**THE IMPACT OF PAUNG SIE FACILITY’S GENDER, PEACE AND SECURITY WINDOW**

**GENDER, PEACE AND SECURITY WINDOW**

**CORE FUNDING**
- Overcame the challenge of overreliance on volunteer contributions
- Acquired analytical skills and knowledge of GPS agenda
- Improved networking capabilities and formed strategic coalitions
- Women claimed their space

**ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
- Strengthened organisational capacity
- Enhanced confidence of organisations and their members
- Long-term strategic-planning, agenda setting and locally driven problem identification
- Increased voice, influence and visibility within communities

**STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

**PARTNER ORGANISATIONS**

**INFLUENCE OF PARTNERS IN MYANMAR**
- Engaged in government decisions to assign female police officers to handle GBV cases
- Legal and policy changes increased participation and access to national dialogue and peace process negotiations
- Created spaces that enabled partners to provide temporary shelter, counselling and legal aid to GBV survivors
- Legal and policy changes increased participation and access to national dialogue and peace process negotiations
- Advocated for 30% inclusion of women in peacebuilding structures
- Social norm change: Elevated organisation’s status within community in order to engage with religious authority for gender equality

**INFLUENCE OF PARTNERS IN MYANMAR**

**INFLUENCE OF PARTNERS IN MYANMAR**
The GPS Window: 
More than the sum of its parts

Executive summary

The Gender Peace and Security window was established in 2016 within the Paung Sie Facility as a targeted funding mechanism to support sub-national organisations seeking to promote gender equality and women’s rights in Myanmar. The GPS window has applied a three-pronged approach, including:

- Core funding provided to the selected organisations, covering staff salaries, office rental, flexible transportation, child care support, office equipment and communications.
- Organisational Development (OD) and technical support, to enhance organisations’ ‘institutional strength’ to plan and engage more effectively in and towards the peace process.
- Strategy development aimed at helping partners define and develop their strategic orientation.

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Key findings of the GPS window

- The GPS approach of targeting women’s organisations aligns with global evidence about the merits of investing directly in bottom-up empowerment and gender equality struggles. Sustained gains are secured through purposeful action over time by gender activists.
- Core funding to women’s groups reduces the dependency on project-based funding, enabling locally-driven agenda setting and long-term strategic planning. Office space and salaries further contribute to altering power imbalances in the community as they have become recognised interlocuters vis-à-vis government officials, religious and traditional leaders, other CSOs and international donors.
- The integrated three-pronged approach is more than the sum of its parts and takes account of the multi-dimensional challenges that grassroots women face. It has contributed to building partner’s internal organisational and strategic planning capabilities, as well as their self-confidence. It has also elevated their influence and visibility within their communities and beyond.
- Focussing support on the sub-national and grassroots level helps to distribute the reach of gender programming beyond the capital, reducing the risk of reinforcing vertical and horizontal inequalities based on class, ethnicity, religion, and geographic isolation.
- Partners address a breadth of issues and activities, confirming that the overly siloed thematic approaches and predetermined agendas about what matters at the sub-national level are misguided. Direct support to organisations facilitates locally-driven agendas that are relevant to their context and strategic priorities.
- The GPS window has a low cost, high returns approach to building up the mobilisation and strategic capabilities of women’s organisations to become change agents that shape and drive political and social outcomes—in this case, during a complex volatile transition process.
Impact of GPS implementing partners

The GPS window contributed to improving organisational capability, strategic planning, and elevating the influence and visibility of implementing partners, both within their communities and in the wider space of civil society mobilising for social change. With that, their capacity to advance both protection and participation goals of the GPS agenda was strengthened.

- **Strengthening organisational capacity and strategy** contributed to increased self-confidence and capacity for organisations to engage and influence decision-making spaces. It enabled long-term strategic planning and sustainability, agenda setting and locally driven problem-led actions, including acquiring new analytical skills and technical knowledge to support their work on GPS. Through this core support, becoming more established as organisations improved their networking capabilities, strategic coalitions and recognition in civil society, in communities and in their own households.

- **Increased voice and influence of GPS implementing partners** was evident in their work through peacebuilding activities, engaging with legal and policy change, engaging with government bodies and decision-makers, responding to GBV survivors in their communities, contributing to social norms change and increasing the visibility and status of implementing partners, which shifted their ability to influence.

What donors in Myanmar and globally can learn from the GPS window

The GPS window model puts the transformative punch back into GPS programming. The risk of ‘depoliticising’ the WPS and GPS agenda has been well-documented. The GPS window model, through its explicit targeting of gender-focused civil society, counters the prevailing trend of depoliticised and technocratic approaches that do not engage with the political challenges of altering gender-based and other forms of inequality.

The GPS window is a telling example of adaptive and flexible programming, echoing recent lessons among OECD donors on ‘ways of working’ that are locally grounded, problem-driven, adaptive and politically smart. The experience confirms that a modality which empowers local actors to lead on ‘problem’ identification and developing context-relevant theories of change can result in strategic, effective modes of engagement across intended change processes. In this case, change agendas relate mostly to different protection and participation challenges associated with the gendered experience of conflict and long-term structural inequalities and injustices.

Notably, ALL partner organisations found themselves addressing GBV, providing shelter for victims of intimate partner and other forms of gender-based violence. This is not an accident; it happens elsewhere, too. This requires serious reflection from donors and speaks to a critical, unmet need for protection.
Recommendations for international actors

As the Women, Peace, and Security agenda has evolved, it is of considerable concern that there is reduced international funding for feminist and women’s groups, ignoring the evidence base on how gains in gender equality and women’s rights are achieved and sustained. The original spirit of the WPS agenda ensured that women be supported to participate in and influence all change processes addressing the gendered experience of conflict. This capacity for influence better serves the purpose of improving protection systems to prevent gender-based and other forms of violence. This requires that donors avoid working in siloed ways across WPS and other sectoral agendas.

- **Invest in targeted support for women’s organisations.** Sustained gains in gender equality and women’s empowerment are secured through bottom-up mobilisation and collective action by gender activists.

- **Provide core funding** to support enabling conditions for collective and individual voice and agency. Core funding reduces the dependency of women’s organisations on project-specific activities and funding. It contributes to their capacity to act as autonomous change agents and engage strategically in locally-defined ‘problem-definition’ agenda setting and strategic planning.

- **Focus support on the sub-national and grassroots level** better distributes the transformative reach of gender programming beyond the capital, ensuring that other inequalities based on class, ethnicity, religion, and geographic isolation are not reinforced—and that inequalities between and within national women’s organisations, grassroots activists and mobilisation efforts are not exacerbated.

- **Invest in documenting change and learning.** Embedded learning serves adaptive and flexible programming because it enables strategy re-orientation. It also serves a wider knowledge production purpose, beyond Myanmar both on pathways of women’s empowerment in these conflict-affected settings and on how donors should change their ‘ways of working’ and organisational constraints to better facilitate locally driven change processes.

- **Invest in learning from ‘gendered’ local knowledge.** The knowledge of frontline women and gender activists is valuable in unveiling often invisible power dynamics. This generates insights into the political economy of sub-national conflict and what opportunity structures are unfolding to negotiate change, not only regarding gender equality and women’s rights, but also across other inclusion, peacebuilding and social cohesion agendas.