* **Population Sex Disaggregation:** **48.2%male; 51.8% female[[1]](#endnote-1)**
* **Population Age Disaggregation: <5yrs 8.5%; 5-19yrs 27%; Women 15-49yrs 29%; >60 yrs 8%1**
* **Average household size: 4.4 (ranges from 4.7-6)[[2]](#endnote-2)**
* **Female headed households: 21% (27% urban; 19% rural) 2**
* **Literacy Rates 15-24 yrs: male 96.3%; female 95.8%[[3]](#endnote-3)**
* **Total Fertility (children per women): 2.13; Infant Mortality rates: 42.9 per 1000 live births** [[4]](#endnote-4)

# Gender in Brief

Myanmar is a diverse country with many ethnic, cultural and religious groups. The Burmese Government officially recognises 135 distinct ethnic groups, which are comprised of are grouped into 8 “major national ethnic races”, and has a Buddhist majority and a large Muslim minority population, which the government does not recognise. The transition from military to civilian leadership has led to ongoing political, economic and social reforms. While this has created new opportunities to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment, gender inequality remains pervasive. Discrimination against women is deep-seated and widespread. Poverty, land use, education, health, HIV infection, trafficking, violence (including sexual abuse) are key issues of concern. Women are profoundly under-represented in public and political life. Gender disparities are more marked in rural areas and amongst some ethnic groups.[[5]](#endnote-5)

**Gender roles and responsibilities:** The perception of most people in Myanmar is that a woman’s place is at home where they are expected to undertake the majority of household, childcare and overall caring work, while men are expected to provide for and make decisions for their families. Myanmar’s national laws support equal property and inheritance rights for both genders, however, where customary law differs it is usually given preference. For example, in Kachin and Chin communities, women are typically completely excluded from inheritance.[[6]](#endnote-6) However, changing economic conditions, particularly in urban areas, has meant that women have increasingly had their burden doubled as they continue to uphold their domestic work while also working outside of the home. In rural areas, traditional gender roles remain the norm. There is a high rate of rural-to-urban migration to find work.

**Education and Economic Empowerment:** Gender and geography has an impact on secondary education in Myanmar. In rural areas many parents do not allow their daughters to travel outside their village to attend secondary school, while in urban areas, girls are better represented in secondary and tertiary education. However, this does not translate into greater employment and attainment of work within the labour force.1 Female participation in the labour market is significantly lower (75.2 %) compared to men (82.3%), and women are commonly paid a lower wage for equal work. Many women from Myanmar migrate to neighboring countries in search of better-paying jobs. However, most end up as industrial, agricultural, or domestic workers, often in exploitative workplaces (including those where they are at risk of sexual exploitation). Despite laws prohibiting child labour, child labour is still commonplace particularly within informal employment arrangements, for example at teashops and for street vendors. In addition, ethnic minorities are

**Government participation and legal frameworks**: Traditional norms prevent women from taking part in local government, particularly at the village level where many believe that women cannot be village leaders. While the Government has appointed its first female Minister, Myanmar’s parliament severely lacks equal representation and women hold only 4.7% of seats.[[7]](#endnote-7) Women are also underrepresented in senior government positions and thus limited in their abilities to influence law reforms and other societal and changes. The Gender Equality Network and Department of Social Welfare is attempting to enact a law preventing violence against women; CARE Myanmar is an active participant in the working group drafting the legislation. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) outcomes in Myanmar are among the worst in the Asia-Pacific region and abortion remains illegal with UN Women reporting that nearly 10 per cent of all maternal deaths are abortion-related, which is often undertaken by untrained attendants.[[8]](#endnote-8)

**Gender-based violence and Protection:** There is a lack of national data on gender-based violence; however, anecdotal evidence suggests that many women, girls and boys face significant physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, economic violence and cultural violence in Myanmar. Women from Myanmar face many forms of violence throughout their lives, often simultaneously; women often experience both physical and psychological violence.[[9]](#endnote-9) Sex workers and migrant women are at particular risk of gender based violence both in the workplace and at home. Gay, lesbian, MSM[[10]](#endnote-10) and the disabled are also marginalised by society. They are not accepted by their family members or by society, and subsequently face many forms of violence. Gender inequality exists throughout Myanmar, and affects all ethnic and religious groups. For example, amongst Buddhists, men have a higher status than women. In some ethic groups, women cannot inherit from the family and married women cannot participate in the family's ceremony. Specific ethnic communities have and continue to be subject to the worst human rights violations in the world and in some circumstances are systematically subjected to arbitrary arrests, extortion, forced labour, rape, violence and forced displacement and eviction. Children from these ethnicities are routinely deprived of their right to access education and basic healthcare. It has also been recorded that military and other government forces have confiscated land and subjected minority populations to a number of human rights abuses, including forced labour, portering or conscription, arbitrary detention, torture, rape and extrajudicial killings.[[11]](#endnote-11)

**Gender in Emergencies:** Humanitarian emergencies impact women, men, boys and girls in different ways and can rapidly change their needs and vulnerabilities. Steps to address the harm emergencies cause need to appropriately understand and respond to these differences. Focus group studies undertaken to better understand women’s needs in IDP Camps in Kachin State, found that women’s major concerns relate to an inability to access clean water, electricity, nutritious food, safe bedrooms, bathrooms and toilets. The items most urgently needed include sanitary napkins, underwear, longyis and warm clothes. The main unaddressed health problems suffered by women are overwhelmingly related with sexual and reproductive organs. Field assessments found that women appear to prioritise household needs over their own health and wellbeing. Male respondent groups expressed that women were unlikely to turn to service providers, especially with regards to SRH issues, as they believed women would feel ashamed to mention these symptoms and be inclined to think that their concerns were not important. In terms of negative coping strategies, both girls and adult women mention parents taking out their anger and frustration by beating their children.[[12]](#endnote-12)

1. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2011) World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. [Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey in Myanmar 2009-2010 (2011)](http://www.mm.undp.org/content/dam/myanmar/docs/FA1MMRPovertyProfile_Eng.pdf)  [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. UNICEF Statistics [Myanmar](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/myanmar_statistics.html) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. [United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division 51 World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables](https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/publications/files/key_findings_wpp_2015.pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. [UN WOMEN. CEDAW and Women’s Human Right’s: Myanmar](http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/cedaw-human-rights/myanmar#sthash.SYZv3pPU.dpuf) [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Minoletti, Paul. Gender Budgeting in Myanmar. ActionAid, CARE, Oxfam, and WON (forthcoming 2016). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. [UNDP, Human Development Report 2015: Work for human development Briefing note for countries on the 2015 Human Development Report: Myanmar](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/MMR.pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. UN Women: [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm) [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. *Behind the Silence* Briefing Paper*,* Gender Equality Network - Myanmar (2014) [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Men who Sleep with Men [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Oxford Burma Alliance. Ethnic Nationalities of Burma: <http://www.oxfordburmaalliance.org/ethnic-groups.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Gender Equality Network. 2013. Women’s Needs Assessment IDP Camps Kachin State:

    <http://www.genmyanmar.org/publications/Women's%20Needs%20Assessment%20IDP%20Camps%20Kachin%20State%20Feb%202013%20FINAL.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-12)