



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Concluding observations on the combined second and third
periodic reports of Myanmar, adopted by the Committee at
its forty-second session (20 October–7 November 2008)**

Addendum

**Information provided by Myanmar on the follow-up to the concluding
observations of the Committee***

* In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document has not been formally edited.

I. Improving access of persons living in northern Rakhine State, especially women and girls, to primary health care and basic education, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

1. The Ministry of Health in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has been providing reproductive health services such as conducting awareness-raising, provisions of medicines and devices of reproductive health, training and monitoring in those areas since 1992 through midwives.
2. Since 2006, UNFPA has been promoting health-care services for women and pregnant mothers in Buthidaung and Maungtau as its programme-targeted townships in promoting reproductive health. The Department of Health in collaboration with UNFPA is conducting Reproductive Health Training Programme, maternal and health-care training programme for all basic health-care staff in those townships and is also providing medical equipment and supplies including reproductive health commodities.
3. Starting from 2010, UNFPA is also providing reconstructive surgical treatment for the women suffering from obstetric fistula who are from the northern Rakhine State in Yangon. For the third long-term plan of reproductive health for Myanmar (2012-2015), UNFPA has included Yathaetaung township in addition to the designated two townships of Buthidaung and Maungtau in northern Rakhine State for the provision of more sustainable reproductive health programme assistance, in order to strengthen the capacity of public health-care system in the area, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.
4. In 2011, in collaboration with UNFPA, Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA) conducted training courses on reproductive health, behavioural change, trainer course in central level and multiplier course in Sittwe township from 1 November 2011 to 5 November 2011. Moreover, in collaboration with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), advocacy on the relationship between HIV/AIDS and various sectors of reproductive health was conducted in Kyauk Tau and Myauk Oo townships and other assistances such as mobile clinic are also provided at these areas.
5. Moreover, with the collaboration of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), training courses on minimum initial service package for reproductive health in crisis situations are provided to those staff who are working at various organizations in northern Rakhine State.
6. With the assistance of UNHCR, the following activities were conducted to strengthen the capacity of the women who reside in Maung Tau, Bu Thee Taung and Yathetaung townships of northern Rakhine State:
 - (a) Conducting the activities such as looking after mothers and children, taking care of pregnant women before and after giving birth; conducting training courses and supplies to midwives and nurses, referring the pregnant women who are in emergency condition to medical centres such as hospitals and clinics and educating on family planning, birth spacing and breastfeeding;
 - (b) Providing ambulance services for humanitarian organizations and medical check-up, provision of basic health for special health care including systematic transmission of the patients;
 - (c) Sharing knowledge to prevent AIDS and malaria, controlling HIV infection, and distribution of condoms and preventive mosquito nets;
 - (d) Educating mothers for nutrition and feeding the deficient children with supplementary nutrition and giving nutritious care to the children;

(e) Supplying clinical materials, maintaining rural health-care centres and regional hospitals, constructing labour rooms in community and assisting the government health-care system.

7. The Township Health Departments are also providing mothers with vitamin B and iron supplements in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) irrespective of their nationality and religion; vaccinating pregnant women against tetanus; providing mosquito nets with antiseptic repellent to prevent the occurrence of malaria and clean delivery kits to keep clean and free from insects; taking care of emergency birth; referring the patients to the hospital from the countryside for (Emergency Obstetric Care – EmOC); providing cash for the food and transportation in cooperation with Myanmar Medical Association (MMA) and UNFPA; providing mothers and women with contraceptives; conducting services for birth spacing; providing vaccines to mothers suffering from AIDS to prevent transmission to their pregnancy with the help of Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission Project (PMCT Project).

8. It is learned that women and children in northern Rakhine have very little knowledge of health education, especially for contraceptive use for birth spacing. According to the survey conducted, culture, tradition and language barriers are found to be hindering women and children in providing health services. While assessing the situation, it was revealed that local women and mothers rely more on the Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) who are the family clan such as aunts, mother-in-law or grandmother for deliveries rather than skilled midwives. If conditions permit, TBAs and AMWs could be trained to improve their skills as birth attendants with the use of clean delivery kits and close supervision. This will be of great help in improving sustainable health standard by skilled birth attendants.

9. In basic education sector, the Government has provided primary school textbooks worth over 1,835.51 million kyats in free of charges for over 5.1 million primary students nationwide in line with free and compulsory primary education system beginning from 2011-2012 academic year. In basic and higher education sectors, starting from 2012-2013 academic year, arrangements are being made by the Government for scholarships and stipends for outstanding students who have difficulties to continue their education. Literacy rate of Myanmar has increased to 94.95 per cent due to the literacy programme carried out in every state and region yearly. Literacy rate of Rakhine is 86.06 per cent.

10. With the collaboration of UNHCR, the following activities were provided in order to promote the capacity-building of the women living in Maung Taw, Bu Thee Taung and Yathetaung townships:

(a) Setting up and managing community-based development centres to conduct education and community-based activities/programmes;

(b) Providing computer training courses and other technical courses to the members of the committee-based social affairs committee in the village and also providing computer courses to boys and girls;

(c) Providing basic spoken Myanmar language courses to teenagers and adults, about 5,000 yearly, spoken language courses for children and providing assistance for primary children to improve their spoken Myanmar language proficiency and to be able to have a continuous study at school, in collaboration with state and township educational officers;

(d) Providing early childhood development training programme for 2,000 young children who are 3 to 5 years of age as a preschool plan;

(e) Helping the young children especially approximately 6,000 girls who passed the primary level to continue their study at post-primary schools or for those who left school very early to recontinue their education on a yearly basis;

(f) Establishing the young female's hostels for those who do not have opportunity of studying in their native village because of the lack of post-primary schools;

(g) According to the Education for All programme, supplying all school-going-aged children throughout Maungtaw District with stationery such as books and pens free of charge by educational department with the aim of giving access to education regardless of races or religion.

11. UNHCR and partner Community and Family Services International (CFSI) maintained three girls' hostels where 57 girls were assisted to sit for national matriculation exams in 2011. Twenty-three assistant female teachers and 25 female teachers were trained during 2011 under teacher-training programme and assigned as permanent teachers.

II. Eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women in northern Rakhine State

12. MWAFF is focusing on integrated measures to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women in Rakhine State. Under the guidance of Rakhine State Women's Affairs Organization (WAO), there are WAOs in four districts, 17 townships and 1,172 wards/villages. The Working Group on Protection and Rehabilitation takes measures such as establishing counselling centres for women who have social problems, raising awareness of existing laws on the protection of women by providing educational talks, screening and reviewing letters of complaint and preventing trafficking in women by education and information campaigns. The detailed activities of 2011 are as follows:

(a) Four social counselling centres have been established in four districts, assisted and provided advice to 110 women who came there;

(b) A number of 213 educational talks and 78 group discussions with respect to preventing women from violence were provided to 20,925 Rakhine women attended in the year 2011;

(c) The complaint letter inspecting committee reviewed 127 received complaint letters for the matters of elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women, out of which 41 letters were referred to respective departments, 39 letters were returned to the complainants and 47 letters were recorded;

(d) In assisting legal protection concerning violence against women by WAO, 27 cases were reported to the police and 11 cases were referred to file at the respective judicial courts;

(e) Upgrading the knowledge on women and children's right and gender equality to village leaders, senior villagers and women;

(f) Giving supplies such as roofs and walls to the needy families and providing assistance for micro-business to 300 households a year for the purpose of making them to be able to do their own living and also distributing cleaning things to women;

(g) Providing training courses on gender equality and distributing essential information of the human right and also providing health assistance and legal affairs to those who are sexually miscondacted.

13. UNHCR is identifying the basic facts particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, such as Muslim female-headed households and persons with disabilities. In 2011, UNHCR supported 69 Muslim female-headed households through provision of housing materials and income-generating activities.

14. In 2011, UNHCR and its partners provided eight awareness-raising training sessions on the essential role of women in the community, the importance of recognizing and upholding women's rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women. UNHCR has specifically targeted awareness-raising training among community/religious leaders as part of our efforts to empower women and prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). These activities cover a total of 2,749 persons.

15. Moreover, UNHCR also has contact with Myanmar Police Force and Border Immigration Head Quarter to address gender-based violence (GBV) incidents and individual difficulties. International Day of Women was celebrated and an awareness-raising campaign such as "Sixteen-day event against gender-based violence" was launched at the local town hall for the first time in northern Rakhine State from 25 November to 10 December 2011.

16. In 2011, 31 women/girls in northern Rakhine State approached UNHCR for assistance as survivors of SGBV. Complaint cases with references were referred to the local authorities for intervention.

III. Alleviating the heavy restrictions on the movement of residents within northern Rakhine State, especially women and girls

17. As of January 2012, the population of Maungdaw Township stands at 511,785 persons comprising of 249,087 males and 262,698 females. The population of Buthidaung Township stands at 292,330 persons comprising 144,250 males and 148,080 females. A total number of Maungdaw District is 804,116 persons comprising 393,337 males and 410,779 females. Breakdown of ethnicity residing within the District are Rakhine (5.42 per cent), Daingnet (1.04 per cent), Maramagyi (0.04 per cent), Thet (0.24 per cent), Mro (1 per cent), Khamwi (0.94 per cent), Bamar (0.29 per cent), Bengali (90.41 per cent), Hindu (0.55 per cent), Chin (0.02 per cent), Kaman (0.0002 per cent), Karen (0.0025 per cent), Shan (0.0013 per cent), other (0.034 per cent) and foreigner (0.03 per cent). Maungdaw Township, Maungdaw Region, Rakhine State share a 156.57 mile-long border with another country and Bengalis residing in Maungdaw District have the same religion, customs, culture, features and language as Bengalis from the other country and traditionally the population became mixed due to illegal marriages between residents of the two countries.

18. Most of the Bengalis residing in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships are not Myanmar national races and are mixed with blood of foreigners and suspected foreigners. As such, their travels are being screened, on security grounds, by the respective Immigration and National Registration Department and also with a view to establishing whether they are legal residents or not and preventing illegal entry of foreigners to our country. After the screening process, travel permit recommendation Form 4 is issued to eligible persons and they are allowed to travel beyond township/region/state. However, Bengali women residing in the Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships can move freely without a travel permit for education and health reasons.

19. Bengalis residing in the Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships are Sunni Muslims. In the teachings of the Holy Koran, any adult woman who professes Islamic religion is required to modestly cover her body so as not to be seen by men. Women in that region do not travel or move very much partly because of the restrictions of their religious leaders.

IV. Lifting the orders concerning marriage authorization and restriction of pregnancy, which violate the human rights of women in northern Rakhine

20. Since Bengalis residing in Maungdaw District share similar language, physical characters and features to those from the neighbouring country, it is necessary to take steps not to unknowingly marry those of that country and scrutinize them whether they are really residents of Myanmar, holding official household registration and are 18 years old or not. Those who have met the above criteria are allowed to marry freely, 950 couples in 2011 and 104 couples in 2012 were scrutinized and allowed to marry in Maungdaw Township, 2,094 couples and 265 couples in 2011 respectively in Buthidaung Township. Despite the above scrutiny, it was learned that there were more than 8,000 illegitimate children whose nationality and father cannot be identified. Arrangements are in place for the illegitimate Bengali children for their inclusion in the family registration list. Out of 8,000 illegal children, birth certificates have been issued to 2,000 of them until May 2012. The process is continuing for the remaining 6,000 children.

21. In connection with pregnant women in Maungdaw Township, the Department of Health, hospitals/dispensaries are not only taking care of women regardless of race or religion but also birth-spacing projects for all religions are being implemented in cooperation with United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs)/non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Department of Health's data in Maungdaw Township indicate 15,799 pregnant women in 2011 and 1,248 pregnant women in 2012 (as of 17 February 2012) respectively. The average birth rate for Maungdaw is 27.2 out of 1,000 persons and the pregnancy ratio is 3.5 out of 100 persons. According to the data collected by Department of Health of Buthidaung Township, there are 8,392 pregnant women in 2011 and the birth rate is 25 out of 1,000 persons.

22. Local order 1/2009 dated 11 August 2009 was issued by the Border Immigration Head Quarter of Maungdaw concerning travelling, voluntary relocation of residing areas, marriages, birth, separation from principal family registration list for the residents in Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships. Such administrative measures are necessary to safeguard national security and interest given the complicated demographic and vulnerable geographic situation of the region.
