



Research Summary

Raising the Curtain

Ideas, expectations, and rules based on gender play a major role in governing men and women's behaviour and opportunities. However, in Myanmar, gender inequality has not historically been acknowledged as an issue of concern. [Raising the Curtain: Cultural Norms, Social Practices, and Gender Equality in Myanmar](#), illustrates how social and cultural norms carry ideas about different roles and worth for men and women that impact their ability to live full and productive lives. The report examines historical narratives and contemporary cultural and religious views of women in Myanmar, and describes in detail stereotypes and perceptions of women across various sectors. The study is based on data gathered from 543 women and men in seven States and four Regions of Myanmar between September 2013 and May 2014.

This research summary highlights some of the key findings from the full report. Other special interest briefs in the series include, education, sport, health, the media, policy, and the economy. The Full Report and Briefing Papers are available from www.raisethecurtain.org.



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Raising the Curtain

Cultural Norms, Social Practices and
Gender Equality in Myanmar

RESEARCH SUMMARY

refer to the full report for complete details



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In its efforts to support the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013 - 2022 (NSPAW), GEN is conscious of the fact that legislative and policy measures to enhance women's status often fail because they are not sufficiently anchored in popular conceptions of what women should or can do. By generating an up to date mapping of the diverse social and cultural norms that exist in Myanmar at a time of rapid political and economic transition, it is hoped the study findings will help give stakeholders a better understanding of the context in which the NSPAW is set to be implemented.





Background

There is growing recognition of the power and reach of social practices and cultural norms in shaping the lives of individual men and women all over the world. Cultural and social practices, including gender roles and beliefs about a person's abilities and capacities - are increasingly seen as having a major impact upon a person's opportunities and actions, along with the conditions in their community and country.

In Myanmar, there is growing attention toward gender inequality and the role it plays in impeding national development and attaining human rights. The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has acceded to the Convention of Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). Through the development of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) 2013 – 2022, the Government has signalled its renewed commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of women in Myanmar.

Civil society networks of women's and gender organizations, formed over the past several years, are also increasingly directing their efforts to programming and advocacy for women's rights and gender equality. Sexuality, men's violence against women, women's participation in decision-making in public and political life, including in peace-processes, are issues gaining attention. Media liberalization has also led to increasing public discussion on cultural norms and social practices, and their relationship with women's status and gender equality.

This is historically contested territory. A long standing discourse of (Burmese) women's 'traditional' high status exists. This contrasts with observations throughout history, that critical turning points for the country have largely bypassed women's needs.

This paper presents a summary of the findings from a qualitative study of social and cultural norms and their links to gender equality and inequality in Myanmar, carried out from November 2013 - January 2014 in 11 states and regions of Myanmar. The study involved 543 study participants through focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and media analysis. The study was conceived and coordinated by the Gender Equality Network (GEN), an active inter-agency network, comprising over 100 national and international non-government organisations, civil society organisations and networks, and technical resource persons.

This study places particular emphasis on a number of areas of the NSPAW, including education, health, the media, work and livelihoods. The research maps how existing social and cultural norms influence the attainment of gender equality and women's rights in the study sites. It also explores norm evolution and change, how norms are reproduced and socialized, and what happens when people move beyond the boundaries of the accepted. The full report also presents recommendations for action based on the study findings.

The Problem is that the Problem is not Seen as a Problem

The study found that gender relations are deeply embedded within a cultural or religious 'coat' which has made it difficult to put gender inequality onto the public agenda. Deeply held views passed on over generations also mean that hierarchical gender relations have become internalized among both men and women, making them not only hard to see, but also very hard to question. The result, according to women's rights activists, has been that gender inequality claims are often brushed aside, denied or belittled.



We, both women and men, hold equal opportunities and chances since we were born, as we all are, human beings. Most women think that these opportunities and favours are given by men. No, these are our own opportunities and chances to live equally and there is no need to thank men for what they are not doing.

Focus Group Discussion with Muslim women,
aged 18-25, Mingalataun Nyunt Township





Whenever we talk about gender inequality, people say that we have no problem with gender issues. In my opinion, the problem is there because people are not seeing the problem as a problem ... even if people are seeing inequality between women and men within society, they usually use culture and religion as excuses 'It is not inequality ... this is our religious practice or this is our social practice.'

Key Informant Interview with senior women leader 1



The notion that Myanmar culture stands as a guarantor for gender equality is a stance that is still reproduced today. Recent scholarship on the reproduction of the historical notion of women's 'high status' has showed how elite women are amongst the strongest proponents of the view that women do not need to be empowered.

In addition, gender equality continues to be viewed as a marginal area in the ongoing democratization and development processes, and reliable sex disaggregated data and information on a sufficient scale is lacking. As a result, many of the internationally used gender equality indicators remain unknown for Myanmar. An additional area of confusion is whether gender equality should be understood in a purely legal sense (*de jure*) or if equality of outcome (*de facto*) should also be counted, as CEDAW stipulates.

Study participants expressed worries about cultural globalization, and fear the loss of traditional values. Women, who are largely regarded as bearers of culture are particularly scrutinized and criticised when 'failing' to conform to traditional norms. Together, this scenario continues to create barriers for women's rights advocates.

Cultural and Religious Norms and Practices

Myanmar is a multicultural society with extensive cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. While population figures are subject to dispute, some two thirds of the population are assumed to be Bamar Buddhists. Study participants consider religion, principally Buddhism, to yield strong influence over gender relations. The roots of constructing a Burmese Buddhist national culture run deep, and is found for example in the media's post-independence campaigns to 'resurrect' the country's 'lost' culture, and in current official texts, the need for preserving culture and traditions is often highlighted. Considering the strength of the gender equality discourse within the Burmese historical narrative, there appeared to be a tendency to place practices of gender inequality among minority ethnic groups alone.

There is also widespread belief across the country and among different religious and ethnic groups that differential treatment of men and women originate in religious texts and is therefore justified. However gender equality advocates highlighted the cultural construction of religious practice including those that discriminate against women.

Hpon, Respect, and Male Superiority vs Purity, Female Inferiority and Exclusion

The belief that women are unable to gain merit the way men can - by becoming monks - which can eventually lead to spiritual enlightenment, is at the root of the perception of men's and women's differential status. For a woman, the first step on the path to enlightenment would be to be reborn as a man in her next life. Fundamental to the idea of male superiority is the concept of Hpon. Hpon is assumed to be a natural and abstract quality that gives higher authority and status to men, and in Theravada Buddhist societies like Myanmar's, this determines that women are inferior to men in religious status. This is then reinforced and reflected in society and cultural practices.

Beliefs associated with hpon, entail that 'parts of the body of socially inferior people should never be above the correlative parts of their superiors'. This has profound impact on the organization of everyday life as it influences how men and women walk, sleep, sit, wash and work. Sayings such as 'Treat your son as a lord and your husband as a god' commonly referred to among study participants are indicative of how cultural norms elevate men. Linked to the concept of hpon are also long-standing assumptions, about men's innate leadership and decision-making authority, which prevent women from holding positions of authority in religious, social and political institutions.

Buddhist nuns are subject to many of the same restrictions that lay-women are. Contrary to monks who are honoured for their celibacy, Buddhist nuns, Thilashin, cannot escape the reproductive norms of femininity. In addition, their opportunities for education and their economic situation are affected

and conditioned by their lower status in the religious order.

Across the study sites, the justification of women's lower status from a cultural and religious perspective has to do with dichotomies that connect women to nature, the body and the worldly sphere - whereas men are positioned as their opposites, connected to culture, the intellect and the spiritual sphere. Ideas about women's bodily functions, including menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth, are used to justify separation of spheres and the lower status of women.

Modesty, Male Sexuality and the Importance of Women's Dress

Cultural norms that prescribe decency, modesty and chastity (eindrāy) for women are amongst those that are most strongly expressed by study participants. A woman's virtue is gauged in no small part based on her ability to live up to these norms. In practice conforming to these norms would mean practicing sexual abstinence and refraining from co-habitation unless one is married. Moreover, modest behaviour is supposedly manifested through one's dress.

The idea of the male gaze as a judge of a woman's appearance and worth was a common theme in discussions with study participants, as was the norm that women's dress code should reflect their marital status. Male sexuality is key in this regard, and is understood as insatiable and uncontrollable. There is a clear conflict between norms that glorify men's sexual prowess as opposed to those that value chastity for women. Women are also expected to regulate their dress and appearance in order to protect themselves from sexual harassment and abuse.

For men, the labelling of certain dress codes as feminine or 'gay' reveals how the norm of masculinity is built on the idea of heterosexuality. Among Buddhist study participants being born gay is regarded as a 'punishment' for sins committed in a previous life.





Controlling the Self, Enduring Hardship and Sacrificing

The institution of marriage in Myanmar is much honoured and heralded as an important and stable foundation through which people are to organize their lives. While cultural norms proscribe life-long marriages, there are different expectations of how men and women handle difficulties and frustrations within marriage, and life in general. Men are often expected to find outlets for whatever frustration they may have in daily life by turning to alcohol, engaging in extra-marital sex or even through the use of violence. Women on the other hand are expected to silently endure hardship and present a brave front to the outside world. Choosing not to marry draws societal condemnation in many instances. Unmarried women were described as fussy, angry and mean.

Transgression of Norms

People who break with social norms experience strong sanctions from society. The most commonly discussed instances of norm breaking have to do with what are seen as deviations in a woman's relationship to a man, which is supposed to be regulated through lifelong marriage.

Among women, the choice not to marry had both positive and negative connotations. On the one hand the high value placed on virginity, means that women who are virgins are in a spiritual sense considered 'purer' than married women. The wish for maintaining this purity was among the reasons given by women for not marrying. Other reasons for choosing a single life included: having an income of one's own and therefore not marrying for economic security; wishing to remain at home or working in order to look after one's parents; and having observed other people's violent marriages and fearing ending up in an abusive relationship.

Divorce was condemned from every religious and cultural standpoint. Study participants had strong negative feelings about divorce, even though they spoke of increasing divorce rates in their communities. However, increasingly, men's violence against women, were beginning to be seen as a legitimate cause for divorce.

In all of the study communities, widows were singled out as a particularly vulnerable group, subject to pity, ridicule and harassment, indeed often blamed for their situation. To a large extent this vulnerability is linked to the norms of appropriate behaviour for a woman whose husband dies, norms she may no longer be able to live up to. Her social status diminishes, as does her economic status in many cases. Adding to this, widows are reportedly regarded as shameful and their bodily integrity is endangered. Many of the sexuality related norms, such as the value of chastity and modesty, re-appear in widowhood. Widows are not supposed to have a sex life or to be seen to want to remarry. Their dress, appearance and actions are placed under close community scrutiny, and the degree to which they can look to their fellow community members for support are highly conditioned on their ability to live up to these modesty-related norms.

Men - More Valuable than Women?

The preference of sons over daughters was evident in the accounts of study participants from a number of ethnic and religious backgrounds. In Mon state, being able to bear a son to send to the monastery was mentioned as an important reason for women to marry. In explicitly patriarchal and patrilineal cultural traditions among Kachin and Chin populations, the preference for having sons rather than daughters was apparent. Such preference could be seen for example in descriptions of rituals to celebrate child birth. There was a reported risk of unequal opportunities for girls in the family as they are regarded as belonging to the family of a future husband.



They say “Once you have built a pagoda, let any crow or vulture rest on it”. It implies that once a woman has got married to a man, no matter how bad or good he may be, all she has to do is to endure her husband’s action and behaviour.

Key Informant Interview with Mon women leader



Among Hindu and Muslim respondents, son preference was clearly expressed and linked to the idea of male spiritual superiority. As men have traditionally been given more value and freedom, they can be regarded as more useful to the family, hence they are preferred. And conversely, the exclusion and restrictions that women face based on modesty norms that restrict mobility make girls less desirable.

Bride price is reportedly practiced in, for example, Kachin, Chin and Shan communities, where women follow men into their family households and men pay bride-price to the wife's parents. Male elders play mediating roles between families where there are disagreements and discord. Their function would typically be to mediate in cases where a woman had fled the house of her husband and in-laws due to domestic violence. The social practices that allow men to bargain and negotiate with other men, over the heads of their wives, point to the inequitable treatment of women.

From Kayah State, there were reports of traditional compensation practices whereby survivors of gender-based violence and rape are socially pressured into accepting offerings to the community on their behalf as a ritual cleansing practice referred to as 'cleansing the village'. The practice of killing pigs and hens and distributing the meat to community members, rather than officially reporting the case to the police, was reportedly believed to spare the community from losing its dignity.

Unequal inheritance patterns for men and women were discussed by study participants from Kachin and Chin States. In Chin State, inheritance was reported to be among the most pressing issues of culturally-based gender discrimination. While there was some indication of practices beginning to change towards greater equality, it appeared that there is a long way to go before women are able to inherit from their parents. Women's unequal opportunities to inherit have both material and immaterial consequences. The economic effects of these practices were reported to influence decision-making around marriage and child bearing. Similarly a woman's economic status as a divorcee and a widow are influenced by their lesser opportunities for inheritance. Several participants spoke of women having conditional access to family property, but that they would never be in control of fixed or productive assets.

Socialization of Gender Norms

The norms around what is seen as appropriate behaviour for girls and boys, and women and men, are taught and reinforced by the surrounding society. There are many important agents of socializing gender norms, including the family, the education system, authorities, social services, the healthcare system, literature and mass media, and religious leaders. Parents, siblings, grandparents and in-laws were mentioned as some of the most influential socializing agents in the lives of study participants, with both men and women playing a part in upholding patriarchal structures.

Women participants also discussed what they perceived to be a tendency among women to defend what they referred to as a 'men's culture'. This could be, for example, excusing certain behaviour among boys, such as sexual harassment, with comments that only served to belittle the issues, such as 'boys will be boys'. In particular, gender equality practitioners saw the participation of women in socializing girls and boys in stereotypical ways as a major problem.

Gender specific norms and the separation of girls and boys become more pronounced as children are nearing puberty. The consequences for the future lives of boys and girls, due to being socialized in different ways, include aspects like self-confidence, assertiveness and sense of worth.

Religion and religious education were described as playing a large part in the daily lives of study participants. For this reason, religious texts as well as religious leaders were said to have important socializing influences on their lives, not just during formative years but continuing into adult life. Proverbs, literature, media and advertising are other important socializing agents with regards to gendered norms and stereotypes.

Observation of Cultural Changes

Many changes in social practices were observed in study communities across the country. These included changes in dress codes, social interaction, communication, information, openness, eating habits, technology, work and mobility patterns, as well as participation in public life. In a time of profound social and political change it is perhaps not surprising that the response to change among communities is mixed and that changes are often met with caution or even resistance.

While the norms that guard women's dress, behaviour and actions are firmly in place, study participants noted a loosening up of certain social restrictions in women's lives, including increased mobility and social space. Changing work patterns were often referred to as a factor contributing to change, and as something that was opening up social space for women.

The changes observed were mostly described as tentative, slow and incremental, with bigger cities leading the way and smaller towns and rural communities lagging behind. Communities where awareness raising activities related to gender had taken place were described as beginning to warm to the idea of greater physical and social space for women. Women's space to have a say in matters concerning their lives was reportedly increasing. One such example given by study participants was decision-making in terms of entering and leaving a relationship. Still, it appears that there is a long way to go before communities accept men's and women's choices as equally valued.

Cultural and religious traditions, emphasizing politeness, language and dress are amongst traditions that a vast majority of study participants say that they want to preserve. Both male and female participants strongly rejected what they see as the influence of 'foreign cultures', Western or Korean, on cultural habits, particularly dress codes. This critique is overwhelmingly directed at women.



Limited access to information and official discouragement of critical thinking, coupled with a forceful official discourse of women's traditionally high status, have all contributed to a lack of debate around gender norms and inequality in the country. Whilst women do have agency and position themselves strategically in their social environments, the impact of socialization is nevertheless that norms around appropriate behaviour, speech, and actions become deeply internalized.



Economy, Work and Livelihoods

Work and livelihood opportunities for men and women are strongly linked to gendered norms that steer perceptions of where women and men can be, what they can do, and when can they do it, in order to be seen as 'good' and 'appropriate' women and men. A gendered division of labour was prominent in all of the study areas. The domains of work for men and women are typically positioned in opposition to each other. They include: hard work as opposed to easy or light work; inside work as opposed to outside work; and productive work as opposed to reproductive work. A man's perceived strength, bravery and tenacity is held up against the perception that a woman lacks these qualities. The idea that women should focus on reproductive work is largely taken for granted.

Reference to women as care takers of family members is linked to the fact that women give birth. House work for women is often described as a duty, a must and as a consequence of men's opposite role, in working outside.

The norms of the male breadwinner and household leader are central to understanding gender relations, and centre on the concept of hpon. Men's work is perceived to be more valuable, and the physical strength required to do men's jobs are often cited as the reason for these perceptions. The lesser value placed on women's work, points to the fact that housework does not bring either status or income.

Community members are largely uncomfortable with taking on a task that is normally perceived to be the responsibility of the opposite sex, and negative community perceptions of crossing gender boundaries in work, strengthen this divide. The extent of the discomfort around breaking gender norms in terms of work reveals the unequal value placed on men's and women's work.

Women's increased income earning cannot automatically be assumed to be emancipatory, with poor and hazardous working conditions, firm glass ceilings to promotion or advancement, and the double burden of domestic and outside work, as reasons for concern. Social practices such as listing women as dependants on family registration cards reinforce the unequal valuing of men's and women's work. Among the material manifestations of the unequal value placed on men's and women's work, is a lopsided wage structure that favours men.

Education

Oftentimes when gender equality and education is discussed, issues around gender parity - the ratio of boy to girl students – take centre stage. In Myanmar, official aggregate figures – linked to reporting on Millennium Development Goal 3 - hold that relative gender parity in primary education has been achieved. Little is known, however, of gender parity and a range of other equity issues in specific local contexts. This in turn affects the potential scope of public debate about gender and education, and the understanding of how gender influences educational opportunities and experiences. At community level, the value of education for girls is measured against other goals such as job opportunities and marriage prospects, rather than being seen as a right in itself.

Gender norms that are reproduced through the education system include those where boys and men are portrayed as: tough; externally oriented; breadwinners; focused on production; intelligent and responsible for national affairs. Girls, on the other hand are held up as the opposite of those characteristics: as quiet and well behaved; focused on reproduction; family oriented and modest. Vocational training continues this pattern of socialization as it prepares boys and girls for an equally gender segregated labour market.

A review of text books from Grades 1-7, including the subjects of Myanmar, English, History and Geography, revealed very clear and consistent patterns of the different societal expectations placed on boys, girls, men and women. Boys are seen in active roles, playing sport, climbing trees, and so on. Girl children are typically depicted helping their mothers and studying.

The teaching profession is among the few available professional opportunities for women, especially outside of bigger cities. Being a teacher is a respected position, and one that allows women to have a professional career without having to risk breaking with gender norms. Education Specialists described how teachers, who may not have had many opportunities to question and explore gender norms, play an important part in the socialization of often stereotypical gender norms among the future generation.

Gender norms were believed to impact on school attendance, retention and performance. A positive change with regards to the importance attached to the education of girls was observed. However in several of the study communities, girls' education was described as lagging behind boys'. Internalized gender norms related to family obligations, impact on girls' decisions to drop-out. Threats of harassment and violence against girls (real or perceived), also impact on decision-making related to school retention. Importantly, improvements in infrastructure and perceived safety appear to have positive effects for girls' schooling.

Men's expected future leadership roles may favour them in education retention. Girls reportedly do better than boys at school due to their socialization, including norms of obedience and diligence. Educated men tend to have more opportunities for career advancement, whilst educated women are favoured for low paying jobs.



In this study, the education system emerged as one of the most powerful socializing agents with regards to gender norms. This takes place through educational materials and teachers.



Health

Cultural norms impact heavily on women's opportunities for a healthy life. Such norms include those that: hold women's menstruation to be dirty; place high value on women's virginity; see women foremost as reproductive beings; hold sex to be a taboo topic; promote childbearing; discourage family planning; encourage women to sacrifice themselves for their families; and those that position women as inferior in the household setting and position the male as the head of household and principal decision-maker. Norms are socialized through peers, families, health educators and health care providers, and are in some cases underpinned by laws and policies related to health. The impact of these norms include: limited access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, particularly among unmarried women but also among men; justification of men's violence against women - including sexual violence - with reference to women's failure to conform to cultural and social norms; the reduction of women's health issues to maternal and child health concerns; women's continued inability to decide matters concerning their own bodies, and the marginalization and discrimination of women who do not conform to gendered norms

Sport

In most communities included in the study, playing sport was not seen as appropriate for women, while it was seen as good and healthy for boys to engage in different sports. Men are encouraged to do sport as it is seen as enhancing their masculinity and is in keeping with the norms that hold men to be active, strong, muscular, and physical. Sports seen as appropriate for boys included playing cane ball (chinlone), watching cock-fighting and bull fighting, playing football, running and boxing. The few appropriate sporting options mentioned for women were bar aerobics, badminton, jumping rope, and dancing. Football was seen as particularly unsuitable for women. The idea of women running and playing was seen as going against the norms of modest, quiet and composed behaviour referenced earlier in this study, with sayings such as 'A woman's step is worth a million

coins', reinforcing the perceived value of a woman's gentleness, grace and modesty. Mixed teams in sport are seen to compromise modesty norms. Women are also dissuaded from participating in sport as it is believed that exercise can interfere with reproductive functions. These norms reinforce gendered stereotypes and create limiting boundaries around opportunities for boys and girls, and men and women, to engage in play and physical activities. However, the Southeast Asian games that took place in Myanmar in 2013 appeared to have had a positive effect on the view of women in sport, due to women's success in many events.

Media

The rapidly changing media environment, characterized by the removal of censorship and increased liberalization, reveals the firmness of cultural norms as boundaries are tested and crossed. This regards sexuality norms in particular. Media functions as an important bearer of norms and can be seen both as a reflection of society as well as an important actor in shaping public opinion and perceptions. The globalization of culture is generally met with scepticism, with women who appear in the media having to shoulder criticism when they fail to conform to traditional gender norms. On the other hand there is appreciation among women for the slightly increased range of roles for women that globalized media has brought.

With regards to sexual relations, women are usually depicted as sex objects, rather than as subjects, in women's magazines. However, this content is indirect rather than explicit. From a health perspective, it is positive that magazines contain columns where women can write and ask about illnesses, including sexual and reproductive health issues, that may otherwise be taboo to discuss in their everyday lives. Examples include replies to questions received from women about cervical cancer and breast cancer, to name a few. However, more detailed discussions on sexual relations or sex education messages are absent from the mainstream women's magazines.



Media largely perpetuates a victimized, objectified and sexualized view of women through the topics it covers and through the way it represents women and men. Print media was found to be elite oriented and highly male biased. Women are less visible in print media (20-30% of people portrayed are women). Fewer women are seen as sources, spokespersons and experts. Politics and economics are heavily male dominated while women are more represented in arts and culture. Women's magazines are reinforcing the view of women as reproductive beings, with norms of modesty taking centre stage.





The media industry also presents narrow and stereotyped opportunities for women. Gender biased market demands are blamed for wage inequality in the media industry. Fewer opportunities for professional recognition and lack of encouragement to address gender issues through media were other important findings.

The lack of representation of women in important fields such as politics and business, the reproduction of gender stereotypes, victimization and victim blaming are some of the key issues that need to be addressed for media to become a positive force in the work for increased gender equality and to overcoming the negative socialization patterns that are currently taking place through mainstream media.

Conclusion

This study has illustrated that cultural norms and social practices impact men and women throughout their lifespan and in every aspect of their lives. From the most deeply personal – the sense of self, body, confidence, love and marriage - to the practical organization and valuing of paid and unpaid work, education opportunities, health status and services, participation in community development, the affairs of the nation, and much more. The reproduction of gender norms, that till this day have rarely been aired and debated, is an on-going process.

As Myanmar continues along the path of change, there are both hopeful and worrying trends from a gender equality perspective. The resistance to cultural globalization and the reactivation of a cultural protectionist stance in which women are cast as ‘protectors of a culture’ can be seen as a barrier to the realization of women’s rights. The forceful clamping down on the few voices that do speak up against such a development is further testament to the strength of the patriarchal culture that claims its mission is women’s protection but which leaves women with fewer opportunities to participate in shaping the society they would like to see.

Whether the opportunities brought by increased openness and liberalization will lead to economic improvement and empowerment for women remains to be seen. How labour market regulations come about, and to what extent labour rights are implemented, will be important determinants. To be sure, the emancipatory potential of work will also be influenced by the extent to which men will share the burden of reproductive work.

Women's increased organizing and strategizing for change are hopeful signs. As the evidence base increases, their work will be on an increasingly solid footing. Finally, men still need to come on board the agenda for change towards gender equality. Apart from a number of champions, this has not yet happened on a significant scale.

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