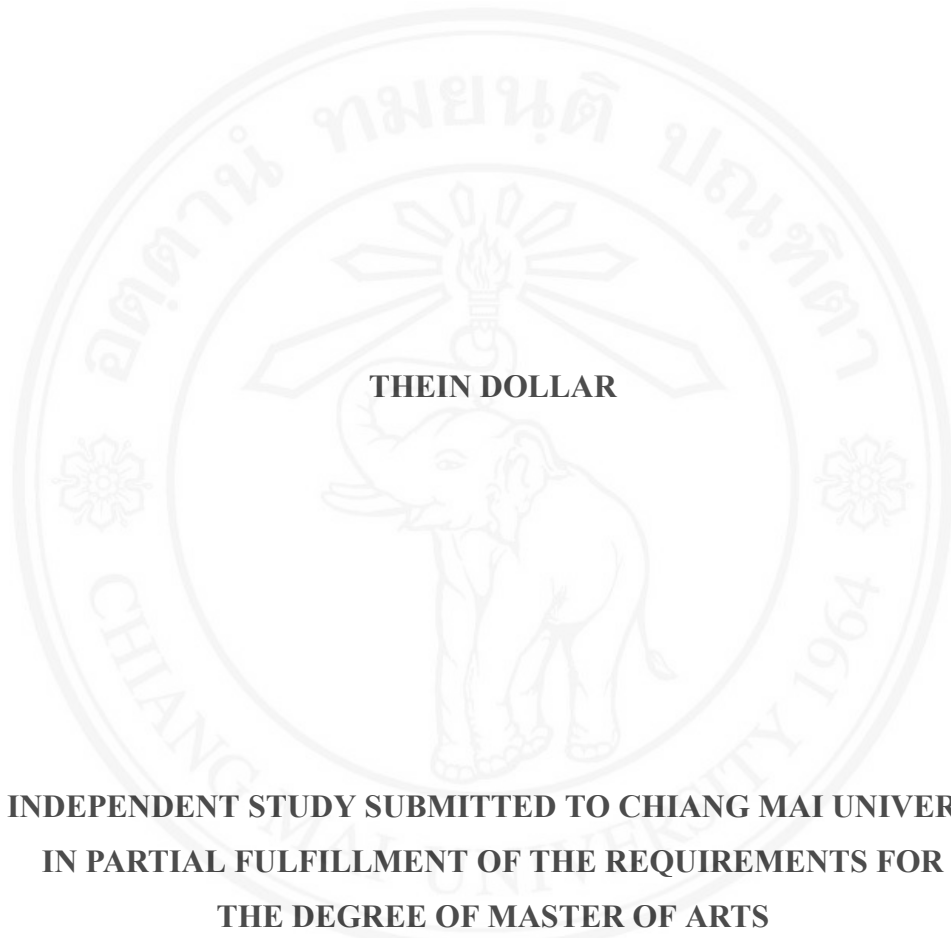


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RAKHINE STATE, MYANMAR**



THEIN DOLLAR

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED TO CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN PUBLIC POLICY**

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30 May 2024

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Thein Dollar

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หัวข้อการค้นคว้าอิสระ	ผลกระทบเชิงเพศภาวะของการเปลี่ยนแปลงสภาพภูมิอากาศในรัฐยะไข่, เมียนมา
ผู้เขียน	นาย เตน ดอลลาร์
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บทคัดย่อ

พื้นที่ด้านตะวันตกสุดของประเทศเมียนมาร์ หรือที่เรียกกันว่ารัฐยะไข่ กำลังเผชิญกับความยากลำบากมากมาย เช่น ภัยพิบัติซ้ำซาก ความขัดแย้งภายในอย่างต่อเนื่องและความไม่เท่าเทียมกันทางเศรษฐกิจและสังคมอย่างรุนแรง รัฐยะไข่ ซึ่งแบ่งออกเป็นภาคเหนือ ภาคกลาง และภาคใต้ ขึ้นชื่อเรื่องความขัดแย้งทางชาติพันธุ์และศาสนา สิ่งนี้ทำให้ความเปราะบางของรัฐต่อการเปลี่ยนแปลงสภาพภูมิอากาศแย่ลง. การระบาดของโรคโควิด-19 และการรัฐประหารในปี 2564 ทำให้อัตราความยากจนของภูมิภาคแย่ลงถึง 80% ทำให้พื้นที่ดังกล่าวใช้ประโยชน์จากทรัพยากรธรรมชาติที่อุดมสมบูรณ์ได้ยาก. ความเสื่อมโทรมของสิ่งแวดล้อม เช่น การหายไปของป่าชายเลน ส่งผลให้รัฐมีความเสี่ยงต่อเหตุการณ์ภัยพิบัติทางสภาพอากาศ เช่น น้ำท่วม พายุไซโคลน และระดับน้ำทะเลที่สูงขึ้น. เนื่องจากความไม่เท่าเทียมกันทางสังคมและความขัดแย้ง ผู้หญิงจึงกลายเป็นชายขอบไปแล้ว ผลกระทบที่เกี่ยวข้องกับสภาพภูมิอากาศเหล่านี้ได้รับผลกระทบอย่างไม่เป็นสัดส่วนและถูกแยกออกจากการตัดสินใจและการกำหนดนโยบาย บทความนี้จะตรวจสอบผลกระทบที่ซับซ้อนของการเปลี่ยนแปลงสภาพภูมิอากาศต่อรัฐยะไข่ โดยมุ่งเน้นไปที่ความเปราะบางทางเพศโดยเฉพาะ และเสนอแนวทางแก้ไขนโยบายเพื่อเสริมสร้างการมีส่วนร่วมของสตรีในกระบวนการและสูตรนโยบาย

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ABSTRACT

The westernmost part of Myanmar, known as Rakhine State, is confronted with a number of difficulties, such as recurrent disasters, continuous internal conflicts, and severe socioeconomic inequality. Rakhine State, which is split into the Northern, Central, and Southern parts, is known for its ethnic and religious conflicts, which worsen the state's susceptibility to climate change. The COVID-19 epidemic and the military coup in 2021 have made the region's 80% poverty rate even worse, making it difficult for the area to take advantage of its abundant natural resources. Degradation of the environment, such as the notable disappearance of mangrove forests, makes the state even more vulnerable to disastrous weather events including floods, cyclones, and sea level rise. Due to social marginalization and conflict, women are already marginalized; these climate-related effects disproportionately affect them and excluded from decision making and policy formulation. With an emphasis on gender-specific vulnerabilities, this paper examines the complex effects of climate change on Rakhine State and offers policy solutions to strengthen women's participation in policy making process and formulation.

Keywords: Climate Change, Women, Rakhine Sate, Policymaking, formulation

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CHAPTER 1

1.1. Introduction and Problem Statement

Climate change has been impacting Myanmar for the past six decades, such as increasing high temperatures, increasing rainfall in most areas, and the late onset and early termination of the south-west monsoon. Climate change makes the country vulnerable, directly having impacts on the communities that depend on natural resources such as agriculture, fishing, and forestry (CARE Denmark, 2023). The impacts of climate change contribute to the increase of displaced people in Myanmar. Due to severe floods and landslides, it forces many families and children to leave their homes, with no access or limited to healthcare, education, water and sanitation services. In Myanmar, the effect of Cyclone Mocha is estimated to have affected 3.4 million people in areas such as Rakhine, Chin and Kachin states and Sagaing and Magway regions. It is noticed that Disasters affect women and girls more than boys and men (Yilma, 2023).

Every year, devastating flooding and cyclones strike Myanmar. In Myanmar, Rakhine State is primarily impacted by natural disasters (Malteser International, 2016). One of the strongest storms of the previous year, Cyclone Mocha, made landfall close to Sittwe in Rakhine, on May 14, 2023. Rakhine State's population of about 5.4 million people was devastated, posing a humanitarian risk to up to 3.2 million vulnerable populations (ISP Myanmar, 2023).

Regarding the impacts of climate change, in Myanmar, women are more likely to suffer from it because they mostly lack access to fundamental human rights such as the ability to freely move and possess land (McCarthy, 2020). Moreover, according to the Myanmar Climate Change Alliance (MCCA), in Myanmar, women particularly possess a lower level of education and lower participation in formal employment. All of these factors are contributing to women's lack of access to take part in decision-making and their lack of opportunities for markets, capital, training, and technologies. According to the United Nations, these disparities and unequal access to resources make women and girls vulnerable at the intersection of conflict and the climate disaster.

As a result, the lack of women's access to resources and decision-making limits their ability to respond to the impacts of climate change (Beute, 2019). On the other hand, they become vulnerable to climate change as they mostly depend on agriculture, and agriculture will be mostly affected by climate change such as floods and landslides. Consequently, their livelihoods will be risky, which makes it a high burden for them to work to protect their families (OHCHR).

In Rakhine State, cyclones, droughts, and flooding are among the natural disasters that frequently cause a 20 percent loss in harvest. In light of this, the majority of the fifty percent of women in Rakhine work in agricultural fields such as rice growing and vegetable planting and sales. Because of the discrimination against women in Rakhine, women are frequently perceived as less capable workers than their male colleagues who are physically stronger. Aside from the effects of climate change, women and the roughly 23% of households managed by women in Rakhine state have been disproportionately impacted by poverty (International Rice Research Institute, 2021).

Because of existing roles, obligations, and disparities, women and men in Myanmar—including Rakhine State—are affected by climate change in various ways. Moreover, women and girls in particular experience the challenges in Rakhine State, since they have more barriers than men to achieving a reasonable level of living (UNDP, Myanmar). Therefore, women are excluded from decision-making processes when they are perceived as less capable or vulnerable workers. But women may also take the lead in adjusting to the effects of climate change, and if they are fully and effectively included in the decision-making process, they can be changing agents in any situation (The Myanmar Climate Change Alliance).

This policy report will emphasize the critical importance of women's participation in the formulation and implementation of climate policies, particularly given their historical exclusion from decision-making processes. The exclusion of women from these vital roles has led to the development of policies that often fail to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women, thereby perpetuating gender inequalities. The report will employ a mixed-methods approach to thoroughly explore the gendered impacts of climate change in Rakhine State, Myanmar. This approach will combine both qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide a comprehensive

understanding of the issue. The report will also examine the current status of women in Rakhine State in terms of their socio-economic conditions, access to education and healthcare, and participation in decision-making processes. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing targeted interventions that empower women and enhance their resilience to climate change. Ultimately, this report aims to provide policymakers with the knowledge and tools needed to create more inclusive and effective climate policies. By ensuring that women have a seat at the table in climate policy formulation and implementation, we can develop strategies that not only address the immediate impacts of climate change but also promote long-term gender equality and sustainable development in Rakhine State.

1.2. Research Objective

This research aims to highlight the importance of women participation in climate policies formulation, to understand the current status of climate change impacts and to identify challenges related to climate change faced by women due to gender inequality in Rakhine State, Myanmar. This study also contributes key policy recommendations for promoting solutions for gender inequality and climate change by discussing the gender problems caused by climate change that should be prioritized by the government in addressing or formulating policies. Through an analysis of the climate change impacts related to gender inequality in Rakhine, this research also intends to provide insights into how policymakers can develop institutions to be more effective and gender inclusive. By focusing on those key areas, this research seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of the importance of women's participation in climate change actions, with the suitable solution of promoting more equitable and sustainable development in Rakhine.

1.3. Research Question

Why is women participation in the formulation of climate change policies important in Rakhine State, Myanmar?

CHAPTER 2

2.1. Conceptual Framework

According to institutional theorists, "institutionalism" has an important influence on how well an organization's formal structure functions. Meyer and Rowan assert that frequently, in order for the organization to acquire or preserve legitimacy in the institutional setting, these "institutional myths" are only ceremoniously accepted. In the institutional setting, legitimacy contributes to the survival of the organization.

In terms of gender-based perspective under institutionalism, it would improve our understanding of how institutional change and the frequently related processes of institutional design can be made more gender friendly, a question that has long preoccupied feminist scholars and activists. Changing institutions is a key priority for anyone wanting to promote gender equality (Jenkins & Waylen, 2014). Moreover, one tool for bringing gender mainstreaming into practice is the gender impact assessment. It must therefore respond to a specific goal because it is merely a tool. In order to reach its full potential, it needs clear institutional support because it involves the investment of various resources, including gender experts, time, gender training and capacity-building, tools, data collecting, and monitoring procedures (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023).

According to the United Nations, climate change is referred to as long-term changes in temperature and weather patterns. The primary cause of climate change has been human activity, particularly the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas. In terms of climate change impacts, men and women are affected by climate change in various ways because of the disparities in their traditional roles, societal expectations, and means of livelihood (USAID). However, the most vulnerable and poor people are still disproportionately affected by the adverse impacts of climate change, particularly poor women (UNDP). However, despite current structural and societal constraints, women are powerful change agents who continue to make major contributions to sustainable development (UNDP).

Institutions in the context of climate change can include rules, regulations, standards, and groups that control climate activity. To connect institutionalism with a gender perspective under climate change, the report indicates that it requires conducting differential impacts of climate change on men and women differently, different access to resources like land, water, finance and technology, and participation of women in decision-making and climate governance. Institutions must incorporate gender consideration into their structures and processes. Analyzing the impacts of climate change in Rakhine state, Myanmar, the report highlights institutions to consider gender mainstreaming in climate policies, addressing the basic needs and vulnerabilities of both men and women and to adapt current institutions to be more gender-sensitive and inclusive.

2.2. Research Methods

This study applies a critical gendered lens to illustrate the intersection of gender issues and climate change. This research will focus on gender inequality issues related to climate change by analysing secondary data such as policy reports, published online articles and documents which identify concepts related to gender inequality and climate change such as impacts on gender, women’s roles and participation and policy responses and gaps in Rakhine State. This study will especially look into the Myanmar National climate change policy, analysing the institutions and gender perspectives. The report will also conduct the context of Rakhine States which examine socio-economic and environmental impacts and map out climate-related challenges and their gendered impacts. I will conduct online in-depth interviews with stakeholders who are representatives from NGOs working on social support related to climate change and women from local communities.

Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2
UNHCR Myanmar Staff	Rakhine Local Woman
Rakhine Region	Rakhine State
Age 30, Female	Age 27, Female

CHAPTER 3

3.1. Overview of Rakhine State

Rakhine State is the most western state in Myanmar, with a population of three million (UNICEF, 2019). Rakhine State can be basically divided into three regions: Northern Rakhine, Central Rakhine, and Southern Rakhine. Each region has unique circumstances and characteristics. There have been frequent natural disasters and inter community conflicts in Northern Rakhine State (nRS). In addition to other causes, ethnic and religious divisions have resulted in violent clashes that have destroyed infrastructure and resulted in the loss of life. Over the years, numerous households have been forced to relocate due to violent outbreaks, mudslides, floods, and storms (Kimiri, Hoffmann & Haneef, 2020).

Furthermore, Rakhine has one of the highest rates of poverty in Myanmar, with estimates of 80 percent. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the military takeover of Myanmar in February 2021, it has increased the poverty rates even more. Despite having one of the lowest economies, Rakhine State has some of the richest resources in the nation. Nonetheless, current initiatives seek to realize the potential of the area. For instance, Rakhine state lost more mangrove forest cover than any other state in Burma between 2000 and 2014, resulting in an estimated \$946.87 million loss in ecosystem value annually as a result of harm to habitat and fisheries (Long, 2021). In addition, despite Rakhine being a risk to the threats of climate disasters, it also has a history of social exclusion, conflicts between various ethnic, religious groups and military. The fighting between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar military has caused a significant displacement among ethnic Rakhine populations (UNDP).

Rakhine is geographically located on the coastline of Myanmar, which is primarily impacted by anticipated rises in sea level. Large coastal storms that transport flooding considerably further inland and affect many thousands of people in the region are also more likely to occur in Rakhine (MIMU, 2022). The monsoon season in Rakhine, which runs from June to October, causes extensive flooding and damages shelters.

Cyclone threats cause climate change, making extreme weather events to occur more frequently and intensely (Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance). Cyclone Mocha recently made landfall in the state of Rakhine on May 14, 2023, displacing hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people. Strong winds, a lot of rain, and water were brought by the cyclone, which not only severely damaged Rakhine State but also areas like Chin, Sagaing, Magway, and Kachin (OHCA, 2023).

In addition, Rakhine State is also experiencing marginalization and displacement of poor people and ethnic groups due to illegal logging, civil wars, and other encroachments that destroyed their homes and degraded the forest (RECOFTC, 2019). In terms of agriculture, Rakhine people are mostly dependent on crops, and 80 percent of them are traditional farmers. However, due to climate change, in most Rakhine townships, people are facing droughts and insufficient rain (BNI, 2022).

3.2. Climate Change Impacts in Rakhine State

Rakhine State is the area of Myanmar most vulnerable to natural calamities like floods and cyclones. Because of this, the locals, who primarily rely on bamboo huts for shelter, frequently face hardship or are unprepared for such occurrences and defenceless when they occur. The seriousness of this situation is rising due to the consequences of climate change (Malteser International). In addition, a significant portion of the population residing in the coastal areas of Rakhine State may lose their houses or possibly entire villages due to coastal flooding brought on by storms, tidal surges, and sea level rise (Slagle, 2014).

Climate change has negative impacts on Rakhine State's social economy, agriculture, and health. In terms of health effects, due to the risk of water pollution, water-borne illnesses, and transportation obstructions, it is extremely difficult and constrained to provide medical and health supplies during and after weather events such as flooding or cyclones. As a result, certain groups—like the Rohingya—have restricted access to resources and medical care (Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance). In terms of the effects on agriculture, the farmers struggle to cultivate on time because of the decreased rainfall. The absence of rainwater is causing crops to die when they are being cultivated. As a result, Rakhine State farmers are most

impacted by economic hardships as well (BNI, 2022). People in Rakhine have experienced poverty, hunger, and a general lack of economic opportunities as a result of those agricultural and economic challenges, which has forced locals to leave their town. Among them, women experience depression as a result of their financial situation and the fact that they work primarily in agriculture (IRRI, 2021).

According to an interview with a local woman in Rakhine State, she said that the weather has changed so differently from before. Nowadays, even in winter, we cannot feel the same as before, the weather becomes hotter. Business groups or people cut down the trees and destroy mangrove forests which protect the effects of storms for local people. Therefore, in the rainy season, even though we do not usually suffer from storms before, we are suffering a lot of impacts from storms now due to lack of mangrove forest and deforestation.

3.3. Gendered Impacts of Climate Change in Rakhine State

Women and girls in Rakhine State have to deal with the combined problems of COVID-19, ongoing conflict, and political and economic instability (Peard, 2023). Women and girls from various parts of Rakhine State experience disparities in participation, decision-making, domestic labor division, and employment and compensation (Kimir, Hoffmann & Haneef, 2020). Regarding climate change effects, minorities in Rakhine State are particularly vulnerable, with poor public services and a lack of resources and institutions, increasing the risks faced by women and girls (Kapoor, Alcayna, Boer, Gleason, Bhandari & Heinrich, 2021).

After tearing into Rakhine State, Cyclone Mocha left a path of devastation that millions of vulnerable people had to deal with. 3.1 million people were mostly at risk of being impacted by cyclones, producing factors such as inadequate housing, food insecurity, and, of course, insufficient ability to cope. Sanitation, clean water, and shelter are the most pressing necessities. Numerous evacuees crammed into cramped quarters increase the risk of infectious and waterborne illnesses. Consequently, there is a chance that gender-based violence against women and children will increase (Peard, 2023).

Just 2 out of 10 (18%) residents in Rakhine have access to water on-site. Women are primarily affected by water issues (Kimir, Hoffmann & Haneef, 2020). They are

mostly in charge of managing the water in a home and looking after kids and other adults. The issue of water scarcity will primarily impact women (Kapoor, Alcayna, Boer, Gleason, Bhandari & Heinrich, 2021). Since 80% of Rakhine families primarily rely on women for water collection, women bear the most of the consequences associated with not having access to on-site water and having to travel to obtain water for the home (Kimiri, Hoffmann & Haneef, 2020). Moreover, climate change produces gendered health inequities in displacement with regard to food and nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene, health, violence, and exploitation. At the stage of displacement in Rakhine State, women and girls face severe consequences of negative health outcomes such as mental health, depression, and other diseases due to pre-existing and emergent inequalities (Schuster, Wachter, Hussain & Gartin, 2024).

According to an interview with a woman who is working at UNHCR in Rakhine State, the state mostly suffers from storms as it is located near the Bay of Bengal. Rakhine State is the least developed region in Myanmar, and it is very difficult for transportation in terms of land and water during weather events. For women with poor families, they have to be worried about their security as they don't have enough financial resources to relocate like rich families and take responsibility for food and water. Even before they are not working in the family, they have to start working after storms. Insufficient financial sources make them insecure and worried.

An interview with a local woman from Rakhine State indicates that women in Rakhine have to live at home while men go abroad to work. They have to rely on mangrove forests and agriculture to run their own business for their family. However, due to climate change and man-made disasters, mangrove forests are gradually disappearing and being destroyed. As a result, women cannot get resources from the forest, and they have to be worried about their family's income. Finally, they also have to decide to go abroad to work, leaving their elderly family and children. In addition, in summer, we never faced water scarcity before when she was young. However, today, water scarcity is common in Rakhine State. And women have to travel to other places to get water. Sometimes, there are a few accidents, such as a boat accident on the way to get water, that kill them. This is the big impact of water scarcity. Moreover, due to not having access to clean water, they have to use muddy water for drinking and showering.

Consequently, they face unnecessary health impacts such as diarrhea and other skin-related diseases.



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CHAPTER 4

4.1. Analysing Myanmar Climate Change Strategy (2018-2030) under Institutionalism

In this section, I will analyze the Myanmar Climate Change Strategy (2018-2030), focusing on how institutions work, coordinate, formulate and implement the climate change plans. With a multi-sectoral approach, the Myanmar Climate Change Strategy (MCCS, 2018–2030) is a national policy document. This strategy's ultimate objective is to promote equitable and sustainable development and that Myanmar has adopted a low-carbon growth route and become climate resilient by 2030. Six social, infrastructure, and economic sectors were determined to be priorities (FAO, 2019):

1. Climate-smart agriculture, fisheries and livestock for food security,
2. Sustainable management of natural resources for healthy ecosystem,
3. Resilient and low-carbon energy, transport and industrial systems for sustainable growth,
4. Resilient, inclusive and sustainable cities and towns where people can live and thrive,
5. Climate risk management for people's health and wellbeing, and
6. Education, science and technology for a resilient society Myanmar Climate Change Strategy (2018–2030).

The Technical Working Group of the Myanmar Climate Change Alliance Programme (MCCA) coordinated and discussed climate change across ministries, cities, civil society, the private sector, the university, and the development partners in order to formulate the with the assistance of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC). Furthermore, in terms of international collaboration, MONREC was assisted by the European Union, UN-Habitat and UN

Environment, and the expertise of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

The specific policies that will help its ambition of becoming a low-carbon and climate resilient society by 2030 includes as follow:

(a) Climate-resilient productivity and climate-smart responses in the agriculture, fisheries and livestock sectors to support food security and livelihood strategies while also promoting resource-efficient and low-carbon practices.

(b) Natural resource management that enhances the resilience of biodiversity and ecosystem services that support social and economic development and deliver carbon sequestration.

(c) Climate-resilient and low-carbon energy, transport and industrial systems that support inclusive and sustainable development and economic growth.

(d) All township and city dwellers, including the most vulnerable, are safe from increased risks of rapid- and slow-onset natural disasters and live in sustainable, inclusive, low-carbon, climate-resilient towns.

(e) Communities and economic sectors are able to respond to and recover from climate-induced disasters, risks and health impacts and build a healthy society, and

(f) Strengthened education, awareness and technological systems that foster a climate-responsive society and human capital to design and implement climate-resilient and low-carbon development solutions for inclusive and sustainable development.

In terms of formulating and making decisions, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of Myanmar's parliamentary republic are in charge of making decisions. MCCS (2018–2030) states that when it comes to inclusive decision-making, Myanmar is transitioning to political democratization and decentralization. As part of this process, the country's governance system is being reorganized, with authority being assigned to regions and states for the following roles and responsibilities:

- A. Enacting laws pertaining to certain sectors
- B. Making laws
- C. Submitting the Regions and States Budget Bill, based on the annual Union Budget
- D. Collecting taxes and revenues

- E. Spending the regional and state fund
- F. Managing, guiding, supervising and inspecting local government activities
- G. Supervising, inspecting and coordinating civil service organisations
- H. Forming civil service organisations to support regional and state governance objectives and appoint their personnel.

In terms of gender consideration, MCCS (2028-2030) states that Women can take the lead in addressing the effects of climate change by, for instance, starting small-scale businesses and entrepreneurship. By maximizing energy efficiency, utilizing low-footprint energy sources and practices, and influencing a household's usage of ecosystem services, they can significantly contribute to the mitigation of climate change. Understanding these various talents, demands, and vulnerabilities is essential for efficient environmental management and protection in the face of climate change. Women should be consulted during the national implementation of climate change planning, and through best practices, they should be identified as program beneficiaries. This can involve setting aside a certain percentage of women's seats on local committees dealing with climate change, holding women-only consultation sessions, and offering secure transportation and childcare so that women can attend meetings.

4.2. Challenges: Faced by Rakhine People due to Climate Changes

In Myanmar, the political and security context may make the effects of increasingly severe and frequent extreme weather worse. Myanmar has experienced unusual levels of violence since the military regime took over on February 1, 2021, undoing the country's recent improvements in climate adaptation (Kim, 2022). The ongoing military makes Myanmar Climate Change Strategy (2018–2030) more difficult to mitigate the effects of climate change, which is why government climate programs are being postponed or suspended (Lo & Hoy, 2023).

In Rakhine State, humanitarian organizations will most likely be denied entry to the areas devastated by Cyclone Mocha by the military authorities, leaving Rakhine people access to basic services (Kim, 2022). In addition, when it comes to climate events, Rakhine State residents have extremely restricted access to essential services like shelter and healthcare due to mobility restrictions and displacement resulting from fighting

between the military and the Arakan Army (UNDP). Therefore, this could have negative impacts on both women and men in terms of shelter and health sectors related to climate change.

According to interviews, the lack of climate change knowledge could be a challenge as most people do not have enough climate change knowledge. Therefore, they cut down the trees and destroy mangrove forests and build houses for them. Due to economic difficulties, deforestation has increased and people in Rakhine State cut down the trees and replaced other plantations which could increase temperature. Moreover, a lack of government support and willingness to support is also a problem in facing climate change impacts. Like other countries, the government does not support social services such as food, finance or shelter after the Cyclone Mocha in Rakhine State. Therefore, Rakhine people suffered from insufficient access to food and shelter. In addition, financial and economic instabilities make both men and women suffer from climate change impacts as they do not have enough financial resources to relocate. Besides, when they have to walk, it could be tiring for old women and women with children. And they will find it difficult to travel safely due to the widespread use of landmines in some conflict-affecting areas in Rakhine State.

Furthermore, regarding decision-making in climate change actions, traditional beliefs and cultural norms could be barriers for women participation in decision making. In Rakhine, most people think that women have to take care of families and do chores. Women are mostly marginalized from decision-making.

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CHAPTER 5

5.1. The Importance of Women's Participation in Formulating Climate Change Policies

In local, national, and international policymaking, female leadership is essential (Boyd, 2021). It's also crucial to keep in mind that, in addition to being more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, women may also effectively serve as change agents when it comes to adaptation and mitigation, policy formulation. When it comes to disaster relief, adaptation, and climate change prevention, women frequently possess a wealth of knowledge and experience. Moreover, women are in a good position to contribute to livelihood strategies that are adjusted to the ever-changing environmental realities because of their roles as guardians of household and natural resources in families and communities (UN Women Watch). Additionally, women also frequently serve as leaders in disaster risk reduction, first responders in community responses to natural disasters, and post-recovery contributors by tending to their families' immediate recovery needs and fostering community development. Women's participation in disaster response and community planning, policy forming can help us create stronger, more resilient communities that are better prepared to handle the effects of climate change (United Nations Climate Change, 2023).

Women can be crucial to the implementation of low-carbon and climate-resilient development approaches as decision-makers, entrepreneurs, facilitators, designers, innovators, producers, workers, consumers, and home managers (Huerta, 2022). The study shows that the participation of women in politics results in significant changes in national and international policies, such as increased funding for health and education, more laws and expenditures related to women's empowerment, and larger foreign aid disbursements. Decreasing gender disparity can help cut emissions because of the roles that women frequently take on. For instance, if women have equal access to education and other resources, they can improve the effectiveness of their farming methods, which in turn lowers the demand for additional arable land and, thus, lessens the amount of deforestation (Westerling, 2023). Moreover, results like higher rates of economic growth

and higher-quality institutions have been linked to female legislators (Mavisakalyan & Tarverdi, 2019).

People's input is necessary for a policy to be designated inclusive and responsive, especially for those who stand to gain the most from its implementation or lack. When it comes to drafting policy, women can be very influential (Pearce, 2020). In Rakhine State, as women are affected by climate change impacts, they could play a crucial role in implementing climate change policies. These shall include (Pearce, 2020):

- Offering distinct perspectives and experiences that could influence policy in a more comprehensive manner,
- Emphasizing the acknowledgement of social diversity in diverse policy concerns raised,
- Help advance the social justice, equity, and equitable principles that influence policy and
- Bring attention to issues that affect women specifically that other parties might miss.

In addition, advancing women's political leadership and voice can accelerate the realization of all the sustainable development objectives and advance gender equality and women's empowerment. There is proof that a nation's overall level of public sector effectiveness and accountability rises when there are more women involved in both public and private decision-making (Asuako, 2020). In South Africa and Rwanda, for example, women were the ones who brought societal issues like rape, inheritance, and property rights to the public's notice. This led to the adoption of policies that acknowledge women's rights as human rights and provide victims of abuse with social safety and empowerment (Pearce, 2020). Therefore, as a result, in terms of formulating climate change policies, women's participation can boost the improvement and effectiveness of ground-level climate change initiatives in Rakhine State by sharing their perspectives.

If women's involvement in politics or policy formulation process has a significant impact on policy, especially on how women's wants and preferences are addressed (Hessami and Baskaran, 2020). In addition to having the right to take part in decisions

that impact everyone's life, women also possess unique knowledge about biodiversity and are invaluable experts (UNDP, 2023). Women just make the decision to put engagement first. They seek out conversation, agreement, and new ideas. They base their discussions on their concerns and where people are at in life. They recognize that climate change is about our individual and collective relationship with the planet that we all share and rely on (Salbi, 2023). In Rakhine state, women take care of their families and children, and they know what they need and want. And this might have a direct influence on policy making within their state when women take part in policy formulation. Then it stands to reason that states with higher percentages of female council members will expand climate change or health care programs more quickly. Furthermore, as stated in the UN Gender Action Plan, women must be involved in the planning and implementation of all strategies for mitigating and adapting to climate change if sustainable development is to be realized. In order to achieve this, women's economic empowerment must also be a primary focus of climate policy and action (Ssemuwemba, Mudliar and Donelan, 2023). In Rakhine State, people rely on mangrove forests for income which has negative impact on climate changes. In addition, women play an important role in agriculture and higher agricultural yields for rural women enable them to give their family improved nutrition and financial security (Breland, 2020). By providing them access to sustainable agricultural practices and resources, it can help improve productions. This also help promote women as influencers of change with excellent perspectives and expertise in mitigation and adaptation policies to climate change (Mungai, 2023). Therefore, by considering women in policy making and supporting them to form cooperatives, it could improve their own business or product and connect them to markets, shape the project that improve the women's incomes to reduce cutting down or preserving mangrove forests. This shows that women become a primary focus of formulating effective policies.

Even though the Myanmar Climate Change Strategies recommend gender consideration in the policy document at national level. Progressively, the issue of gender inequality and injustice still need to be addressed and that is not enough. The following factors collectively keep hindering and narrow the scope of policies for women's autonomy and gender equality: i) the persistence of poverty and socioeconomic

inequality; ii) violent and discriminatory patriarchal cultural patterns and the predominance of the culture of privilege; iii) the unequal social organization of care and the division of labor between sexes; and iv) the concentration of power and hierarchical relations in public spaces (NGO CSW). In Rakhine, according to interview, women have faced these similar factors. Therefore, not just the participation in politics, but also all methods of design, implementation, and follow-up and plans / programs related to them, must acknowledge and ensure the use of gender parity tools. Ensuring their involvement, leadership, and organizations' engagement in the bodies that formulate and determine policies, including financial plans, for disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation at the local, state, and federal levels is important. Without women's participation, climate action will not be able to address the current climate disaster and will instead lead to more significant problems down the road. Therefore, governments must move quickly to address the risks faced by the most vulnerable majority, which is women, and to acknowledge the women's participation and the economic and social effects of climate change (Mungai, 2023). And the lack of access to policymaking and political office for women results in their exclusion from the workforce and from decisions pertaining to sustainability (Breland, 2020).

Eventually, when it comes to making decisions that benefit the world and its future generations, women are especially inclined to do so. Due to societal norms and gendered socialization, women voters and politicians—especially in high-income countries—are usually reported to be more concerned about climate change and environmental issues. Furthermore, women tend to be less corrupt and have more democratic leadership styles than men, which is probably due to socialization (Westerling, 2023). Currently, in Rakhine State, with the ongoing instability, there has been an increase in illegal logging. Overexploitation was causing Rakhine State's forest resources to decline, and the current political unrest was making matters worse and raising the possibility of environmental destruction (BNI, 2021). Therefore, as women have less corrupt than men, it can probably protect from illegal logging and preservation the forests when they take part in policy formulation. In addition, Research from local policy initiatives to national legislatures continuously show that the involvement of women enhances climate action. Numerous studies have also demonstrated a substantial

relationship between indices of gender equality and assessments of environmental and climatic performance (Westerling, 2023). It's also important to note that the research also states that women in government positions are more likely than men to sign international treaties to prevent global warming, based on a study of 130 countries (Boyd, 2021).

5.2. Policy Recommendations: Moving Forward

Rakhine had one of the highest rates of poverty in all of Myanmar. In addition, Rakhine State has a history of social marginalization, conflict between various ethnic groups and the military, and climate change disasters. Women have been excluded from decision making processes and policy formulations. Based on finding and results, I would like to recommend policy suggestions for Rakhine State as follow:

- Laws that ensure women's equal rights and opportunities in policy-making processes must be put into place and upheld in order to encourage women's active engagement in the development of climate change policies at both national and regional level. Legal safeguards establish a fundamental structure that guarantees that female perspectives are acknowledged and valued. Through the implementation of strong legal measures, gender equality can be institutionalized, thereby removing structural obstacles and facilitating women's effective participation in policy development. In addition to recognizing the value of women's participation, these legislative frameworks give them the protection and assistance they need to participate meaningfully and with confidence in decision-making processes.
- In order to enable gender-responsive policy results concerning climate change, it is essential to establish inclusive governance frameworks that require the inclusion of women in decision-making entities. Making sure women are represented at important organizations can have a big impact on how policies are formulated to address the particular issues and viewpoints that women face. In addition to encouraging diversity, inclusive governance brings a wider range of perspectives and experiences to the decision-making process, resulting in more thorough and successful climate policy. We can make sure that efforts to address

climate change are equitable and take account of the demands of all societal members by institutionalizing women's representation.

- Building women's capacity to successfully engage in policy formulation requires providing them with focused training and educational opportunities. Giving women the tools they need to succeed improves their self-esteem and makes it easier for them to make significant contributions to policy discussions. These programs can address a variety of topics, such as negotiation methods, technical knowledge of climate issues, and leadership development, making sure that women are prepared to participate in and have an impact on decision-making processes. We can establish a more proficient and inclusive policy-making atmosphere that gains from a diversity of viewpoints and knowledge by supporting women's education and training.
- It is essential to provide safe spaces where women may freely express their opinions and work together on climate change projects, especially in areas afflicted by discrimination and conflict. Safe spaces are crucial for encouraging candid conversation because they provide women the confidence to express their opinions and thoughts without worrying about discrimination or retaliation. By ensuring that women's opinions are heard and respected during policy talks, these settings assist in lowering the dangers related to women's participation. Women may be empowered to actively participate in climate action and contribute to more inclusive and effective solutions by building safe and supportive venues.
- An effective and inclusive climate action requires supporting community-based programs that actively include women in projects aimed at mitigating and adapting to climate change. Participation at the grassroots level guarantees that policies are based on the experiences of people most impacted by climate change and amplifies the voices of women. Women's local knowledge and experiences can be tapped into when we involve them at the community level, resulting in deeper and long-lasting solutions. By ensuring that climate policies are influenced by the lived experiences of various community members, this strategy not only empowers women but also improves the overall resilience and effectiveness of climate initiatives.

- Gender analysis must be incorporated into climate policy creation at every level in order to address the unique demands and vulnerabilities of women. Policies can be made more effective and inclusive by making sure that gender views are taken into account at every level of the planning process, from implementation to evaluation. Policies that take gender equality into consideration lessen the disproportionate effects of climate change on women and encourage the development of equitable resilience. This strategy not only makes sure that the special experiences and difficulties faced by women are acknowledged and taken into consideration, but it also helps create more equitable and comprehensive climate solutions that benefit the whole community.
- Funding and resources must be allocated expressly for programs that encourage women to participate in the formulation of climate policy. Support from the financial community is essential to keeping women involved and empowering them to take meaningful climate action. Funding for women-focused projects can guarantee fair access to leadership, education, and training opportunities that enable women to participate productively in talks about climate policy. In addition to enhancing women's ability to tackle climate issues, this investment promotes more resilient and inclusive policy results that benefit entire communities.
- Lastly, to make sure that climate policies continue to be responsive to the evolving needs of women, it is important that monitoring and evaluation systems be established in order to evaluate the gender consequences of these policies. Ongoing assessment makes it possible to spot weaknesses and obstacles, allowing for prompt strategy modifications when necessary. We can make sure that climate policies are inclusive and flexible, increasing their impact over time, by methodically evaluating their efficacy from a gender perspective. This strategy creates a flexible policy framework that is more suited to handle the particular difficulties that women encounter in the context of climate change.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The complex connection between natural catastrophes, sociopolitical instability, and economic suffering in Rakhine State highlights the critical need for comprehensive and inclusive climate change measures. Targeted measures are necessary due to the state's high vulnerability to extreme weather events, extreme poverty, and social marginalization, especially of women and ethnic minorities. Policies must incorporate conflict-sensitive approaches to ensure that climate adaptation and mitigation efforts do not exacerbate existing tensions. Gender-responsive initiatives play a critical role in empowering women, as they are essential in fostering community resilience. Addressing both the short-term effects of climate change and the long-term socio-economic stability requires promoting women participation, peacebuilding activities, strengthening local governance, and offering financial and legal help to women. Climate change and violence are interrelated concerns that Rakhine State may better overcome by emphasizing inclusive and sustainable development in both national and regional policymaking process.

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