James Madison University
JMU Scholarly Commons

Senior Honors Projects, 2010-current   Honors College

Spring 2016

Strategies for improving the prevention of intimate partner violence against women in Burma

Rebecca L. Murray
James Madison University

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/honors201019

Part of the Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence Commons

Strategies for Improving the Prevention of Intimate Partner Violence

Against Women in Burma

―――――――――――――

An Honors Program Project Presented to

the Faculty of the Undergraduate

College of Arts and Letters

James Madison University

―――――――――――――

by Rebecca Lynn Murray

May 2016

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Justice Studies, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors Program.

FACULTY COMMITTEE: HONORS PROGRAM APPROVAL

Project Advisor: Sue E. Spivey, Ph.D.,   Bradley R. Newcomer, Ph.D.,
Professor, Justice Studies   Director, Honors Program

Reader: Tara N. Parsons, Ph.D.,
Assistant Professor, Justice Studies

Reader: Christine M. Robinson, Ph.D.,
Professor, Justice Studies

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

This work is accepted for presentation, in part or in full, at the James Madison University Honors Symposium on

April 15, 2016.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYM GLOSSARY

CEDAW   Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

GEN   Gender Equality Network

IDP   Internationally displaced person

IMAGE   Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity

IPV   Intimate partner violence

NLD   National League for Democracy

NSPAW   National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women

PoVAW   (National Law) on Protection and Prevention of Violence Against Women

PTSD   Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

PWO   Palaung Women's Organisation

WLB   Women's League of Burma

UNDP   United Nations Development Program

WHO   World Health Organization

VAW   Violence against women

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

This research combines an understanding of gender in Burmese[1] society with contemporary techniques for preventing intimate partner violence. This report understands that the societal factors which surround intimate partner violence are extremely complex. As a result, the research does not seek to find causes of such violence but hopes to provide realistic strategies for reducing the current rates of intimate partner violence in Burma.

Given Burma's recent transition from military political control to a democracy, many changes and reforms are taking place within the nation. It is important that women's conditions and gender relations are improved as this transition takes place. Reducing intimate partner violence, IPV, in Burma was chosen as one specific way that the lives of women in Burma may be improved.

As a result, organizations with an interest in the prevention of intimate partner violence in Burma are the main audience for this research. This report is designed to provide these individuals and groups with a comprehensive understanding of intimate partner violence in Burma as well as strategies to best improve programs dealing with this form of violence.

In order to understand the current state of gender relations in Burma, interviews were conducted with twenty-four college students of varying ages in the capital of Yangon. These interviews presented intimate partner violence as a significant issue. The interviews were then used as a context for creating strategies which would best aid interested organizations in preventing violence against women within the household.

---

[1] Within this report, the term "Burma" will be used instead of "Myanmar." The name "Myanmar" is not recognized in all nations because the name was changed to such in 1989 at the hands of the controlling military. Although both names for the nation are acceptable, "Burma" was chosen for this report.

The following chapters begin with an in-depth look into the surrounding literature which will help to frame the interviews with the students and the proposed strategies for preventing intimate partner violence. The literature review includes a background of Burmese history and society, the legal provisions for women in Burma, the current situation of intimate partner violence in the country, the ways in which a nation is affected by conflict, the contemporary strategies for preventing intimate partner violence, and the current non-governmental organizations which are invested in improving the lives of Burmese women. The review of the surrounding literature is followed by the methodology for the interview process and a summary analysis of the interviews. The summary analysis is a discussion of the students' villages including the religious contexts, geographical locations, education values, relationship between men and women, designation of gendered responsibilities and roles in society, family dynamics, marriage and dowry expectations, and intimate partner violence.

All these aspects work to shape the final chapter of analysis which includes an overview of Burmese society and the suggested strategies for prevention of intimate partner violence. These strategies are organized into the aspects of program development, legislation, social gender norms, local community engagement, female empowerment, male engagement, and alcohol use.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter on the surrounding literature, several topics will be discussed. The next

following pages include a background of Burmese history and women's status in society, the

legal status of women in Burma, intimate partner violence in Burma, the impact of conflict on

nations and societies, the current strategies for preventing or reducing intimate partner violence,

and an overview of the Burmese non-governmental organizations with an interest in improving

the lives of women in Burma. This chapter is followed by the methodology for the interview

process, an analysis of the interviews, a discussion which includes the suggested strategies for

the prevention of intimate partner violence in Burma, and concluding remarks.

Background

In desire of trade, the Europeans first colonized Southeast Asia in the 1500s (Bhagowati

5-15). It was not until 1824 that Britain colonized Burma--a rule which ended in 1948 with

Burmese independence. For around one decade, Burma lived in an unstable democracy. Then, in

1962, a military coup led by General Ne Win overthrew the democratically-elected U Nu (56-

76). Opposition was suppressed and the military gained complete control of the country. Under

military control, the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma was created in 1974, the economy

worsened, and civil war broke out between rebel armies and the military. Protests and riots of the

1970s and 80s were met with fatal force and Aung San Suu Kyi, the spokesperson for the

National League for Democracy, NLD, was placed under house arrest in 1989 (102). The

greatest change occurred in 2008 when a new constitution was written under the pretense of

democracy. In October of 2010 an election was held for the first time in twenty years and Aung

San Suu Kyi was released. Although the military junta spoke of democracy, it has ultimately maintained control of the country. The elected Union Solidarity and Development Party was backed by the military. Additionally, the military won 60% of the seats while 25% are always reserved for military members (107). As a result, the cabinet was largely represented by the military. Additionally, the 2008 Constitution ultimately prevents a true democratic process. According to the Global Justice Center, the Burmese Constitution is different from any other constitution in the world as the military is considered a separate entity which is supreme over the civilian state (Global Justice Center). Within the constitution, the military is provided veto power (Z. Aung 533) and the legislative, executive, and judicial branches are prevented from having oversight over the military (Global Justice Center). Because of these national laws, the politics of Burma have changed very little from prior to 2008 and violence has continued into the present day in spite of cease fire agreements and a victory for the NLD party in 2015. Very recently, on November 8 of 2015, the National League for Democracy won the general election in Burma (BBC). As a result, the NLD will be able to choose the next president in March of 2016.

Demographically, 68% of the population is ethnically Burmese although it represents the most ethnically diverse country of Southeast Asia with over one hundred ethnic groups (Bhagowati 97). Many of the ethnic minorities such as the Shans, Karens, and Arakanese live along the border hills by India, Bangladesh, China, Laos, and Thailand. Although the majority of Burma is Buddhist, at 89%, there are notable Christian and Muslim populations, both at 4% (CIA World Factbook). These realities have created divisions along ethnic and religious lines, adding to the conflict of civil war. Additionally, Burmese society is overwhelmingly low-income and rural, with 70% of the Burmese population living in rural areas (*A New UNDP*).

This report would not be complete without a look into the history of women in Burma. Centuries ago, Chinese travelers were amazed at the status of women (Bhagowati 45-50). Although their status did not reflect true gender equality or a complete lack of oppression they held opportunities for work outside of the house and surprising sexual freedom in the eyes of the Chinese travelers. Women held more possibilities for independence in rice-patty agriculture. With a tradition that continues into the present, the men cleared the land for planting while the women planted the rice or other crops. Furthermore, many women were able to inherit land. Although many of the historical travelers spoke of the relative independence of Burmese women, the women did not believe they were truly independent. In reality, Burmese women were described as having a high status by everyone except for the Burmese women themselves (Ikeya 76).

Although women may have held a surprising number of rights and responsibilities prior to the 20th century given the global social expectations at that time, the isolation of Burma in the past decades has restricted Burmese women from progressing in terms of their equality (Bhagowati 120). Most Burmese ethnic groups are patriarchal thus leading to a male-dominated hierarchy in Burmese society. In Burma, there is a concept of *hpon*--the achievement of being born both human and male (Khaing 16). A woman is expected to act in respect of her husband's *hpon.* Perceived differences between the sexes results in differing gender roles and spheres. The wife works in the house because she bears children and is expected to find joy in remaining close. However, the husband is often the head of the house--a social expectation which is embraced by both Burmese men and women. As a result of these societal expectations and the history of isolation, Burma is now defined by a reality that there are no women in the military, there are few women in decision-making positions, and women commonly experience violence

(Bhagowati 117). Even the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW, in 1997, there has been little change for Burmese women (Z. Aung 543).

<center>Legal Aspects</center>

In 1997, Burma ratified CEDAW, The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UN Women). Additionally, the Department of Social Welfare has a ten-year plan from 2012-2021 which is known as the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women or NSPAW. However, the 2008 Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and other laws within Burma do not reflect the requirements of CEDAW. Burma does not currently have any legislation preventing gender-based violence or defining gender discrimination except for penal codes on sexual assault and rape.

Given the lack of protective legislation, the Department of Social Welfare requested that the Gender Equality Network, or GEN, work to form laws which would improve the legal status of Burmese women (UN Women). As a result, the women of Burma are working towards a law which would ban all violence against women (Su). This prospective law is known as the Protection and Prevention of Violence Against Women or PoVAW (UNFPA). The proposed law would cover the prevention of gender-based violence, penalties, and inheritance rights (Lwin). PoVAW has been developed along with the help of local women and organizations, paying close attention to the requirements of CEDAW (UNFPA).

<center>Intimate Partner Violence in Burma</center>

Kyu and Kanai note that Burma has little research on the reduction of domestic violence in comparison to other countries around the world (Kyu and Kanai 244). However, Burma is a member of CEDAW which states that any form of violence against women is considered discrimination and therefore a violation of women's human rights (Palaung Women's Organisation 21). Thus, Burma has a legal obligation to respond to intimate partner violence as a human rights violation. In spite of this, Burma experiences high levels of intimate partner violence. Domestic violence can be physical, psychological, or sexual. One particular 2005 study of Mandalay women found that 69% of the women had experienced psychological violence and 27% had experienced physical violence (Kyu and Kanai 266). Violence against women may also indirectly lead to other problems including stress, substance use, lack of fertility, reduced personal autonomy, unintended pregnancy, abortions, STI's, and various mental disorders (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 16). Additionally, development may be affected in children who witness violence within their families. As a result, the repercussions of intimate partner violence are not limited to the moment itself.

In order to understand intimate partner violence in Burma, one must comprehend the way in which Burmese men and women frame the concept on a social level. A study published by the Palaung Women's Organisation, PWO, reported in 2011 that more than 75% of the interviewees believed violence within the household was an issue which should be dealt from within the family (Palaung Women's Organisation 28). This reflects a Burmese understanding that domestic violence has historically been a private family matter (Kyu and Kanai 244). The majority of the interviewed women had never heard about human or women's rights (Palaung Women's Organisation 13). Additionally, many of the women noted that it was socially acceptable for a

man to beat his wife if she did not fulfill her responsibilities--such as having dinner ready when her husband returns home. Likewise, fighting back is not culturally acceptable although some of the interviewees in one particular study did (Ezard 688). This social understanding of power relationships is reflected in the reality that men are most often the head of the household within a Burmese family. A traditional Palaung saying even states, "The more your husband beats you, the more he loves you (Palaung Women's Organisation 31)." A World Health Organization study in 2010 determined that the likelihood of spousal abuse increased when the husband believed it was an acceptable action (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 23). Violence becomes four times more likely when men believe it is "always acceptable" to use violence against their wives. Similarly, violence becomes two times more likely when men believe it is "sometimes acceptable (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 23)." Because violence within the household is frequently socially acceptable by Burmese communities, the only individuals to intervene on behalf of the women are often friends and family (Palaung Women's Organisation 14). The PWO notes that there are few social services and little legal protection provided by the government for the Palaung women who experience intimate partner violence (21). Additionally, little has changed for women since the new government in 2010 (14).

Previous research has looked at possible factors which may increase the risk of intimate partner violence. The relationship between these risk factors is highly complex and every case is unique. Yet, research has sought to understand the possible causes of intimate partner violence in Burma. The most likely factors include the personal experience or witnessing of parental violence, poverty, unemployment of the husband, alcohol abuse by the husband, and female empowerment (Kyu and Kanai 244). While none of these aspects are direct indicators of intimate partner violence, it is likely that there is a correlation. First, there is support for a relationship

between intimate partner violence and previous experience with domestic violence. Acceptance of violence can be learned and passed down through the generations. One WHO study found that there was a greater chance of intimate partner violence when both the woman's and her partner's mothers were abused (Abramsky et al. 121). Secondly, research has found a relationship between poverty and intimate partner violence. While such violence is possible in all socioeconomic classes, Abramsky et al. notes that it is most common in low-income families (121). It is here that the interconnected relationship between risk factors becomes clearly evident. One possible reason low socioeconomic status may be related to violence is because poverty often increases stress (Kyu and Kanai 245). Likewise, unemployment is related to family stress and resources. Another argument is the relationship between socioeconomic status, the masculine identity, and violence (Jewkes 1424). Unemployment may also be related to drug and alcohol abuse. For the Palaung people, economic crisis has caused many to turn to growing opium and addiction to drug and alcohol use (Palaung Women's Organisation 25). There is presently strong support for the relationship between alcohol abuse and intimate partner violence. This support has been found both within and outside of the nation of Burma. One particular study in 2009 focused on the relationship between alcohol use and intimate partner violence within a Burmese refugee camp on the Thailand-Burma border (Ezard). Alcohol is commonplace in areas of displacement and the study found that risky alcohol use was more common with the men than the women (Ezard 685). Intimate partner violence and alcohol are related in a complex way and, although alcohol abuse does not directly lead to such violence, there is support for a relationship. In a 2001 study, Leonard found that alcohol was involved in 25-50% situations of intimate partner violence against women (Leonard 235). Additionally, Leonard noted that the risk of injury doubled in cases where the husband was intoxicated, from

13% to 26% (238). While all these specific factors are integral to understanding why specific instances of violence occur, factors at the societal level must be examined. The greater society may support individual instances of violence through hierarchical gender roles, the low social value of women, and the belief that manhood is tied to the control of women (Jewkes 1424).

<div align="center">Impact of Conflict</div>

As previously described, Burma has experienced decades of turmoil which has left a scar on the nation as a whole. As a result, it is important to look at the impact of conflict on societies. Interestingly, most contemporary wars are the result of issues within states rather than issues between states (Pedersen 175). Burma is an example of this phenomenon. Moreover, civilians represent 90% of the war-related deaths in contemporary conflicts (177). However, death is not the only result of conflict. In its wake, war also leaves behind impoverishment, disease, orphans, homeless children, and refugees (177). There is also a long-term impact on the social and mental health of the population at the individual, community, and national levels (175). Many individuals have increased risk of anxiety, depression, alcohol/drug abuse, PTSD, and other results of war trauma (181). Communities suffer from a breakdown of society, increased food shortages, a lack of shelter, and the disruption of daily life (181). At the national level, infrastructure is destroyed, the arms trade increases, there is an increase in landmines, the state is unable to provide for the people, and refugees are left homeless (177). It also must be noted that most refugees are women, children, and the elderly--individuals who are more likely to experience exploitation, rape, political violence, and torture (181). In spite of these negative consequences to war, Pedersen notes that traumatic experiences can also help to mobilize

communities, provide social cohesion, and reveal resilience (186). Societies also engage in a wide variety of coping responses which reflect the global cultural diversity (188).

Additionally, conflict has a particular effect on women when rape is used as a weapon of war. During war, women are often targeted for strategic reasons (Thomas and Ralph 81). Rape is perhaps the most common form of violence against women in addition to murder and torture. Rape victims also experience death from injuries when left by perpetrators. While rape is also experienced by men, women are most often the targets of such abuse. This is true of the conflict within Burma. According to Thomas and Regan, rape has not been recognized as a human rights abuse in the past and Burmese officials and military leaders view the act as a private crime (84-86). Reports show that rape has been used in conflicts all over Burma. For example, rape has been used to force the Muslim Rohingya population from the Rakhine State as the Rohingya people have been considered to be illegal immigrants of Bangladesh by the Burmese government (85-86). Additionally, rape has been experienced by the Burmese refugees in refugee camps at the hands of the Bangladeshi military and paramilitary groups. Other women are kept as "comfort women" or at army barracks for the purpose of rape (87). Another study of the Mon refugees in Burma in 2000 reported that 46% of the female interviewees had experienced rape (HD et. al 359). This was significantly higher than the 20% who stated that they or a family member had experienced torture.

Another report from 2014 focuses on the use of rape as a weapon of conflict in the Kachin State of Burma (Cengel). Cengel describes how the internal conflict between the Kachin Independence Army and the Burmese military has affected the Kachin women. Since the year 2010, there have been 100 documented cases of rape at the hands of the Burmese army and most of these cases have occurred in the Kachin State and the northern area of the Shan State. Around

half of these reported cases were gang rapes and 28% of the women were killed or died from later injuries. Unfortunately such crimes are tried within military law which, according to the constitution, provides amnesty for the army. In spite of a desire for transparency and justice, rape cases such as those within the Kachin State almost always end with the military police. Additionally, the government spokesman, Ye Htut, has denied the use of sexual violence as a military weapon.

Rape is a crime against both the honor and physical integrity of women. As a result, women who have experienced rape in conflict situations often experience shame (Thomas and Ralph 89). In turn, there is a general lack of reporting based upon the reality that women must endure shame from their communities and families in order to come forward (90). However, there are examples of instances when the communities stand up in support of their female victims (Cengel). Cengel writes that more women in Kachin have been willing to speak out about their experiences than usual. In the case of a seven-year-old victim at the hands of a Burmese solider which was highly publicized by the media, the community acted and achieved a trial in the civilian courts. The soldier was the first to receive life in prison for his crime. In spite of this success, rape continues to be the result of conflict within Burma.

<u>Present Strategies for Prevention</u>

Although most of the literature on intimate partner violence and prevention techniques comes from high-income countries (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 20), it can still be used to outline the present strategies for prevention, including assessments of which strategies have been successful and which have not. According to one study, programs which seek to reduce intimate partner violence are most successful when they address both the social

acceptance of violence and the underlying risk factors which promote such violence (Ellsbert et al. 1564). For this reason, a wide variety of strategies have been assessed in this report.

One must first understand that there are different approaches to understanding and preventing intimate partner violence. There are many different aspects of violence against women which are interrelated in a complex web, engaging many parts of life and society. The various approaches frame intimate partner violence in distinct ways. The World Health Organization distinguishes these various approaches (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 6-7). First, there is the gender approach which focuses on the concepts of masculinity and femininity as well as the relationship between men and women. Often patriarchy is understood through power relations. The second approach is human rights, centered on the state obligations to protect human rights. This approach understands violence against women as a human rights violation which must be eradicated or punished. The criminal justice approach enforces justice as a response to the violence after it occurs. Finally, the public health approach is science- and population-based with an emphasis on primary prevention. There are three kinds of prevention strategies from within the health perspective (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 7). Primary prevention deals with the reduction or elimination of violence. Secondary prevention is focused on the immediate response to violence. Finally, tertiary prevention deals with the long-term rehabilitation and reintegration of victims. While some contemporary strategies for prevention engage with all of the mentioned approaches, others choose to focus in on a particular one. An ecological model also helps to define the differences in scope between spheres at the societal, community, relationship, and individual levels. Prevention strategies may be used to target any of these levels.

From a human rights perspective, one strategy for preventing intimate partner violence deals with legislation at the national level (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 27). The human rights approach from Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton holds that the state is responsible for the protection of its citizens and their natural rights (36). The state can be used to improve conditions by forming legislation which improves national income, rates of poverty, employment, health care, property, education, and political representation. According to the researchers, changes of this kind would help to create a foundation of equity so other programs can succeed. Legislation is very important to forming a national environment which is not tolerant towards violence against women. This includes acknowledging any ratified international laws and working towards the goals and requirements which they hold. Presently, there are several international laws which protect women from violence. They include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in 1993, The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women in 1994, The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, and The Millennium Declaration in 2000. While these international agreements are helpful in providing standards for the treatment of women, the laws of the countries must support the goals of such agreements.

Legislation is also connected to the criminal justice approach. To improve the security of women, strategies may include an increase in legislation and protection from the criminal justice systems (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 36). Examples of such strategies would be the resource of specialized police units, providing easy access to restraining orders, or providing multi-agency sexual assault teams for response. Such actions from legislation and the criminal justice system would help to send a message that violence against women is not tolerated on a

national level. Jewkes writes that the laws must be comprehensive on the topics of gender

equality, intimate partner violence, and sexual harassment/violence (Jewkes 1427). However, it

must be noted that, in low- and middle-income countries, legislation related to domestic violence

is not often accompanied by plans for a budget (Ellsbert et al. 1558). Additionally, such laws in

these countries often experience resistance from the male-dominated courts and police. In spite

of these drawbacks in low-income countries, legislation may be used for more than just gender

equality and the criminalization of intimate partner violence. Laws may also be crucial to

reducing the consumption of alcohol within communities--a topic which will be covered in

greater detail in the following pages (Jewkes 1425-1426).

The gender approach may be taken by changing the very root of violence against women

--cultural gender norms (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 57). The relationships between

men and women are defined, in great part, by the social and cultural expectations. As a result,

strategies which target gender norms may reduce the social toleration of violence against women.

One way this can be done is through media awareness campaigns which are aimed at informing

the public about the subject of intimate partner violence, changing stereotypes, reforming public

opinion, and convincing the public that violence against women is a human rights violation

(Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 54). Media awareness campaigns may also be used to

encourage men to find an active role in preventing intimate partner violence. Media as a strategy

has the benefit of reaching a wide audience of many people and can be done through various

forms such as television, radio broadcast, print, and more (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton

55). However, awareness campaigns are ineffective when they present information in a pass-and-

go fashion such as a billboards, posters, or short television ads (Ellsbert et al. 1562). Success is

more promising for preventing intimate partner violence at the population level when awareness

campaigns are long-term such as engaging with social media or presenting concepts through television series (1562). Educational dramas have been used for this purpose in South Africa with *Soul City* and in the United Kingdom with *The Archers* (Jewkes 1427). Likewise, the media may be used to display positive role models for girls and women.

Social gender norms may also be transformed through strategies within the community. One woman from a Burmese refugee camp on the Thai-Burmese border described how the community was involved with the response to intimate violence saying, "So also they, they call both husband and wife and they explain them about not hitting like this. We are human being, the same human being and not to hurt each other" (Lambert and Pickering 41). Community mobilization against the acceptance of intimate partner violence is important and may be achieved through locally-driven projects which allow the community to participate and influence individual actions (Ellsbert et al.1562).

Several prescriptive studies suggest empowering women as a means to preventing intimate partner violence from the roots. This empowering can be used to provide women with power, independence, and tools to prevent their victimization. Women and girls can be empowered through school and community programs and workshops which focus on improving female agency, providing safe spaces, self-defense training, and changes to the social norms which accept violence against women (Ellsbert et al. 1562). Improving female education may also have an effect on female empowerment and the status of women in society (Ellsbert et al. 1564). The WHO suggests microfinance and training on gender equality as ways to improve the power of women in both economic and social ways (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 67). For example IMAGE (Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity) is a program in South Africa which provides loans for women as well as educational sessions and

workshops (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 48). These sessions and workshops are aimed at preventing HIV/AIDS, transforming gender norms, increasing communication, and addressing intimate partner violence. The IMAGE program has been successful in reducing intimate partner violence and empowering the women of South Africa. It is important to note that, according to one study, microfinance programs are more promising in low-income countries when there is additional training for gender equality and violence prevention (Ellsbert et al. 1561). It is possible that microfinance programs may not be successful in reducing intimate partner violence on their own.

There appears to be support for two distinct opinions within the research community with respect to women's empowerment. On the one hand, there is support that empowering women provides them with the tools to protect themselves against violence (Kyu and Atsuko 245). There have been successful programs in Uganda and Kenya which empower women through education in life-skills, self-defense, and occupational training (Ellsbert et al.1562). Empowerment may also come in the form of financial support. For example, the use of microfinance programs is a development strategy which provides more economic possibilities for individuals (Kim et al. 1794). On the other hand, research has also shown that empowering women may actually increase their risk of experiencing violence at the hands of an intimate partner (Kim et al. 1795). This may be because empowering women runs the risk of challenging the social fabric of gender norms. Women who do not consent to the existing patriarchy of a society may cause conflict within the household, thus resulting in intimate partner violence. In this way, it is possible that women with liberal understandings of gender may increase their risk (Kyu and Kanai 245).

As a result, several organizations suggest that engaging with men may reduce the negative reactions which may be experienced when women are empowered or society presses

against social norms of patriarchy. According to the WHO, encouraging men to be a part of the solution does not need to end with media awareness campaigns (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 55). Strategies must also target men and boys in order to transform the cultural gender norms. The previously mentioned IMAGE program of South Africa does just this by engaging with the male population while focusing on addressing intimate partner violence through female empowerment (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 48).

Within the section, "Intimate Partner Violence in Burma," of this report, it was noted that there is a relationship between alcohol and intimate partner violence. Various researchers and organizations have noted possible strategies for preventing domestic violence by reducing alcohol use. One way this can be done is by reducing the availability of alcohol (Ezard 690). This could be achieved through limiting the number of hours that alcohol is sold, reducing the amount of alcohol is sold, or increasing the price of alcohol. All of these possibilities have support for reducing alcohol-related intimate partner violence. For example, a study in 1998 showed that, in an Australian town, there were less domestic violence victims admitted to the hospital after the hours of alcohol sale were reduced (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 51). In the case of increasing the price of alcohol, there is support that this action reduces general violence (Ezard 690). Other possible actions could include banning alcohol advertisements or raising the purchase age (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 52). Leonard notes that reducing the availability of alcohol could be achieved through restricting the venues of sale, forming laws against the serving of intoxicated customers, or banning alcohol at venues such as sports stadiums (Leonard 242). For those with a history of alcohol abuse, marital violence may also be incorporated into treatment programs.

Several programs and strategies have been designed to reduce intimate partner violence through distinct intervention steps. For example, the World Health Organization suggests a framework of four steps (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 7-8). These phases include, defining the problem, investigating why the problem occurs, exploring ways to prevent the problem, and finally, disseminating the information. SASA! is another program which engages with steps of intervention (Kyegombe et al. 128). SASA! is a program which was implemented by the Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention in Kampala, Uganda in order to prevent violence against women and children's exposure to such violence. The SASA! program has been successful in these goals and is based upon four different intervention phases (Kyegombe et al. 130). The first, "Start," is when the staff seeks to understand the community along with average men and women who are selected from the community. In the second phase, "Awareness," the selected activists gain support and encourage their community to reflect upon gender imbalances. In the "Support" phase, skills and relationships are strengthened in order to create change. Finally, the "Action" phase, is when new behaviors are encouraged within the community.

The WHO also notes the importance of conducting research to determine whether or not the pre-existing programs work to prevent violence against women (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 39). There are three specific ways of characterizing the effectiveness of a program. They are a change in attitudes and beliefs, the reduction of perpetration, and the reduction of victimization.

<u>Burmese Non-Governmental Organizations</u>

The non-governmental organizations which are invested in the wellbeing of Burmese women can be found both within Burma and the global community (*Myanmar Non-Profit*

23

*Directo*ry). The majority of these organizations are located in Burma, Thailand, and India and provide support for women with focuses such as advocacy, human rights, humanitarian aid, social business, education, research, refugees/internationally displaced persons (IDP's), democracy promotion, health, and children. While some of the organizations are focused specifically on Burmese women, others aid women in the process of achieving their greater goals. Additionally, it must be noted that many of the organizations which are based in India and Thailand are focused on the women of Burma who have chosen to leave their home country or have been displaced as a result the conflicts. For example, Karen, Karenni, Paung, Kachin, and Shan women have organizations within Thailand.

A well-known organization in Burma is the Women's League of Burma or WLB (Women's League of Burma). The WLB works with other Burmese organizations to achieve goals of peace and reconciliation, political empowerment, advocacy, and prevention of violence against women. The WLB also began a specific program in 2005 known as Women Against Violence. This program has two safe houses in India and Thailand and is aimed at raising awareness about violence experienced by women as well as providing counseling for women and their abusive partners, medical aid, food, shelter, legal aid, and much more. The WLB is also involved in the Stop Violence Against Women Day and International Women's Day.

Additionally, Burma is one of 177 countries to be reached by the United Nations Development Program (*UN Development Programme in Myanmar*). The UNDP has supported Burma since the 1960s and continues to partner with the Burmese government in the midst of the nation's recent transition. The UNDP is involved in progress for Burmese women through discussions about Burmese gender equality, the creation of national strategic plans, and promotion of female leadership (A. Aung). One example is the android application, iWomen,

which is available to Burmese women in rural areas. IWomen provides a community of 22,000 women in 2,000 villages where the women can share their difficulties and victories. This is one of the many ways in which the UNDP works to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Burma.

In this current chapter of the literature review, various concepts have been covered including background information, legal aspects, IPV in Burma, the impact of conflict, present strategies for prevention, and Burmese non-governmental organizations.

METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter, the surrounding literature was discussed in order to provide a framework for understanding Burmese society. This chapter describes the methodology of the interview process, followed by the interview analysis, discussion of proposed strategies, and a conclusion.

The data for this research was collected in two stages. In order to provide research which would be most constructive to the non-governmental organizations of Burma, interviews in July of 2015 were conducted on the subject of gender relations. Before traveling to Burma, the interview process was cleared by the Institutional Review Board following an in-person full-board review. The Institutional Review Board was present in the process to insure that the interview subjects would be protected and treated ethically during the interview process. The guidelines and stipulations addressed by the Institutional Review Board were followed during the entirety of the interview process.

From the interviews, it was determined that intimate partner violence is one of the most pressing gender-related issues in Burma today. The second stage of the research was based upon compiling the present research and scholarly studies in order to construct helpful strategies for the Burmese NGO's to use when confronting the issue of intimate partner violence.

To gather a realistic picture of gender relations in Burma, twenty-four interviews were conducted with college students from Yangon, Burma. The school has requested that the name of the institution remain unpublished in this report. Prior to traveling to Burma, the school principal was contacted about the possibility of conducting interviews with the students. Once at the school, the principal allowed time within the students' schedules for the interviews to take place

if the students wished to be involved. Of the students interviewed, eleven were female and thirteen were male. While most of the students were in their late-teens and twenties several of the students were much older. Additionally, the students' home villages are from various states across Burma. Although the sample was not random, these two aspects provided for more diversity within the subject pool. Because the students had very limited knowledge of English, the principal of the college was present during the interviews as a translator. The principal was chosen as the translator given the family-like bond which he holds with the students.

Overall, the interviews followed a general list of pre-chosen topics although they were semi-structured. A long conversation with the school principal before the interviews helped to generate a list of topics which would be most helpful to understanding the gender relations in Burma. As a result of the semi-structured nature, the interviews allowed the students to focus on the topics they believed to be of most importance in relation to gender. For example, some students talked extensively about the dowry systems in their villages while others chose to focus on the reality of alcoholism and drug abuse in their villages. In order to ease the students into the more direct questions, the interviews began with very general questions about their villages such as number of houses and the most common occupations. The questions then eased into the topic of gender relations. It must be noted that, given the natural and fluid character of the interviews, not every student was asked every question. As a result, the interviews were not used to provide specific percentages but to allow for a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding gender in Burma. A data table of the questions which were asked of the students is presented on page 29 with a list of the students on page 30.

With the permission of each of the students, all of the interviews were recorded using an audio recorder. The data was captured through audio recording so as to interact more with the

students and to document any possible nuances in phrasing. From the recordings, detailed notes were taken. The recordings were then deleted to protect the students' confidentiality. In the last stage, the notes from the interviews were coded and analyzed for patterns.

As the process of interviews progressed, it became evident that many women in Burma continue to experience violence from their husbands. As a result, domestic violence became the focus of this study in order to provide information which will be of most use to interested groups and organizations in Burma.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Interview Schedule</u></p>

Topic	Overview of Questions Asked
State	The students were asked what state they were originally from
Village Size	The students were asked how large their villages were (most students answered with the number of houses in their villages and some included an estimation of the number of people)
Religion	The students were asked about the religious outlay of their communities
Education	The students were asked if male or female children are more supported to receive education in their villages
Jobs	The students were asked what occupations and jobs are most common in their communities
Gender Relationship	The students were asked if they believed the relationship between the men and women of their villages to be equal or unequal
Female Duties	The students were asked what duties the women of their villages have in/outside of the house
Male Household Duties	The students were asked if it is ever acceptable for the men of their villages to complete household duties such as cooking or taking care of the children
Freedoms	The students were asked if there are freedoms or privileges which are allowed to men which are denied to the women of their villages
Household Decisions	The students were asked who in the family unit most often makes important household decisions
Guests	The students were asked who in the family unit most often greets guests and if women are allowed to engage with guests
Marriage	The students were asked if parents are involved in the arrangement of marriages
Dowry	The students were asked if a dowry (the exchange of money or cultural objects for a marriage) is expected within the community
IPV	The students were asked if mistreatment occurs within their villages
Action	The students were asked what kind of mistreatment occurs (i.e. words, beating, killing)
Cause of IPV	The students were asked what events most often lead to the occurrence of IPV
Community Acceptance	The students were asked if their communities accept the mistreatment
Community Response	The students were asked how their communities actively respond to IPV

Interviewees (Pseudonyms Used)

Name	Gender
Ma Ma Lay	F
Mi Mi Khaing	F
Myat Noe Phyu	F
Ni Ni Aung	M
Zin Min Htet	M
Zeyar Htet	M
Swe Lin Kyaw	M
Maung Maung Than	M
Zaw Wai Ko	M
Thet Thiha Soe	M
Thiri Aung	F
Zin Ko Lin	M
Nyan Thu Htet	M
Aye Myat Mon	F
Phyo Thida Kyaw	F
Chaw Su Lat Sandi	F
Zin Le Mon	F
Khin Hlaing Hein	M
Su Su Meing	F
May Myat Nwe	F
Htain Lin	M
Cho Su Aye	F
Wai Myo Kyaw	M
Ye Naing Phyo	M

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

In the previous pages, this report has provided an in-depth description of the surrounding literature and the methodology which was used to interview the Burmese students. In this interview analysis, several topics will be covered including, religion, place, education, gender relationship, gendered responsibilities, family dynamics, marriage, dowries, and intimate partner violence. The interview analysis will be followed by a discussion with proposed strategies and concluding remarks about the report.

The interview process was ultimately used to better understand which issues are of greatest importance to gender equality in Burma. It was ultimately determined through the course of the interviews that domestic violence is a present hindrance to achieving this equality. Additionally, the interviews provide a general basis for understanding how the genders interact within Burmese culture. Overall, the students' responses reflect a reality that Burmese households are very diverse and that villages vary greatly. However, general trends and cultural norms can be seen which reflect the studies presented in the literature review. Additionally, the qualitative aspect of the interviews provides a deeper understanding of the cultural perspectives.

Place

To understand the geographical context of the following section, one may refer to the image on page 33. Of the twenty-four students, twelve are from the area of Palatwa, within the Chin state. While twelve students are from villages in the Palatwa area, two are from villages near or in Hakkah, a city also located in the Chin state. Seven of the students are from the Kachin state, to the northeast of Chin. From there, two students are from the Sagaing Division

and one is from the Aragan state. Only three of the students are from the same village and this redundancy has been taken into account with the analysis. In spite of the fact that many of the students are from villages which are geographically close, their answers conveyed many differences between the ways of life. For example, students from Palatwa in the Chin state were very divided when asked about the relationship between men and women in their villages. Ma Ma Lay described, "At all times, the male will expect [the female] to listen to them and be obedient to them." In contrast, Swe Lin Kyaw stated that women could be the head of the household in his village, saying, "If someone has a wife that is educated, [she] will be the head of the family...The head is in charge of decisions." Although these two students come from villages in a similar area of Burma, their answers revealed very different realities from their communities.

The size of the students' villages varied greatly from small villages of fifty people to large cities. The majority of the students were from villages with five hundred houses or less and several students were from villages with less than one hundred people.

Map of Burma

http://www.vidiani.com/administrative-map-of-burma/

Religion

Although all of the students attend a Bible college in preparation for Christian ministry, the religious background of the students' villages is more diverse. In this context, "family" refers to the unit of parents and children although extended family such as aunts, uncles, and in-laws often held the same religion as the family unit. Of the twelve students asked about the religious affiliation of their villages, eight had a majority of Christian families, three had a majority of Buddhist families, and one student spoke of an equal number of Christian and Buddhist families. Only one out of the twelve students, Aye Myat Mon, mentioned another religious background other than Christianity and Buddhism, speaking of a few tribal worshippers in a Sagaing village which was one-third Christian and two-thirds Buddhist.

Education

Of the ten students who were asked, seven of the students described how the men in their villages are more supported when it comes to education. For most of the villages, females do not require education because they will ultimately marry men with education. Zin Min Htet and Swe Lin Kyaw described how there is no use for female education in their villages because they will marry men with education. Zin Min Htet went on to state, "Most of the parent minds have that the daughter they do not much like to go to school." In one interesting case, education of females is not supported because many of the women who leave the village for higher education return with husbands--an action which is not looked upon in a positive light. Aye Myat Mon described, "The son in the family is supported more because, most of the girls, when they go higher most of them get husbands from the school themselves and come home with them. They do not think good that they let them go to school."

Of the students who were asked, only three described how the females receive more education than the males in their villages. One older student described how, in the past, female education was not supported but now things have changed. Zeyar Htet explained how females receive more education because the young men are not as willing to go to school. The parents perceive the males as a waste of money. In contrast, the females are viewed as more obedient and helpful to the parents. As a result, the women from that village receive higher education than their male counterparts.

Interestingly, only one of the students stated that the children of his village have equal access to education and that parents ultimately treat both their male and female children the same. In Ye Naing Phyo 's Kachin village, both the youngest son and daughter go to school.

Gender Relationship

In general, the students were split in their answers when asked directly if they perceived equality or inequality within their villages. However, their descriptions of the relationships between men and women held more nuanced pictures of equality in their villages. In some cases, the students would state that they perceived equality in their villages but would then describe instances of inequality or mistreatment within the social relationships. For example, Wai Myo Kyaw student stated early in the interview that he believed there was equality within his village but later described how male education is valued above female education and how husbands often mistreat their wives. Likewise, Thet Thiha Soe originally stated that there was "not much difference between the man and the woman" while later in his interview he described how mistreatment is often acceptable within his community. By this, it became clear that the students'

perceptions of the level of equality in their villages did not always reflect the reality of the social climate between men and women.

In order to provide a more comprehensive picture of gender relationships, most of the students were asked if they believed the men in their villages hold any freedoms or privileges which were not open to women (or vice versus). The most popular answer was that females in their villages cannot go where they please and that women are limited when it comes to visiting or holding conversations with men. Another common answer was that women cannot wear pants or shorter skirts if they desire to but are limited to the traditional female skirt known as a *htamein*. While wearing pants is becoming more common in the cities, women who do wear pants in the villages are often scandalized. In one of the villages, male babies are valued above the female babies and bring more joy to the families.

In one memorable moment of the interviews, a female student stated, "I just want to be a man." When questioned further, Ma Ma Lay described how the men of her village are privileged and can go where they please. In her eyes, inequality defines the majority of relationships between men and women. In her village, men are more respected and valued, often expecting obedience from the women.

Another memorable interview with a student from Kachin focused on the male mentality that, because they bring food, make money, and provide for the family, they have authority over their wives. Phyo Thida Kyaw described, "The men will be saying, 'I bring food, I make money, I provide.'" In turn, the women agree and believe themselves to be inferior and dependent upon their husbands. This ultimately leads to a general mindset of patriarchy and male superiority within the village where, as a result, the women are looked down upon and pitied.

In spite of all this information, one must note that many of the students did describe equality within their villages stating that there are no freedoms which are limited to the male populations. Zeyar Htet even described how the women of his Chin village may actually be higher in status than men. He demonstrated this with the example that many companies and government jobs now accept more women's applications because they are seen as better workers than the men who are often drunk. While many of the women have more value in the family as a result of this, there are still families in his village which experience inequality toward women.

<u>Gendered Responsibilities</u>

Unequivocally, the main form of work within the students' villages is fieldwork such as cultivating patty fields or growing produce. Other common ways of making a living include bamboo cutting, selling produce, working in the timber industry, and mining of precious resources or panning for gold. City jobs are also available for the individuals in urban areas.

Often the women work with their husbands in the fields. Many of the students described the way in which the men are responsible for clearing the forests for the creation of new fields while the women follow after to plant the seeds. In one particular village the women collectively agree on which field to harvest at any particular time by inviting each other to harvest together. Even in the cases where the women aid the men in the fields, they are still responsible for the duties around the household including the care of the children, preparing meals, cutting firewood, pounding rice, etc. In this way, many of the Burmese women work two jobs--one in the fields and one in the house. One Aragan student described how the women wake up very early in the morning to cook everything and arrange the equipment for the men to work in the

fields. Wai Myo Kyaw stated, "For the fieldwork, the women wake up very early and cook everything and arrange all the equipment we will need."

In general, the villages are very divided along the line of whether it is ever socially appropriate for a husband to help his wife with her household duties. For some villages, it is acceptable for the man to help with the household duties, even including cooking, if his wife cannot fulfill them all. In some cases it is only appropriate for the men to take care of physical strength-based tasks such as cutting wood for the fire or fixing a leaking roof. However, in other villages, it is never acceptable for a man to do what is socially considered women's work. Thet Thiha Soe described, "Men will never cut wood, cook, pound rice because it is women's work." The differences between these various mindsets is not controlled geographically by the different Burmese states or areas. Even the many villages in the Paletwa area have very different perspectives on the distinction between male and female responsibilities. Interestingly, many of the students did not perceive the gendered responsibilities to be an inequality but simply a necessary and good way of life. For example, when talking about the different responsibilities held by men and women in her community, Chaw Su Lat Sandi said, "I think the different ones are good." Likely, this is why many of the students perceive a sense of equality within their villages in spite of the reality that Burmese women often carry the bulk of responsibilities-- working both in the field and the household.

<u>Family Dynamics</u>

The relationship between men and women is most visible in the household when it comes to making family decisions and entertaining guests. As with the previously described household duties, the responsibility for making family decisions does not seem to be determined by

geographic location. Overall, most of the students described how the father makes the household decisions. Thet Thiha Soe described, "The father is superior in decision making," and Ni Ni Aung similarly stated, "The father only will make decisions." Several of the students stated that decisions are made after the husband and wife discuss the issue and come to an agreement. When asked why he believed there was equality in the household, Maung Maung Than stated, "Husband and wife, before they make a decision, they talk together to come to agreement." In some cases, the eldest son or daughter may also be included in the discussion. Only one student, Su Su Meing, stated that the wife is in charge of making the family decisions because the husbands are typically quiet while the wife is the leader in the household. Swe Lin Kyaw stated that the head of the household could be either the wife or husband and was determined by the education of both. The head of the household is then in charge of the decision making.

Several of the students were asked about the family dynamics when a guest is welcomed into a household. This question was not asked in the majority of interviews. However, the students described different societal expectations. One student, Zaw Wai Ko, stated that the husband always welcomes the guest first and that the wife must remain quiet during the conversation. Other students described how the welcoming of guest is an equal responsibility. One would infer that, based upon the diverse answers to the previous questions, the rest of the students would have provided varied answers to this question.

Marriage and Dowry

From the students' answers it became apparent that marriages based on love are becoming increasingly common although there are still instances where the parents will arrange the marriages of their children. Many of the students described how, even when two individuals

39

express interest in each other, the parents are often involved in the engagement. For example, Nyan Thu Htet described, "Starts out by love then they reveal to the parents and then the parents arrange."

Interestingly, Wai Myo Kyaw described a common practice where young girls are virtually stolen away from their families. The student described how older men often trick the younger girls from the village to travel with them: "By telling lie, [they say] we will go there and there." While away, the two are married. In this way, many of the young girls (described to be in their early teens) are deceived into marriage. Wai Myo Kyaw spoke of this saying, "Almost human trafficking but they do not think as such." Even though this is a common practice in his village, there is a societal punishment in place. In addition to the four swords which are commonly given as a dowry, the husband's family must eat an animal such as a pig or chicken with the nails still intact. This serves as punishment for stealing the young girl without her knowledge.

Although many of the students described the prevalence of marriages based on love, it is obvious that dowry systems are still ingrained within the cultural practices of the villages given the continued existence of monetary and cultural item exchanges for unions to take place. This was unrelated to the religious demographics of the students' villages. While some of the dowry practices are reliant upon the exchange of money, others include material items. For example, in one Kachin village, it is customary for the bride to provide her future husband with a knife and a traditional bag. Khin Hlaing Hein spoke of this saying, "Give to the boy one knife and a traditional bag. Culture that the bag will represent the provider. Knife represents protection." In Wai Myo Kyaw's Aragan village, the man must provide four swords including different lengths and a spear. Several students described how payments are commonly made for marriage. In some

cases, the man will provide his bride's family money in exchange for their daughter. In other cases, it is the bride's family which requests a sum of money. The amount could be dependent upon the bride's status or the husband's status. In addition to the knife and traditional bag, Khin Hlaing Hein described how the mother of the bride may ask for a sum which is equal to the price of raising her daughter including the price of the milk to feed her or the backpack to carry her. Unfortunately, the exchange of money has caused an interesting relationship between the men and women in one Paletwa village of the Chin state. Zin Min Htet described how, in the past, the man would provide a sum to his bride's family. As a result, the man would not feel any duty to help his wife in the household because he had "bought" her with the dowry. This is in spite of the fact that both the women and men work in the fields together. Although the student explained how the practice of "wife buying" began to die out in 2005 when the Roman Catholic ministry brought education and concepts of equality, the practice has not completely disappeared. Zin Min Htet spoke of the present day saying, "Some love each other but the parents will ask how much and then the man will have to pay...Sometimes they will arrange saying, 'That much you pay? I will give you my daughter.'"

<u>Intimate Partner Violence</u>

When the interview process first began, the purpose was to determine the greatest needs for female social equality in Burma. After the first couple of interviews, it became evident that intimate partner violence was a relatively common phenomenon. All students after this point were asked about the possibility of IPV in their villages. Of the sixteen students who were asked about gendered mistreatment, thirteen of the students answered that it is present in their villages

back home. The levels of mistreatment described by the students varied from verbal scolding all the way to spousal homicide.

Wai Myo Kyaw, an Aragan student, described an experience in his village when a woman was killed during a beating from her husband. Following the death of his wife, the Burmese man stood outside of his house with a whip proclaiming to the village that it was his wife and the other villagers had no part in his dealings. As Wai Myo Kyaw described, "When they said, 'Why you kill your wife?' he says, 'This is my wife, don't be a part of it. You can't say anything. This is my wife.'" This action reflected the reality that most individuals from the particular village perceived spousal beating to be acceptable: "The majority will say, because this is their problem, they are dealing with their problem. Some very few people will go and say this is not good."

Su Su Meing explained how, while mistreatment happens within the various tribes, it is common especially for the Aragan people. She noted how both the Aragan husbands and wives get drunk and then proceed to fight each other. In a conversation with the principal, he described how the Aragan tribe is often perceived as being a very violent people group. A common saying states, "Kill the Aragan people, then the snake." The principal explained this statement saying that, when confronted with a snake and an Aragan couple, one must always kill the couple first because they are the greater danger.

Overall, there appeared to be two main "reasons" why the students believed the women of their villages experienced violence. On the one hand, many of students described how Burmese women are sometimes the cause of their own mistreatment. To describe this concept, many of the students would state that the women would be beaten because they did not "do good" or because it was their "mistake." These turns of phrase were used to describe instances where the

woman did not fulfill their duties such as providing meals or being present upon the return of their husbands from fieldwork. Even if the students perceived domestic violence as a negative action, their belief that the wives were beaten for not "doing good" reflects a perspective that the violence is still a reflection of the women's actions. This reveals an underlying perspective of victim blaming. One student, Cho Su Aye, said that, in the case of spousal abuse, the village must study the situation to know "who is right and wrong."

The second reason why the students believed the women of their villages experienced violence was the prevalence of alcoholism. Through the interview process, it became evident that there is a relationship between alcoholism and domestic violence. Many of the students described how the husbands are drunk when they are violent towards their wives. For example, Chaw Su Lat Sandi described, "The husband beat the wife when the husband has alcohol," even though such mistreatment is not generally acceptable in her village. The drinking of alcohol or the personal production of wine is embedded in the local cultures of many Burmese villages. In addition to the drinking of alcohol, opium is also commonly used in Burma. Two students spoke of opium use. One Kachin student, Htain Lin, described how the smoking and injecting opium has become very common in the past five years. She explained how, even if the individuals who use opium do not beat their wives, the drug abuse causes great problems for the families. The husbands may need to sell possessions to pay for the opium and from the household quarrels may come beatings and abuse.

For the most part, mistreatment is not entirely ignored or accepted as a way of life in the students' villages. During a conversation with the principal of the college, he described a common phrase within the Burmese tribe. According to the principal, the phrase roughly translates to, "If you don't beat the wife, the wife will never be wise." This reveals how Burmese

wives are considered "property." During the discussion, he stated that wives are also likened to cows and the cultural understanding that a cow must be beaten in order for it to work properly for the owner. This mindset was reflected by a student from the Burmese tribe who described how very few individuals will view mistreatment in a negative light.

The students who were asked about the community's level of acceptance toward mistreatment were also asked to describe the way in which their villages tend to respond to specific instances of mistreatment and physical abuse. These fourteen students described several levels of response. For many of the villages, individuals will simply tell the man that it is not good for him to beat his wife. In other cases, villagers will intervene when the abuse occurs if they hear the wife screaming. The community may also be involved by bringing the couple to a community meeting or to the local authorities. The couples may be charged money, receive a warning, or are allowed to divorce. In one particular village, the husband is chased out of the village if he continues to mistreat his wife with violence.

DISCUSSION

So far, this study has covered a review of the relevant literature, a description of the methodology, and an analysis of the interview data. This chapter includes a discussion of the current Burmese society in relation to intimate partner violence and the suggested strategies for organizations that are interested in reducing or preventing intimate partner violence in Burma. The final chapter of this report will conclude with an overview of the study.

This research has been designed to combine contemporary strategies for the reduction of intimate partner violence with a societal understanding of gender and intimate partner violence in the nation of Burma. As would be expected, Burma is a low-income country with a society which is drastically different from high-income countries. As a result, strategies which would be helpful in high-income countries such as the United States may not be applicable to the unique society of Burma. While strategies such as using social media for community mobilization or banning alcohol in sports stadiums may be helpful in high-income countries, approaches to prevent intimate partner violence in Burma must take into account the reality of life in Burma--a country with many challenges ahead. The suggested strategies which follow bring together an understanding of contemporary prevention programs with an understanding of the present state of Burma. The research within the literature review supported the understanding that violence is more common under specific circumstances. For example, there is a greater likelihood of intimate partner violence with individuals of lower socio-economic status (Abramsky et al. 121). Because 26% percent of the Burmese population lives in poverty, one may understand how intimate partner violence continues to be a struggle within Burmese society. While reducing the general poverty in Burma may ultimately decrease the prevalence of intimate partner violence,

such a goal may not be realistic for the NGOs and organizations toward which this report is geared. As a result, the suggested strategies will focus on reasonable steps which can be taken at the individual and community levels.

<div align="center">Suggested Strategies</div>

As previously described, the WHO outlines several different approaches which may be used to understand and prevent intimate partner violence (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 6-7). These approaches include gender, human rights, criminal justice, and public health. Although they focus on different aspects of intimate partner violence, all must be taken into account in order to form a comprehensive strategy against intimate partner violence. Additionally, primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention strategies are all important to the public health perspective. While all these aspects are significant, this study focuses on strategies within the gender and public health approaches for primary prevention of intimate partner violence. The following strategies can be divided into the aspects of legislation, social norms, community mobilization, female empowerment, engaging men, alcohol use, and program effectiveness.

Before these strategies may be examined, it is important to understand that programs with long-term interests may be benefited by stages of development. Several outlines such as those from the WHO and SASA! have been used to form the suggested stages of defining the problem, investigating the foundational causes, program development, program implementation, and researching effectiveness. The framework should begin with defining the issue at hand-- specifically intimate partner violence--and the desired goals for the program. Next, the program should seek to investigate the root causes of the violence. This must include an understanding of

the specific population or community. From here, possible program strategies may be developed along with an investigation into their possible effects. Only then may specific strategies be implemented to achieve the desired goal. Finally, research is important for determining if the implemented programs are successful. Therefore, continued research must be used to determine which strategies are effective in the reduction of intimate partner violence within Burma. The WHO notes that the effectiveness of a program may be characterized by a change in attitudes and beliefs, the reduction of perpetration, and the reduction of victimization (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 39). The gathered information on the success of the implemented programs must then be used to further improve the programs and strategies.

While NGOs and small organizations may not have the power to directly affect legal changes, those groups may put pressure on Burma to make these changes. First, the men and women of Burma must receive the legal provision of equality in line with the requirements of CEDAW. This may not directly change the social view of violence toward women but it will ensure that women receive the same legal protections and privileges as men. Secondly, intimate partner violence must legally be recognized as a human rights violation. This will be achieved if PoVAW is accepted by the Burmese legal system. Thirdly, there is a necessity for adequate legislation and protection from the Burmese criminal justice system in order to deal with instances of intimate partner violence. This will send a message that the actions of such violence are not tolerated by the Burmese authority or society.

The social norms which support intimate partner violence must be shattered if this form of violence is to be prevented. While not all of the interviewed students stated that intimate partner violence occurred within their villages, the previous research and interviews demonstrated that such violence is sometimes a socially acceptable way for Burmese men to treat

their wives. Conflict within the family is also often considered to be a personal issue which does not concern the greater community. As the WHO described, acceptance of violence at the individual level is very important to increasing the risk of perpetration and victimization (Butchart, Garcia-Moreno, and Mikton 21). Acceptance at the individual level is supported by traditional gender norms and support of violence at the societal level. As demonstrated through the literature review and the interviews with the Burmese students, this acceptance of violence is a reality in Burmese society. Program strategies may be used to break these social norms which are often at the heart of intimate partner violence. Programs should focus on educating the public about intimate partner violence, changing stereotypes, and presenting the concept that intimate partner violence is a violation of women's human rights. Public opinion may be reformed through media awareness campaigns. However, as previously noted, these awareness campaigns are more effective when they engage with the population in a long-term way instead of a simple billboard or television advertisement. Suggested strategies include engaging with social media, presenting strong female role models, and creating educational dramas with positive messages.

Changing social norms and the acceptance of intimate partner violence must include the local communities. As the students described, domestic violence would sometimes involve action from the communities in the form of intervening on behalf of the wife, informing the husband about the negative reality of his actions, and even achieving justice with the local authorities. Additionally, the interview with the students revealed that many Burmese men and women live in very small villages. One of the students' communities was composed of only around fifty individuals. In fact, 70% of the Burmese population is rural (*A New UNDP*). These small villages will have a limited involvement with the greater Burmese society. As a result, it is very important to mobilize the communities for the reduction of intimate partner violence. Using

strategies which engage directly with the Burmese communities will increase collective efficacy and community-level "policing" of intimate partner violence. This may even include locally-driven projects which allow for community participation.

Female empowerment may include economic, social, and political aspects. Burma has a long history of patriarchal society which continues until today. Though not in all cases, the majority of students described ways in which the Burmese men have more privileges and power than Burmese women. This was seen through access to education, social freedoms, the family decision-making process, marriages, and family responsibilities. Empowering the Burmese women can provide them with the tools to prevent victimization. Strategies include improving female education in Burma, educational sessions, and community programs/workshops which are aimed at improving female agency, providing safe spaces, self-defense training, and changing social norms which diminish the status of Burmese women and accept intimate partner violence. Economic empowerment can also be achieved through microfinance programs. Strategies which use microfinance and vocational training as ways to economically empower women must also include training for gender equality and violence prevention if they truly intend to be successful (Ellsbert et al. 1563).

As previously described, empowering women may have a mixed effect on their risk of experiencing violence at the hands of an intimate partner. While some women may reduce reliance on their husbands or may be more informed about ways to protect themselves, other women may increase their risk by challenging societal norms or creating additional conflict with their husbands (Kim et al. 1795). It is for this reason that programs must engage men in the process in a gender synchronized approach.

The interviews supported the findings of previous research which has demonstrated that there is a relationship between alcohol and intimate partner violence. The students noted that violence occurred as a result of either the woman's failure to fulfill her responsibilities or her husband's use of alcohol. As a result, it is very important to understand the value of strategies which target alcohol abuse. Here it must be noted that most of the alcohol in refugee camps is illicit (Ezard 685), many Burmese individuals ferment their own alcohol, and illicit and unlicensed alcohol sales are common, especially in the rural areas (Pellech). As a result strategies which limit access to alcohol may be less successful in Burma than in high-income countries. However, the following strategies may still have an effect on Burmese consumption of alcohol, especially in the more urban areas. Availability of alcohol may be reduced through limiting the hours that alcohol is sold, limiting the amount of alcohol that is sold, or increasing the selling price of alcohol. For several years, Burma has had a ban on alcohol advertisements including those in print, on television, and on billboards (Mon). Additionally, the nation's capital, Yangon, has increased license fees and taxes. These are important steps forward for Burma. However, there are many more opportunities for strategies which limit alcohol abuse, especially at the local level.

The previously described strategies incorporated research on contemporary Burma, individual interviews with Burmese students, and present strategies for the prevention or reduction of intimate partner violence. These strategies are focused on gender and public health approaches in an effort to reduce the social acceptance of intimate partner violence and to provide Burmese women with the tools to protect themselves.

CONCLUSION

Intimate partner violence is a significant issue within Burmese society. Although such violence does not occur within all Burmese families, such violence is legal and socially acceptable by many Burmese men and women. Steps must be taken to transform these social gender norms and laws to reduce the risk factors for Burmese women.

The limits to this study must be noted. As previously described, the interview process did not include a randomized sample. Although the students were from states all over Burma, the demographics of the sample (age, religion, level of education, etc.) do not parallel the greater Burmese society. For example, most of the students were from Christian villages while the majority of Burma identifies as Buddhist. It is also possible that the presence of the principal, a male, had an effect on the students' responses. For this reason, the interview analysis merely serves to better understand Burmese society and cannot be used to directly represent the whole Burmese nation. Additionally, Burma is a nation in transition and, as a result, the specifics of the research surrounding this study may not remain the same, even in the near future.

This research was designed to provide interested organizations with useful strategies to prevent or reduce intimate partner violence in Burma. As a result, the report includes background information on Burmese society, interviews with Burmese students in Yangon, and proposed strategies which are based on the information gathered from these two sources. The proposed strategies deal with legislation, social norms, community mobilization, female empowerment, engaging men, alcohol use, and program effectiveness. It is hoped that this information may be used by interested parties to improve the condition of women in Burma through the reduction of intimate partner violence.

BIBLLIOGRAPHY

Abramsky, Tanya, Charlotte H Watts, Claudia Garcia-Moreno, Karen Devries, Ligia Kiss, Mary Ellsbert, Hendrica AFM Jansen, and Lori Heise. "What Factors Are Associated with Recent Intimate Partner Violence? Findings From the WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence." *BMC Public Health* 11 (2011): 109-126. Web.

Aung, Alex Nyi Nyi. "Myanmar's National Strategic Plan for Women Advancement Released." *Undp.org.* United Nations Development Program. 4 October 2013. Web. 4 February 2016.

Aung, Zin Mar. "From Military Patriarchy to Gender Equity: Including Women in the Democratic Transition in Burma." *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 82.2 (2015): 531-551. Web.

BBC. "Myanmar's 2015 Landmark Elections Explained." BBC. 3 December 2015. Web. 20 February 2016.

Bhagowati, Surajit Kumar. *Women in Southeast Asia.* New Delhi: New Century Publications, 2014. Print.

Butchart, Alexander, Claudia Garcia-Moreno, Christopher Mikton. "Preventing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Against Women: Taking Action and Generating Evidence." World Health Organization. 2010. Web. 12 January 2016.

Cengel, Katya. "Rape is a Weapon in Burma's Kachin State, but the Women of Kachin are Fighting Back." *Time* 11 February 2014. Web. 2 January 2016.

CIA. "The World Factbook: Burma." *Cia.gov.* Criminal Intelligence Agency. 15 March 2016. Web. 29 March 2016.

Ellsbert, Mary, Diana J Arango, Matthew Morton, Floriza Gennari, Sveinung Kiplesund, Manuel Contreras, and Charlotte Watts. "Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls: What Does the Evidence Say?" *The Lancet* 385.9977 (2015): 1555-1566. Web.

Ezard, Nadine. "It's Not Just the Alcohol: Gender, Alcohol Use, and Intimate Partner Violence in Mae La Refugee Camp, Thailand, 2009." *Substance Use Misuse* 29.6 (2014): 684-693. Web.

Garcia-Moreno, Claudia, Henrica Jansen, Mary Ellsberg, Lori Heise, and Charlotte H Watts. "Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence." *The Lancet* 368. 9543 (2006): 1260-1269. Web.

Global Justice Center. "Burma's Constitution." *Globaljusticecenter.net.* Global Justice Center. 2012. Web. 28 February 2016.

HD, Petersen, Worm L, Olsen MZ, Ussing B, Hartling OJ. "Human Rights Violations in Burma/Myanmar. A Two Year Follow-Up Examination." *Danish Medical Bulletin* 47.5 (2000): 359-363. Web.

Hoffman, Kristi L., David H. Demo, John N. Edwards. "Physical Wife Abuse in a Non-Western Society: An Integrated Theoretical Approach." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 56.1 (1994): 131-146. Web.

Ikeya, Chie. "The 'Traditional' High Status of Women in Burma: A Historical Reconsideration." *The Journal of Burma Studies* 10 (2005-2006): 51-82. Web.

Jewkes, Rachel. "Intimate Partner Violence: Causes and Prevention." *The Lancet* 359.9315 (2002): 1423-1429. Web.

Khaing, Mi Mi. *The World of Burmese Women*. London: Zed Books, 1984. Web.

Kim, Julia C., Charlotte Watts, James Hargreaves, Luceth X. Ndhlovu, Godfrey Phetla, Linda Morison, Joanna Busza, John D.H. Porter, and Paul Pronyk. "Understanding the Impact of a Microfinance-Based Intervention on Women's Empowerment and the Reduction of Intimate Partner Violence in South Africa." *American Journal of Public Health* 97.10 (2007): 1794-1802. Web.

Kyegombe, Nambusi, Tayna Abramsky, Karen M. Devries, Lori Michau, Janet Nikuti, Elizableth Starmann, Tina Musuya, Lori Heise, and Charlotte Watts. "What is the Potential for Interventions Designed to Prevent Violence Against Women to Reduce Children's Exposure to Violence? Findings From the SASA! Study, Kampala, Uganda" *Child Abuse Negl.* 50 (2015): 128-140. Web.

Kyu, Nilar, Atsuko Kanai. "Prevalence, Antecedent Causes and Consequences of Domestic Violence in Myanmar." *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 8.3 (2005): 244-271. Web.

Lambert, Caroline and Sharon Pickering. "Domestic Violence on the Thai Burma Border: International Human Rights Implications." *Forced Migration Review* 17 (2003): 41-42. Web.

Leonard, K. "Domestic Violence and Alcohol: What is Known and What Do We Need to Know to Encourage Environmental Interventions?" *Journal of Substance Abuse* 6.4 (2001): 235-247. Web. 12 March 2016.

Lwin, Khaing Thanda. "Draft of Myanmar National Prevention of Violence Against Women Law to be Submitted to Hluttaw in April or May." *The Global New Light of Myanmar*. 26 February 2015. Web. 4 February 2016.

McCan, Sarah. "Speaking Out About Violence Against Women in Myanmar." *Trocaire.org*. Trocaire. 26 November 2013. Web. 4 January 2016.

Mon, Kyaw Hsu. "Advertising Industry Moves Past Booze Ban." *Myanmar Times.* 12 April 2010. Web. 23 February 2016.

"Myanmar (Burma) Non-Profit Directory." *Ngo.mycitizen.net.* 2013. Web. 3 March 2016.

Palaung Women's Organisation. "Voices for Change: Domestic Violence and Gender Discrimination in the Palaung Area." *Burmalibrary.org.* Palaung Women's Organisation. 25 November 2011. Web. 3 January 2016.

Pedersen, Duncan. "Political Violence, Ethnic Conflict, and Contemporary Wars: Broad Implications for Health and Social Well-Being." *Social Science & Medicine* 55.2 (2002): 175-190. Web.

Pellech, Christoph. "Stricter Enforcement of Liquor Regulations? --Myanmar Increases License Fees." *Myanmar Business Today* 2.39 (2014): Features. Web.

Su, Chit. "Law Banning Violence Against Women Near Completion." *Myanmar Times.* 1 April 2015. Web. 1 March 2016.

Thomas, Dorothy, Regan Ralph. "Rape in War: Challenging the Tradition of Impunity." *SAIS Review* 14.1 (1994): 81-99. Web.

Toe, Win Naung. "Myanmar's Parliament Approves Controversial Interfaith Marriage Law." *Radio Free Asia.* 7 July 2015. Web. 20 February 2016.

UNFPA. "Increasing Women Participation in the Drafting of Landmark Anti-Violence Against Women Law." *Unfpa.org.* United Nations Fund for Population Activities. 17 July 2015. Web. 4 February 2016.

United Nations. "A New UNDP for a New Myanmar: Annual Report 2013." *Undp.org.* United Nations. 2013. Web. 4 January 2016.

United Nations. "United Nations Development Programme in Myanmar." *Undp.org.* United Nations. 2012. Web. 4 January 2016.

United Nations Women. "Asia and the Pacific: Myanmar." *Asiapacific.unwomen.org.* UN Women. 2016. Web. 6 February 2016.

Women's League of Burma. "Women Against Violence." *Womenofburma.org.* Women's League of Burma. 2016. Web. 4 January 2016.